When we decided to extend the annual Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) Graduate Student Research Conference (GSRC) this year into a journal that could be a venue to showcase presenters’ work, we knew the endeavor would take us into previously unexplored terrain. As any conference organizers might know, the amount of work involved in ensuring that all goes well on the day(s) of the event belie all that is required to pull it off: the planning and practice, the long nights and the exhaustive attention to getting the details right. Oftentimes, during the latter months of 2017 and the earlier ones of 2018, it felt like we would only release our metaphorical breaths of relief in the evening of April 21st, after all the chairs were stowed away, the last light switch flipped off. Then we would remember that, this year, we had chosen to make the prospect of a peer-reviewed publication an added incentive for our presenters and those breaths needed to be drawn up again. After months of work, here we are, the inaugural GSRC Journal in hand and complete— but, ironically, rather than letting us rest, the articles it contains prompts us to work harder, to understand that when it comes to mobilizing our research towards the betterment of educational communities, then our commitment should be an ongoing endeavour.

Unlike typical conference proceedings that act like catalogues or records of who presented what, we decided we wanted the inaugural journal to be worthy enough to highlight the exciting research that had been presented at the conference in a more rigorous manner; though, not impossibly rigorous so as delay publication for exorbitant amounts of time as some academic journals are wont to do. As the conference encompassed the willingness and desire to celebrate experimental research methodologies alongside traditional ones, so too did we hope our journal would provide a permanent print (or digital) home for the presenters’ work. As the GSRC’s conference theme was *Creating Possibilities for Change in Education*, the journal embraced the same. We were inspired by both our keynote speakers. Dr. Gail Prasad’s *On Be(com)ing A Syncretic Researcher* made us really think about a triumvirate of “being the change” we want to see in our educational research world and how we might incorporate...
ontological humility, methodological flexibility, and epistemological creativity into the work we do. In *Onkwehonwe and Guest relationships: education and responsibilities for 'reconciliation,'* Dr. Ruth Koleszar-Green spoke about the ethics of relationships in our work and how we, as settlers, must bind our research with an ongoing intentionality towards reconciliation, how we must work to modes of education that would throw off the ongoing binds of colonialism. Both speakers were warm and generous with their advice, invigorating us as we read all the wonderful submissions that came into the journal and, it would seem, also the authors whose articles and pieces have been included in the issue.

Dr. Eizadirad of Ryerson University offers the first article, a pertinent discussion about the relationship between curricula and standardized testing and the philosophies that inform their relationship. The paper demonstrates how the Education Quality and Accountability Office’s (EQAO) assessments have historically harnessed the underpinnings of the Tyler Rationale – one that privileged positivist, technocratic and quantifiable approaches to curriculum development. Dr. Eizadirad shows how, accordingly, standardized testing unfairly works against racialized students and those from lower socio-economic status communities. The paper is ultimately a call for questioning hegemonic approaches to curriculum evaluation.

Wickstrom applies a similar ethical outlook when it comes to children’s drawings in kindergarten. Originally a poster paper on work done in a larger empirical project which examines the impact and implementation of Ontario’s full-day kindergarten program under the supervision of Dr. Janette Pelletier, the journal article version of the poster here reads as an intervention piece. Wickstrom maintains that while young children represent their learning through various and multiple modalities, assessment is restricted to formalized, constrained writing tasks. The alternative posited here demonstrates how children’s drawings can be utilized to communicate their learning.

Next, Boldyreva challenges barriers too, this time in experiential science education outside of the typical classroom setting. In high school classes, field trips – such as those to conservation centres – are markedly less common; but, in a world with ongoing and dangerous climate management and environmental issues, more necessary than ever. Experiential learning experiences have been proven to garner more comprehensive science knowledge and greater understanding of how to meet ecological challenges but those learning experiences are simply not happening as much as they should be. Boldyreva conducted semi-structured interviews with science teachers in Ontario to uncover what they perceived were the barriers to having more experiential learning experiences for students and what might be done to overcome them.

Bayliss’ article also contains a necessary look at the research around school-based mindfulness interventions. Previously used in healthcare centres, busy corporate offices and even prisons, Mindfulness-Based Interventions (MBIs) have found their way into school settings. Bayliss cautions that while this may seem like a positive development for the ways in which MBIs have the potential to treat students’ stress, depression, anxiety, and other disorders, it is difficult to make sweeping conclusions about the actual effectiveness of mindfulness training for these purposes. The timely review of literature on the topic both explains what school-based MBIs are and laments the lack of research that has been done on them to date. The review demonstrates why further research is needed in this very promising area.

Castonguay-Payant takes us to the boroughs of Montreal in an exploration of how parents judge schools and make assumptions about educational quality measures. School choice practices in the province are increasing quasi-market logic, which Castonguay-Payant tells us is characterized by competition within a state-regulated service, or at least competitive
interdependencies between schools in urban areas. The study aimed to find out how school choice practices vary by parents’ cognitive and normative categories, relation to others, social position, social and cultural resources or spatial locations. The value of studies like this one may rest in understanding the collective consequences of school choice practices and the discussion around the problematic effects of social segregation.

As the GSRC conference included presentations in both official languages and hoped to foster a cross-university and provincial dialogue on educational research in Canada, we are excited to include Burchell et al.’s French language piece on the cross-language transfer of syntactic awareness for anglophone students in French immersion. Using mediation modelling to measure syntactic awareness, they found that it facilitates vocabulary development, reading comprehension and other linguistic capacities and recommend its inclusion in the Canadian French Immersion Program.

Kaszuba further extends the discourse on French language teaching through the consideration of educational programs for teacher training. The need for qualified French teachers in Ontario has prompted immersion-based programs that stand in contrast to the course-based model which focuses primarily on language teaching methods. Kaszuba sought to compare and contrast the experiences of student teachers in both types of programs and while the sample size was small, the findings support that immersion-based teacher education offers more in-depth second language theory and strategically timed practical experiences.

Del-Villar concludes the issue with a piece on training programs for Master of Social Work (MSW) students in an institute in New York city. Despite the diversity there, Del-Villar explains, very few MSW field education programs focus on anti-oppressive practice and anti-racist work. To begin to remedy this disparity, the author constructed and tested a pedagogical approach to training pre-service social workers for work with and among marginalized and racialized communities. The piece is a fascinating report on the results observed and concludes by underscoring the need to standardize effective anti-oppression and anti-racist training curriculum.

Acknowledgements

It is work like this and all the presentations and articles which continue to Create Possibilities for Change in Education. And the work we have done leading up to the conference and to this, the inaugural journal issue that stemmed from it, could not have been accomplished without the aid of dedicated individuals. We wish to take this opportunity to thank administrators in all four of OISE’s departments and the Dean’s office for their financial support and faculty involvement. Without them, the conference would not have been the success that it was and without the conference, this journal issue would not exist. OISE alumni (both the association and a number of individuals) were generous partners in this work, going above and beyond duty in bringing the conference and journal to their successful culmination.

Importantly too, we owe much thanks to our fellow students and early-career scholars who acted as committee heads and reviewers (a few of whom played double duty). The journal can only showcase a small fraction of the exciting research we learned about on April 20-21, but because of reviewers’ efforts and intellectual insight, other submitters will move forward with their educational research projects in stronger ways.
We are indebted and thankful to our GSRC committee chairs and article reviewers:


A note about the cover image:

Our cover image is a collage of paintings created by students preparing to become teachers in Mimi’s class. The students created these paintings to explore the notion of experiential learning. They all worked with the same colours, technique and materials, and each came up with unique expressions of learning. The collage of their paintings, entitled *Critical Perspectives in Education*, captures the richness of perspectives that emerge when alternative means of expression are used in the classroom, making room for possibilities of change in education.

We would like to thank the student-artists for their contributions to the piece.