

LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

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Introduction

Dear SFU Educational Review readers,

Welcome to our 2024 issue of SFU Educational Review, marking the continued efforts to promote educational scholarship under a new editorial team. This issue reflects a pivotal moment for the journal as it is the first one coordinated by our editorial members who are deeply committed to fostering critical dialogues that challenge and transform the realm of educational research and publishing. It is an honour to have engaged in the process of co-creating a product that we are proud to share with the Simon Fraser University community and beyond.

Recently, our editorial team engaged in an extensive discussion centered around the themes of decolonization in education and the progression of research publishing. These conversations have greatly influenced the direction of SFU Educational Review and our future objectives. In academic settings, the focus of academic publishing often remains on the technical aspects of writing with the aim of helping emerging researchers to publish more. Yet, we argue that it is essential to first ponder foundational questions: Why do we write? For whom? And what values influence our writing? Driven by the insights that emerged from our recent editorial discussions, this issue tackles these questions through the lens of de/colonization in knowledge-making. We seek to explore how academic writing and publishing can be approached differently to promote a decolonizing agenda in the field of education research. Decolonizing scholarly writing involves the daunting yet crucial task of unlearning dominant individualistic and neoliberal scholarship frameworks, embracing a collective, community-focused approach, and fostering inclusive academic environments.

This editorial proceeds in three parts. First, we explore the concept of de/colonization in academia and discuss the current challenges within the publishing arena. We then present our visions towards healing and justice in academic publishing, which will guide us in incorporating decolonization in our editorial processes, article selection, and overall publication practices. Following the thematic discussions, we provide a snapshot of the articles and works included in this issue. We hope that the articles and discussions featured here will inspire further dialogue and action towards a more equitable and inclusive academic future.

Epistemological Colonization in Publishing

Academic publishing is becoming increasingly commercialized, characterized by several key trends as noted by Fyfe and colleagues (2017). First, the number of research journals is rising, with a sharper focus on specific subdisciplines. Second, the audience for these journals has shifted from primarily individual researchers to institutions that are willing to pay high subscription fees. Third, the academic publishing market has globalized, adopting English as its primary language, with editorial boards and contributors that reflect an international perspective. While marketization and globalization may seem to facilitate the production and dissemination of knowledge, they also transform academia into a competitive marketplace, where research

outputs become commodified. This commercial approach introduces substantial challenges and disparities among researchers, particularly in terms of social, economic, and linguistic equity. Moreover, this trend contributes to epistemological colonization, as it reinforces the dominance of Western perspectives and methodologies in the creation and validation of knowledge (Liu & Arora, 2023). Such a dynamic underscores the need to critically assess how knowledge is produced and circulated in our increasingly interconnected academic world.

In our editorial meeting, several issues emerged that sparked our critical reflection, including: (1) colonization as a one-way imposition, (2) the impact of epistemological racism on knowledge-making, (3) binary and categorical thinking, (4) standardization and exclusion, (5) access and inequity, and (6) metrics-based success. In the context of academic publishing, colonization can manifest as a one-way imposition where Western knowledge, always under the guise of international scholarship, enforces its standards and norms on scholars, particularly those from underrepresented populations, including scholars from the Global South, Indigenous communities, and non-native English speaking backgrounds. As put forward by Chunhong Liu, one of our editors, “the colonial way of doing, thinking, and knowing is directly transferred or applied in an educational context”, which often leads to a homogenization of knowledge and, even worse, the “invalidation” of diverse cultural perspectives and practices (personal communication, October 31, 2024).

Epistemological racism concerns knowledge frameworks that are centered around specific, often Western-centric, viewpoints and rejects other knowledge systems and practices that can be simply labeled non-Western due to their geopolitical situations (Kubota, 2020). These frameworks dominate academic publishing, leading to a narrow understanding of what constitutes “valid” research (Sugiharto, 2023). The egocentric, Western-oriented standard, in editor Micheal Obakhavbaye words, “constitutes epistemology and ways of knowing, and ... it stifles Indigenous ways of knowing. Most of us coming from different parts of the world, and we have our ways of our culture, which actually influences the way we think about reality. That’s our ontology and epistemology” (personal communication, October 31, 2024). However, the current global system of knowledge production, consumption, and dissemination primarily originates from Euro-American academic centers and locations (Canagarajah, 2002). In this case, emerging scholars who incorporate Indigenous knowledge systems or alternative epistemologies may unfortunately find their work undervalued or dismissed.

Meanwhile, academic publishing often falls into binary and categorical thinking—classifying work into rigid categories that reflect a dichotomous view of knowledge (e.g., qualitative versus quantitative, theoretical versus applied). This reflects a reductionist, logocentric view of knowledge that can stifle innovation and overlook the complex, interconnected nature of scholarly inquiry. The binary thinking further regulates how researchers, especially emerging ones, position themselves in a wider scholarly community. As pointed out by editor Bahar Zandrazavi, this means that one can only be “inside or outside” and that “we are in

categorized boxes, and if we don't fit, we don't belong" (personal communication, October 31, 2024).

In more specific terms, the epistemological colonization in publishing operates through mechanisms of standardization, access, and metrics-based evaluation. The standardization in publishing practices involves the one-way communication of requirements and criteria that decide the publishability of one's intellectual creation, such as formatting, language use, and methodological approaches. Such standards often exclude those who may not have access to certain educational resources or who may approach academia differently, such as researchers following Indigenous and art-based understanding of knowledge and reality. This prevents emerging scholars from non-traditional backgrounds or non-English speaking regions from fully participating in the global research community. Access to publishing in leading journals often requires significant resources, including funding for research activities, institutional support for research, and language editing services, which may not be equally available to all scholars. This creates inequity in who can publish and whose voices are heard. Emerging scholars, especially those from less affluent institutions or countries, face considerable barriers, limiting the diversity of research and perspectives in academic literature. The emphasis on metrics such as citation counts, impact factors, and h-index in academic publishing also disproportionately affect emerging scholars. These metrics often favor established researchers and traditional fields of study, making it difficult for new scholars to showcase the impact of their work. Additionally, the pressure to meet these metrics can lead to a focus on quantity over quality and innovation in research output.

Towards Healing and Justice in Publishing

During our discussions of efforts to decolonize academic publishing, we identified several key themes that will guide our way forward: (1) decentring and multiplicity, (2) fostering a diverse ecology, (3) communal healing, (4) emphasis on process over product, and (5) practical strategies.

To counteract the one-way imposition of knowledge in academic publishing, we believe in the value of decentering and multiplicity. This includes not only bringing new voices to the centre but also creating multiple centres or more accurately, de-centring the academic publishing platform. Our journal's commitment to decolonization on this decentred, multiplied platform then, as editor Shaghayegh Bahrami said, would be "making additional ways for understanding the world, for communicating in the world, with the world, within the world" (personal communication, October 31, 2024). We aim to approach academic publishing as developing a network of centers, each as valid as the others, each in connection with the others, and each essential to the existence of the scene on which we interact. In our effort to connect with authors, reviewers, and readers within and beyond SFU, we hope to foster a diverse ecology of scholars and practitioners shaped by the interactions of multiple communities (Lemke, 2000). An ecological view of academic publishing helps us to approach emerging researchers in an

alternative light; for instance, graduate students are seen as legitimate and meaningful contributors to scholarly discussion, avoiding the deficit-based framing of them as merely novice or student researchers.

When envisioning the path to decolonization, our editorial team emphasize the significance of engaging in healing as a communal act which requires “being responsive to our diversity, dialogu-ing across differences, crafting possibilities of solidarity and common agendas” (Bhattacharya, 2019, p. 11). This approach manifests itself in our peer review process which is informed by the ethics of care. In the editorial process, as editor Anna Rumjahn puts it, we recognize that challenging external structures requires cultivating an awareness of the symbiotic relationship between the internal landscape of emotions, perspectives, and responses, and external events. We are committed to undertaking this inner work as we strive to create collective possibilities for the future.

Many of our authors and editors are graduate students and emerging scholars who are actively navigating the continual, dynamic process of un/re/learning. To reflect our goal of communal healing, we place great emphasis on the quality of the process. We seek to intentionally engage in dialogue with authors, reviewers, readers, and our editorial team by asking: How was that process for you? We understand that each individual experiences a unique process depending on who and where they are in their academic and life journey; and we see this as an opportunity to support a sustainable practice.

Complementing the above-mentioned guiding principles, some of our practical strategies moving forward include: (1) promoting the contributions of emerging scholars and practitioners in addition to the works of more established scholars; (2) supporting diversified forms of scholarship in regard to both content and format; and (3) considering the introduction of a new submission format to encourage engagement with published content and foster dialogue between authors and readers.

Overview of Articles

This issue of the SFU Ed Review offers a diverse range of scholarship that highlights the eclectic nature of research in the field of education.

First, Ana Vojnovic’s arts-based paper, “*Nowhere In Memoriam*”, draws readers into the experience of an artist and educator while the writer reflects on a childhood in Belgrade, Serbia, the immigration journey to Canada, and the sense of “ungroundedness” living in present day Vancouver. Using photography, poetry, and experience, Vojnovic uses affective and embodied ways of knowing to evoke emotional responses from readers. Using a unique combination of modes, Vojnovic shares the experience of finding liminal moments of time and place within the urban environment, bridging emotional and visceral connections between past and present.

Next, through three vignettes, Bridget McClarty brings us into a sense of stillness, emerging us in embodied ways of knowing which can be developed through engagement with more-than-human entities in her piece, “Does Stillness Bring Wisdom?: A Journey Towards Human-Body-Land Intercorporeality”. McClarty uses an artful and reflective writing style to convey the practice of eco-centered slow pedagogy. The writer encourages us to adopt a learner’s mindset when engaging with the more-than-human so that we can learn to listen to the wisdom it offers.

In “Preparing Anti-Racist Educators Through Critical Transformative Emotional Praxis: A Theory of Change”, Tonje Molyneux reviews literature addressing Whiteness and White culture in education, finding that Whiteness is particularly pervasive in teacher education programs. Molyneux emphasizes the damage that Whiteness, white supremacy, and systemic racism can have on students, pre-service teachers, and teacher educators. To enact change, Molyneux combines transformative learning and critical emotional praxis to present an original framework: “Theory of Change for Critical Transformative Emotional Praxis in Teacher Education”.

In Gobeil et al.’s paper, “Investigation of Experiential Learning Practices in K-12 Education”, the authors identify a critical gap in the literature regarding Experiential Learning in K-12 settings. Gobeil et al. find that assessment practices in general are rarely studied in the field of Experiential Learning, and more importantly, no current studies exist that delve into assessment practices related to Experiential Learning in K-12 settings. The authors argue that studying assessment practices for Experiential Learning in K-12 settings will improve student outcomes, thereby encouraging future research in this area.

Cris Barabas then introduces us to new and liberating conceptual propositions in the field of youth critical literacy in the literature review “Researching Literacy with (Marginalized) Young People: Some Conceptual Propositions from the Literature”. Drawing on the exciting diversity of research in this area, Barabas highlights three emerging themes within the field: *ecological and sociomaterial orientations of literacy studies*, *transborder literacies*, and *literacies as public medium for communal desirings and resisting*. By consolidating the literature into these themes, Barabas points researchers in new directions to widen the scope of research in youth critical literacy practices.

Following Barabas, Tsoghik Grigoryan’s piece, “Tutorial Booking and Tracking Application Interactivity: A Multimodal Social Semiotic Analysis Framework”, introduces us to *Multimodal Social Semiotics Theory* to frame understandings of human-digital interaction through a sociocultural lens. The author applies theories of Multimodal Social Semiotics in an investigation of ‘ASP tutTrak’, an online tutorial booking and tracking application. Through this investigation, Grigoryan offers insights into how users make meaning when interacting with

digital platforms, and the interplay of social, cultural, and contextual factors during human-digital platform interactions. Grigoryan's findings emphasize the importance of considering user engagement through sociocultural and multimodal lenses in Educational Technology development.

Finally, Malik et al. conclude the issue with their piece, "A Thematic Literature Review of Decolonization and Abolitionist Approaches in Computing Education". Throughout their review, the authors focus on how to bring critical, culturally responsive, decolonial, and abolitionist pedagogies into the curriculum of Computing Science classrooms, both in secondary and post-secondary contexts. Malik et al. find that although there are numerous promising practices in this area, large gaps still exist in normalizing anti-oppressive approaches in the field of Computing Science education. This leads to a call for better integration of critical, culturally responsive, decolonial, and abolitionist pedagogies in Computing Science education to embed themes of justice and equity in the work of Computing Science educators.

Concluding Thoughts

Building on a seventeen-year legacy, this issue of the SFU Educational Review embodies the beginning of our new editorial team's commitment to challenging dominant academic publishing frameworks and amplifying emerging voices. The diverse contributions featured in this issue reflect the richness of perspectives and methodologies that drive educational research forward. From embodied eco-pedagogy to arts-based inquiry, critical reviews of literature and empirical studies, these works inspire reflection and action across varied educational contexts.

As we move forward, we aim to remain dedicated to cultivating a platform that not only showcases scholarship but also serves as a space for dialogue, communal healing, and collaborative growth. By embracing a process-oriented approach, we hope to advance a vision of academic publishing that prioritizes epistemic justice, multiplicity, and an ethics of care. Submissions are welcomed on an ongoing basis through our website, and we encourage you to share your thoughts on this issue via our contact page. We invite readers to engage with the articles presented here, carry forward the conversations they spark, and join us in imagining and enacting a more inclusive academic future.

With gratitude and sincere spirits,

The Editorial Team

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