



# Centre for Leadership & Diversity 6th Annual International Conference

## Leadership for Renewal, Sustenance, and Resistance in Challenging Times

Ontario Institute for Studies in Education  
252 Bloor St W, Toronto, ON  
OCTOBER 16, 2025 (ONLINE)  
OCTOBER 17 - 18, 2025 (IN-PERSON)

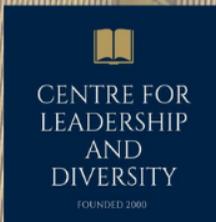
We are living in challenging times across the globe. There are attacks on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion programs, and attempts to roll back years of progress towards creating a more just and equitable world, and education systems. This shift has had devastating impact on students, educators, and communities. More than ever before, space must be created where people can come together to support, renew commitments to justice, peace and liberation, share research and ideas, collaborate and co-construct the way forward.

Join the 2025 Centre for Leadership and Diversity's 6th Annual International Conference, a space to engage in critical dialogue, identify actions and imagine new kinds of research, and educational praxis. CLD invites participants to come together and be a part of forging new paths towards the work of educational justice.

We hope to see you in person or online!

Register here:

<https://oise.jotform.com/2517357556>  
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## #CLDConference2025



## Keynote Panelists

Friday, October 17<sup>th</sup> 2025



**Alison Mitchell**

Headteacher (Secondee)  
Educational Leadership and  
Professional Learning  
Glasgow City Council and  
University of Glasgow (Affiliate)



**Teralyn Phipps**

Principal  
Robert J. Lee  
Public School  
Peel District School Board



**Dr. Beyhan Farhadi**

Assistant Professor  
Educational Leadership & Policy  
OISE/UT



**Dr. Vidya Shah**

Associate Professor  
Educational Leadership  
& Policy  
OISE/UT



**Dr. Camille Logan**

Former Associate Director  
of Education  
Advancing Equity in Public  
Education



**Dr. Ann Lopez**

Director, CLD  
Professor  
Educational Leadership  
& Policy  
OISE/UT

Moderator



# IN PERSON CONFERENCE PROGRAM

**DAY 1: Friday, October 17, 2025**

(All times are Eastern Daylight/Toronto Time)

**ABSTRACTS FOR PAPERS ARE AT THE END OF THE PROGRAM**

8:00am	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Registration begins</b> <b>6<sup>th</sup> Floor Lobby</b></p>	
8:45 – 9:00 am	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Room</b> <b>7-162</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Dr. Fatema Hossain, Centre for Leadership and Diversity Core Team OISE, University of Toronto</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>GREETINGS</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Prof Ann Lopez, Director, Centre for Leadership and Diversity, OISE, University of Toronto</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>CONFERENCE LOGISTICS</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Yvonne Chan, Centre for Leadership and Diversity Core Team OISE, University of Toronto</p>
9:00 – 10:15 am (Session 1)	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Session 1</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Room</b> <b>7-162</b></p>	<p><b>Chair: Dr. Carly Manion</b></p> <p><b>Presenters:</b></p> <p><b>Dr. Jamila Maliha, Dr. Shelly Hopper, Dr. Erin Van De Wiele</b> <b>Western University, Ontario, Canada</b> <i>The Power of Story: Leading Through Lived Experience in the Pursuit of Justice, Wellness, and Reconciliation</i></p> <p><b>Dr. Ardavan Eizadirad, Dr. Zuhra Abawi, Dr. Andrew B. Campbell</b> <b>Wilfrid Laurier University; York University; OISE, University of Toronto, Ontario, Canada</b> <i>Activist Leadership for Inclusive Schools: Canadian Perspectives</i></p> <p><b>Mr. Jesse Genereux</b> <b>McMaster University, Ontario, Canada</b> <i>Cultivating the Non-Violent Other: Ethical Subjectification After Levinas</i></p> <p><b>Ms. Heather Lawless</b> <b>University of Toronto, Ontario, Canada</b></p>



		<p><i>Critical Approaches in Teaching and Educational Practices: Podcasting as a Path towards Equity in the Health and Wellness Space</i></p>
<p><b>10:25 – 11:35 am</b> <b>KEYNOTE PANEL</b></p>	<p><b>Library</b></p>	<p><b>KEYNOTE PANEL</b></p> <p><b>Panelists:</b></p> <p><b>Dr. Beyhan Farhadi</b> Assistant Professor, OISE, University of Toronto</p> <p><b>Dr. Camille Logan</b> Former Associate Director of Education Advancing Equity in Public Education</p> <p><b>Alison Mitchell</b> Headteacher (Seconded), Glasgow City Council Education Services University of Glasgow School of Education</p> <p><b>Terilyn Phipps</b> Principal, Robert J. Lee Public School Peel District School Board</p> <p><b>Dr. Vidya Shah</b> Associate Professor, OISE, University of Toronto</p> <p><b>MODERATOR</b></p> <p><b>Dr. Ann Lopez</b> Director, Centre for Leadership and Diversity, OISE, University of Toronto</p>
<p><b>Session 2</b> <b>11:45am – 1:00pm</b></p>	<p><b>Session 2A</b> <b>Room</b> <b>7-105</b></p>	<p><b>Chair: Dr. Beyhan Farhadi</b></p> <p><b>Presenters:</b></p> <p><b>Dr. Cheryl Ernst</b> <b>University of Delaware, United States</b> <i>Beyond Grammar: English Language Programs Building Skills That Facilitate Soft Diplomacy</i></p> <p><b>Dr. Amal Farhat</b> <b>Qatar University, Qatar</b> <i>Analysis of First-Year Students of Their Learning Experiences</i></p> <p><b>Dr. Ardavan Eizadirad, Dr. Sabreena Ghaffar-Siddiqui</b> <b>Wilfrid Laurier University, Ontario, Canada; Independent</b></p>



<p><b>Session 2</b> 11:45am – 1:00pm</p>	<p><b>Session 2B</b></p> <p><b>Room</b> 7-162</p>	<p><i>Clash of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion (EDI) and Anti-Woke-ism: Reclaiming and Re-Storying EDI for Thriving Communities</i></p> <p><b>Ms. Nancy Hsiung</b> OISE, University of Toronto Ontario, Canada <i>Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI): Insights from 20 Secondary School Leaders from Across Ontario</i></p> <p><b>Chair: Dr. Zuhra Abawi</b></p> <p><b>Presenters:</b></p> <p><b>Mr. Ramon San Vicente, Ms. Alison Gaymes San Vicente &amp; Ms. Kim Pividor</b> Toronto District School Board, Waterloo Region District School Board, Ontario, Canada <i>Toward School Improvement for Liberation</i></p> <p><b>Mrs. Samia Javed</b> University of Western Ontario, Canada <i>The Designated Early Childhood Educator (DECE) Glass Ceiling and its Impact on Full-Day Kindergarten (FDK): A Critical Inquiry</i></p> <p><b>Dr. Carrie Wright, Ms. Angel Caglin</b> Wilfrid Laurier University, Ontario, Canada; University of West Indies <i>Educator responses to equity dialogues</i></p> <p><b>Ms. Alice Romo, Prof Karen Robson</b> OISE University of Toronto, Ontario, Canada, McMaster University <i>Examining Inequity in Outcomes for Latin American Students in Toronto</i></p>
<p>1:00 – 1:40 pm</p>	<p><b>LUNCH</b></p> <p>7<sup>th</sup> Floor – Peace Lounge</p>	
<p><b>Session 3</b> 1:40 – 2:55pm</p>	<p><b>Session 3A</b></p> <p><b>Room</b> 7-105</p>	<p><b>Chair: Dr. Vidya Shah</b></p> <p><b>Presenters:</b></p> <p><b>Mr. Daniel Roldan</b> York University, Ontario, Canada <i>Beyond Empathy, Toward the Other: Ethical Leadership and Responsibility in Unjust Times</i></p> <p><b>Mr. Umar Qureshi</b> OISE, University of Toronto Ontario, Canada <i>Exploring School Principalship Competencies at High Need Elementary Schools in Ontario: A Qualitative Approach to an Equity Based Framework for Sustainable Student Support</i></p>



<p><b>Session 3</b> 1:40 – 2:55pm</p>	<p><b>Session 3B</b>  <b>Room</b> <b>7-162</b></p>	<p><b>Cynanie Sawyers-Haylett</b> <b>University of West Indies, Mona, Jamaica</b> <i>Learning to Lead Differently: Decolonising Leadership Practices for Effective Higher Education Institutions</i></p> <p><b>Prof. Zuhra Abawi, Dr. Natasha Burford</b> <b>York University; OISE, University of Toronto, Canada</b> <i>Who is the Ivory Tower for? Navigating the Academy at the Intersection(s) of Race, Gender and Mothering</i></p> <p><b>Chair: Alison Mitchell</b></p> <p><b>Presenters:</b></p> <p><b>Alison Mitchell, Prof Dennis A. Francis</b> <b>University of Glasgow School of Education, United Kingdom</b> <i>Troubling Leading Anti-Racism in Scottish Schools</i></p> <p><b>Mrs. Nicole Bustos</b> <b>Universidad Diego Portales, Chile</b> <i>Resistant but improving: a case study about teachers' and principals' professional agency against standardization and accountability</i></p> <p><b>Dr. Salima Ibrahim-Khan</b> <b>OISE, University of Toronto, Ontario, Canada</b> <i>Transformative Peace Leadership: Gandhian Perspectives Towards Education for Peace</i></p> <p><b>Dr. Toby Jenkins</b> <b>University of South Carolina, United States</b> <i>Rethinking Mindsets: Mining Counter Cultures for Mindsets of Bold &amp; Creative Leadership</i></p>
<p><b>Session 4</b> 3:00 – 4:15 pm</p>	<p><b>Session 4A</b>  <b>Room</b> <b>7-105</b></p>	<p><b>Chair: Dr. Dionisio Nyaga</b></p> <p><b>Presenters:</b></p> <p><b>Frankie Antone, Lluvia Lozano, Sydney Fremont</b> <b>Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres, Ontario, Canada</b> <i>Every Child Matters: Fostering Culture-Based Approaches within Childhood Learning Spaces across Urban Indigenous Communities</i></p> <p><b>Dr. Rose Torres</b> <b>Shingwauk Kinooomaage Gamig, Center of Excellence in Anishinaabe Education, Ontario, Canada</b> <i>The Interface Between Mothering and Academic Leadership: Reframing Power Through Care</i></p> <p><b>Mr. Daisuke Kimura</b> <b>Tohoku University, Japan</b></p>



<p><b>Session 4</b></p> <p><b>3:00 –</b> <b>4:15 pm</b></p>	<p><b>Session 4B</b></p> <p><b>Room</b></p> <p><b>7-162</b></p>	<p><i>Building Cultures of Sustainability and Inclusion through Global Citizenship Education: Leadership Insights from Japanese Schools</i></p> <p><b>Dr. Camille Logan</b> <b>Former Associate Director, Peel Regions District School Board, Ontario, Canada</b> <i>The Perils of Leading While Black and Female: Confronting the “Triple Bind” in Educational Leadership</i></p> <p><b>Chair: Lawrence DeMaeyer</b></p> <p><b>Presenters:</b></p> <p><b>Dr. Janelle Joseph</b> <b>Brock University, Ontario, Canada</b> <i>Embodied &amp; Relational: Decolonizing Educational Leadership for the Next Generation</i></p> <p><b>Ms. Valeriya Roshka, Prof Pratim Sengupta</b> <b>University of Calgary, Alberta, Canada</b> <i>Dis/Orienting University Leadership by Centring Complex Intersectionalities in Student Activism and Protests</i></p> <p><b>Mr. Alfred Adu-Bobi</b> <b>Western University, Ontario, Canada</b> <i>Principals’ Experiences of their Well-being Amid School Violence in Ontario</i></p> <p><b>Dr. Ardavan Eizadirad, Dr. Crystena Parker-Shandal</b> <b>Wilfrid Laurier University, University of Waterloo, Ontario, Canada</b> <i>Restorative Justice in Preservice Teacher Education in Canada: A Tool to Facilitate Healing and Actively Help End Violence</i></p>
<p><b>Session 5</b></p> <p><b>4:20 –</b> <b>5:35 pm</b></p>	<p><b>Session 5A</b></p> <p><b>Room</b></p> <p><b>7-105</b></p>	<p><b>Chairs: Dr. Rose Torres</b></p> <p><b>Presenters:</b></p> <p><b>Ms. Alice Romo</b> <b>OISE University of Toronto, Ontario, Canada</b> <i>School Safety for Whom? School Discipline and Effects of Policing Youth in Schools</i></p> <p><b>Dr. Dionisio Nyaga</b> <b>Algoma University, Ontario, Canada</b> <i>Incalculable life, dreams and the futures of care in social work teaching and learning</i></p> <p><b>Stephen Francis</b> <b>OISE, University of Toronto, Ontario, Canada</b> <i>Examining Colonial Orientations Towards Power in Education Policies of Post-Colonial Caribbean States</i></p>



<p><b>Session 5</b></p> <p><b>4:20 –</b> <b>5:35 pm</b></p>	<p><b>Session 5B</b></p> <p><b>Room</b></p> <p><b>7-162</b></p>	<p><b>Dr. Ardavan Eizadirad</b> <b>Wilfrid Laurier University, Ontario, Canada</b> <i>Why Anti-Discriminatory Education Cannot Be Optional: A Global Call to Action for Educational Leadership and Praxis</i></p> <p><b>*Announcements by CLD Team</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>Chair: Dr. Said Sidani</b></p> <p><b>Presenters:</b></p> <p><b>Dr. Tamiru Jote Tulu</b> <b>Kotebe University of Education, Ethiopia</b> <i>Leading for Inclusion in a Low Income Country</i></p> <p><b>Prof. Nadia Abu-Zahra &amp; Dr. Kawkab Alwadeai</b> <b>University of Ottawa, Ontario, Canada</b> <i>Striving Toward Equity in Practice: The Voices in Exile Initiative</i></p> <p><b>Ms. Rashin Lamouchi &amp; Ms. Leah Brathwaite</b> <b>George Brown College, Ontario, Canada; YMCA of Greater Toronto, Ontario, Canada</b> <i>Sense of belonging as 'being at home': Narratives of forced migrant youth in Southeast Asia"</i></p> <p><b>Dr. Ann Marie Luce</b> <i>Inclusive Leadership Beyond the Gender Binary</i></p> <p><b>*Announcements by CLD Team</b></p>
<p><b>6:00 – 8:00pm</b></p>	<p><b>Nexus</b></p> <p><b>Lounge</b></p>	<p><b>Celebration &amp; Conference Reception</b></p> <p><b>Introduction by Prof Ann Lopez</b> <b>Director, Centre for Leadership and Diversity</b> <b>OISE, University of Toronto</b></p>



**DAY 2: Saturday, October 18, 2025**

(All times are Eastern Standard Time)

**ABSTRACTS FOR PAPERS ARE AT THE END OF THE PROGRAM**

8:30am	<b>REGISTRATION</b> 6 <sup>th</sup> Floor Lobby	
9:00 – 9:15 am	<b>Room</b>  7-162	<b>LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT</b>  Lawrence DeMaeyer, Centre for Leadership and Diversity Graduate Assistant OISE, University of Toronto  <b>WELCOME</b>  Prof Ann Lopez, Director, Centre for Leadership and Diversity OISE, University of Toronto  <b>CONFERENCE LOGISTICS</b>  Seo Young Lee, Centre for Leadership and Diversity Graduate Assistant OISE, University of Toronto
9:20 – 10:35 am (Session 6)	<b>Session</b> 6  <b>Room</b>  7-162	<b>Chair: Stephen Francis</b>  <b>Presenters:</b>  <b>Prof. Zuhra Abawi &amp; Prof. Nidhi Menon</b> York University, Ontario, Canada; University of New Brunswick, New Brunswick, Canada <i>Visibilizing the Invisible: Pathways and Possibilities for Pre-Service Education from Refugee Backgrounds</i>  <b>Ms. Parisa Azari</b> University of Ottawa, Ontario, Canada <i>From Displacement to Diploma: The Role of World University Service of Canada (WUSC) in Advancing the Right to Higher Education</i>  <b>Ms. Justina Addai</b> Legon Centre For Education Policy Research, University of Ghana, Ghana <i>'My daughter wore pads only during the day to school and used piece of cloth at night' - The impact of sanitary pad accessibility on adolescent girls educational outcomes in Northern Ghana)</i>  <b>Ms. Heather Lillie Taylor</b> University of Glasgow, United Kingdom <i>Active Youth Participation within Community Decision Making in the North-West End of Glasgow: Understanding the Views of Participants</i>

<p><b>10:40 – 11:55 am (Session 7)</b></p>	<p><b>Session 7A</b></p>	<p><b>Chair: Dr. Zuhra Abawi</b></p> <p><b>Presenters:</b></p> <p><b>Dr. Raphael Camargo Pentead</b> <b>Universidade São Judas Tadeu, Brazil</b> <i>Demystifying Meritocracy in Education: An Ideological Critique for Equitable Leadership</i></p> <p><b>Mr. Nana K. Adu-Poku</b> <b>York University, Canada</b> <i>Paving the Way: A Black Male Scholars' Critical Auto-Ethnographic Account</i></p> <p><b>Prof. Asad Choudhary</b> <b>University of Western, Ontario, Canada</b> <i>Leading with Faith: Understanding the Work of Islamic School Principals in Ontario</i></p> <p><b>Sharon Kang</b> <b>McMaster University, Ontario, Canada</b> <i>Student Organizing, Leadership and Care Work as Resistance</i></p>
	<p><b>Session 7B</b></p>	<p><b>Chair: Alison Mitchell</b></p> <p><b>Presenters:</b></p> <p><b>Alecia Andrene Damaris Gonzales-Morgan, Denise Camille Dennis</b> <b>Shortwood Teachers' College, Jamaica; College of Agriculture Science and Education, Jamaica</b> <i>Uncovering the Hidden Curriculum: English Language Ideologies Among Preservice Teachers in Two Jamaican Teachers' Colleges</i></p> <p><b>Shella Zagada</b> <b>OISE, University of Toronto, Ontario, Canada</b> <i>Kapwa-informed Antiracist Leadership Praxis among Filipino Leaders in Social Service Organizations</i></p> <p><b>Paula Sharlene Barrett, Alicia Andrene Dameris Gonzales-Morgan &amp; Marsha-Kaye Jones</b> <b>Shortwood Teachers' College, Jamaica</b> <i>The COVID-19 Pandemic and Digital Equity: A Study of Rural–Urban Primary School Access to Digital Learning in Jamaica</i></p> <p><b>Prof Ghofran Alyass</b> <b>George Brown College, Ontario, Canada</b> <i>Including University Student Perspectives on Meaningful Access and Reasonable Accommodation</i></p>



<p><b>12:00 – 1:15 pm (Session 8)</b></p>	<p><b>Session 8A</b></p> <p><b>Room 7-105</b></p>	<p><b>Chair: Prof Asad Choudhary</b></p> <p><b>Presenters:</b></p> <p><b>Dr. Tanya Lewis &amp; Ms. Sree Nallamotheu</b> <b>Bureau Kensington, Toronto Neighbourhood Centres, Ontario, Canada</b> <i>Sustaining Social Justice Work in Uncertain Times: A Systems Psychodynamic Approaches: A Systems Psychodynamic Approach</i></p> <p><b>Dr. Zuhra Abawi</b> <b>York University, Ontario, Canada</b> <i>Western Imperialism and Education: Mapping Afghan Women and Girls Resistance</i></p> <p><b>Ms. Zenah Hussun &amp; Ms. Sumeeya Farah</b> <b>OISE, University of Toronto, Ontario, Canada</b> <i>From the Margins to the Center: Reimagining Education as a Form of Resistance through the Creation of Third Spaces</i></p> <p><b>Mr. Eric Keunne</b> <b>York University, Ontario, Canada</b> <i>Centering Internationally Educated Teachers in the Renewal of Ontario’s Francophone Education System</i></p>
	<p><b>Session 8B</b></p> <p><b>Room 7-162</b></p>	<p><b>Chair: Ifat Razzaque</b></p> <p><b>Presenters:</b></p> <p><b>Melissa Enmore</b> <b>ME-Consulting Inc., Canada</b> <i>The Emotionally Intelligent Leader - Mental Health and Leadership</i></p> <p><b>Shahtaj S. Dheda &amp; Dr. Debra A. Bercovici</b> <b>University of Toronto Scarborough, Ontario, Canada</b> <i>Investigating the Effect of Political Value Discrepancy on the Student-Institution Relationship; A Study of Student Activists at the University of Toronto</i></p> <p><b>Dr. Gonzaga Robert Mukasa &amp; Chikee Ifeoma Christiana</b> <b>Texas Tech University, United States</b> <i>Before the Blackboard: Reclaiming Indigenous Wisdom and Curriculum Futures in the Global South</i></p>
<p><b>1:15 – 1:45 pm</b></p>	<p><b>Room 7-162</b></p>	<p><b>CLOSING REMARKS</b> Dr. Ann Lopez Director, Centre for Leadership and Diversity OISE, University of Toronto</p>



## THANKS

This Conference would not have been possible without the commitment and the collaborative efforts of University of Toronto Graduates & Graduate Students

### CLD Conference Planning Team

Yvonne Chan, Coordinator  
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Seo Young Lee  
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### CLD Core Team and Volunteers

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Dareen Fatimah  
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University of West Indies, Mona



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Educational Leadership and Policy Program, OISE, University of Toronto

Ifat Razzaque

Educational Leadership and Policy Program, OISE, University of Toronto

Parsa Shahid

Educational Leadership and Policy Program, OISE, University of Toronto

Dr. Said Sidani

University of Toronto Mississauga



## ABSTRACTS

**Zuhra Abawi**  
York University

### ***Western Imperialism and Education: Mapping Afghan Women and Girls Resistance***

In August 2021 images of black turbaned Taliban saturated Western television screens as the U.S. scrambled to flee Afghanistan following two decades of occupation. The Taliban enacted several laws and policies that sought the complete and total erasure of Afghan women and girls from public life: most notably outlawing education at the secondary level and beyond. As such, Afghanistan is the only nation worldwide with a blanket gender ban on education. Much of the Western media depictions of Muslim Afghan women, girls, and women of the Global South in general are fraught with orientalist and reductionary constructions (Osman & Zeweri, 2021). However, Afghan women and girls have been instrumental to social and political activism throughout the country's history. Western colonial narratives of human rights and education have worked tirelessly to sustain ongoing military imperialism in the region; particularly in relation to discourses of women's rights through the Western gaze. The American invasion of Afghanistan was widely justified by the Western moral imperative to liberate and save passive and oppressed Afghan women from the menacing men of their society; including educational initiatives which saw Afghanistan become one of the largest international aid recipients of education interventions during occupation (Abdifateh, 2008). What is often ignored by these narratives is that the Taliban itself is a byproduct of Western military imperialism with its origins in the Afghan Soviet war (Ahmad, Coll, 2004; Rashid, 2010). Throughout the over four decades of conflict in Afghanistan, women and girls have collectively mobilized and advocated for their own education through clandestine educational networks, often risking their lives. These lived experiences of activism for education sit in stark contrast to the white feminist objectification of Afghan women as passive, helpless and oppressed (Blinded, 2022; Amin & Alizada, 2020; Haqpana & Tsouroufli, 2023; Jamal, 2014). In this paper, I seek to map out Afghan women and girls' stories and counter-stories of resistance by drawing on Mignolo's (2007) conception of 'epistemic decolonization' which seeks a re-centering from Western epistemic orientations and knowledge production. The paper aligns with the conference theme 'Education in a Global Context of Challenge and Change'.

**Zuhra Abawi**  
York University  
**Natasha Burford**  
OISE, University of Toronto

### ***Who is the Ivory Tower for? Navigating the Academy at the Intersection(s) of Race, Gender and Mothering***

#### Purpose of the Study

While post-secondary institutions are increasingly diverse, Black, racialized and Indigenous faculty; particularly women, remain grossly underrepresented (Blinded et al, 2019; CAUT, 2018; Henry, et al, 2016; Henry & Tator, 2012; Oleschuk, 2020; Wijesingha & Ramos, 2017). Despite institutional commitments to diversity, equity, and inclusion, limited progress has been made in diversifying the professoriate in Canada. Indeed, Canadian universities continue to be overwhelmingly white and male (Henry, 2016). Despite steep racialized and gender gaps in faculty representation, there is limited extant literature pertaining to the intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989) of racialized women faculty and mothering, and how identities of gender, race, and motherhood impact racialized women's experiences and academic careers. This paper looks at the unique barriers, sites of resistance and possibilities of racialized mother scholars in academia to carve out space for alternate epistemologies to counter the dominance of white, male hegemony in Canadian universities.

### Methods

The paper employs a duo-ethnographic approach to conceptualize the experiences of two racialized mother-scholars (Matias, 2011) in Ontario, Canada as they navigate their spaces of mothering and academic duties within the unwelcoming terrain of post-secondary education that demands conformity to whiteness.

By employing both Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Motherwork theoretical frameworks, we attempt to challenge and dismantle the dominance of white, masculine, Eurocentric ontologies and epistemologies that not only push out racialized women faculty, but also racialized women faculty who are also mothers.

### Data

We employ a duo-ethnographic methodology (hooks, 1991; Lund et al, 2017; Sawyer & Norris, 2013) as an emancipatory (Blinded & Blinded, 2022) approach in engaging in dialogue between two self-identified racialized, scholar-mothers working in academia. The authors, in conversation with one another, reflect on their lived experiences, epistemic orientations and positionalities; and how these facets of their identities frame their navigation of academia. We draw on scholar George Dei who articulates the purpose of inclusion; which he states does not involve “bringing people into what already exists; it is making a new space, a better space for everyone” (p. 36). The dialogue between the two authors operates as an intentional carving out of space to re-think and re- imagine the inclusion of racialized, mother academics.

### Results

Full participation in academia by racialized Motherscholars continues to be an ongoing challenge in Canada. Institutional increases in awareness of equity, diversity and inclusion followed the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota in 2020; with widespread commitments to embed practices that would enable the full inclusion of minoritized populations in traditionally white spaces such as academia. Our experiences align with racialized women faculty overall; notably: the expectation to take on increased mentorship and service activities, issues of perceived competence as well as hostility and microaggressions.

### Significance

The study exposes gaps in policy-making and institutional commitments to equity, diversity and inclusion that fail to consider the gendered and, in this case, racialized identities of motherhood in terms of considering who academia is for. Overall, the paper speaks to the salience of racism and sexism in academia; and the challenges, microaggressions and discrimination racialized Motherscholars encounter, often leading to burn out, dissatisfaction and institutional pushout. The paper encourages questions of working conditions for racialized faculty members overall, and trends of inequities stemming from the overreliance of precarious faculty, which is often gendered and racialized; to limited institutional supports; and low levels of tenure and promotion. This work is a starting point to rethink how academia is structured and who it benefits and at what cost.

**Zuhra Abawi**  
**York University**  
**Nidhi Menon**

**University of New Brunswick**

### ***Visibilizing the Invisible: Pathways and Possibilities for Pre-Service Education from Refugee Backgrounds***

This paper explores the complex roots of violence that contribute to systemic inequities, opportunity gaps, historical and intergenerational trauma, and social exclusion experienced by pre-service and in-service educators from refugee backgrounds in Ontario. Between 2015 and 2023, Canada resettled approximately 218,430 refugees (Statistics Canada, 2022) more than any other country in the OECD, with the majority settling in Ontario. Despite Canada’s global reputation as a nation that welcomes refugees, upholds multiculturalism, and champions human rights, the lived realities of refugees remain shaped by settler-colonial logics of citizenship and belonging (Menon, 2024). State mechanisms rooted in colonial ideologies continue to uphold whiteness and empire, often weaponizing human rights discourse to regulate, contain, and exclude refugees from the Global South (Eizadirad, Abawi, & Campbell, 2023). Within this socio-political climate, marked by rising xenophobia, racial apathy, and right-wing nationalism, the educational trajectories of teachers from refugee backgrounds are shaped by systemic barriers, precarity, and a lack of institutional support. As Ontario’s demographics continue to shift, the teacher workforce remains misaligned with the racial, cultural, and linguistic diversity of the students, families, and communities they serve (Abawi, 2021; Abawi & Eizadirad, 2020; Ryan et al 2009; Turner, 2015). Grounded in trauma-informed, culturally relevant, and community-based approaches, this work underscores the necessity of addressing the root causes of violence against refugee educators. By making visible the experiences of pre-service and in-service teachers from refugee backgrounds, we challenge prevailing discourses that frame them as outsiders or anomalies rather than as integral contributors to the education system.

This conceptual paper argues for the visibility and inclusion of pre-service and in-service teachers of refugee backgrounds in Ontario by examining how their histories, identities, and aspirations are simultaneously erased and contested within teacher education programs and school systems. We theorize that their exclusion from these spaces constitutes a form of epistemic and systemic violence—one that perpetuates educational inequities while reinforcing dominant power structures. In critically analyzing the challenges faced by refugee educators, this paper also offers solutions for fostering safety and well-being within this community and explores strategies to mitigate these challenges to create thriving communities.

**Nadia Abu-Zahra & Kawkab Alwadeai**  
University of Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

***Striving Toward Equity in Practice: The Voices in Exile Initiative***

In the face of growing global hostility toward equity and justice efforts, the Voices in Exile (ViE) initiative provides a compelling framework for leadership, resistance, and renewal. This research-based initiative – from its beginnings in 2018 in a Canadian university to the present – highlights Activists-in-Exile (AiEs), individuals who are forced to leave their countries due to their political and social justice commitments, and who continue to work as transnational agents of change. By challenging marginalization and broadening equity frameworks, ViE provides a timely model for educators, policymakers, and researchers aiming to sustain justice work through relational leadership, critical inquiry, and solidarity across differences in an era of backlash and precarity. ViE incorporates relationship-based action research, collaborative needs assessments, digital storytelling, and network-building strategies. Preliminary findings indicate that AiEs promote equity through diasporic leadership, ongoing community engagement, and transnational advocacy, thereby connecting diverse places and institutions, pushing back against exclusionary state narratives, and shaping policy and public awareness across various contexts.

**Justina Addai**

Legon Centre For Education Policy Research, University of Ghana, Ghana

***'My daughter wore pads only during the day to school and used piece of cloth at night': The Impact of Sanitary Pad Accessibility on Adolescent Girls Educational Outcomes in Northern Ghana***

Ghana is making progress in improving girls' education by making efforts to remove barriers that affect girls' enrolment and completion, yet a major factor affecting girls is access to menstrual hygiene products. As part of a bursary program offered by Ghana Education Service in partnership with UNICEF, 1,000 girls from Northern Ghana received school items, which included sanitary pads starting from Junior High School (JHS 1) till they transitioned to Senior High School (SHS 1). Adopting the phenomenological approach, we traced the 1,000 beneficiaries to examine the usefulness of the sanitary pads in improving educational outcomes. Beneficiaries and their parents were involved in the study using qualitative approaches such as focus group discussions and in-depth interviews. The results showed that 97.8% of the beneficiary girls identified sanitary pad as the most important item among other items received. The sanitary pad has been shown to enhance school attendance among low-income girls who struggle to afford menstrual products. Girls use coping mechanisms like using sanitary pads during the day and cloths at night to maintain attendance during menstrual periods before receiving a bursary package. There is a need for a social intervention of sanitary products among other interventions in schools, targeting districts where educational attainment for girls is relatively low.

**Alfred Adu-Bobi**

Western University, Ontario, Canada

***Principals' Experiences of Their Well-being Amid School Violence in Ontario***

**Introduction and Purpose.** School violence has become a critical issue in Ontario public schools. Statistics show that 83% of Ontario public school principals have witnessed violence or threats of violence against a teacher or student in their schools (Abacus Data, 2024). Although several researchers have examined the scope, patterns, and impacts of violence on students and teachers, little is known about these dynamics on school principals. The purpose of this study is to explore the well-being of principals as they encounter instances of violence directed at them. Therefore, this paper seeks to answer the main research question: What is the influence of violence on the well-being of principals?

**Literature Review.** The core concepts in this paper are violence and well-being. Violence in this case refers to acts, incidents, and behaviors that individuals or groups perpetrate against others at any time in person, in school or online (Crawford & Burns, 2015; 2016; National Association of School Psychologists, 2015). Violence can include microaggression, physical

attacks/fights, harassment, verbal threats, threats and attacks with or without a weapon, and cyberbullying. Well-being refers to when an individual achieves job satisfaction, work-life balance, and a sense of purpose in their work (Appleby, 2016; Global Wellness Institute, 2018; World Health Organization, 2001). It encompasses occupational, physical, emotional, social, cognitive, psychological, and spiritual well-being of principals.

**Methods.** This study adopts an interpretive qualitative approach to better understand the perspectives and experiences of principals as they experience violent incidents in schools.

**Data Sources.** This study collects data through semi-structured interviews with a purposive sample of public secondary school principals in Ontario. Data analysis follows Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis.

**Conclusion.** Violence against principals can affect their mental health, well-being, safety, and ability to lead their schools effectively. Addressing violence is crucial to enhancing the safety and well-being of school principals.

**Significance.** This study will add to the literature examining the nexus between school violence and principals' well-being. It can also help policymakers review school safety policies and design coping strategies to help principals enhance their well-being.

**Nana K. Adu-Poku**

York University, Ontario, Canada

***Paving the Way: A Black Male Scholars' Critical Auto-Ethnographic Account***

This chapter utilizes critical auto-ethnographic storytelling (Bundy et al., 2023; Goings, 2015) to capture my lived experiences growing up in an underserved community and becoming a Black male educator, critical scholar and community leader who aims to disrupt oppressive practices and spaces within the education system. As a doctoral candidate in the Faculty of Education at York University in Toronto, Canada, my research aims to contribute to critically conscious pedagogy (Freire, 1970; hooks, 1994) to build stronger relationships between Black parents, Black students, and school systems, ultimately cultivating the next generation of Black educators and leaders. This self-reflexive essay employs critical auto-ethnography to move beyond a race-neutral approach to analyzing my experiences as a Black doctoral student in Canada's supposedly multicultural urban center. I examine how my graduate school, in combination with my experience outside of the academy, has enabled me to work toward becoming a critical scholar, educator, and community leader who aims to dismantle white supremacy in the Ontario schooling system.

**Ghofran Alyass**

George Brown College, Ontario, Canada

***Including University Student Perspectives on Meaningful Access and Reasonable Accommodation***

The perspectives of students with disabilities are not included in educational policies that are meant to protect their rights to education. This is evident at all levels of education but particularly in post-secondary education. In an attempt to change that reality a masters study entitled "Including University Student Perspectives on Meaningful Access and Reasonable Accommodation" this study which will be outlined in this presentation outlined the perspectives of eight disabled post-secondary students who provided their perspectives on what it means to have meaningful access and reasonable accommodations. This study which will be used in this presentation has shown what happens when students with disabilities are given the opportunity to share their perspectives on the accommodation processes that take place within Canadian post-secondary institutions. A key question in this study was how do students perceive meaningful access and reasonable accommodation and what do their perceptions reveal about the doing of policy?

**Frankie Antone, Lluvia Lozano & Sydney Fremont**

Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres, Ontario, Canada

***Every Child Matters: Fostering Culture-Based Approaches Within Childhood Learning Spaces Across Urban Indigenous Communities***

This community-driven research project aims to strengthen culture-based child-rearing and educational approaches that emphasize identity, belonging, and well-being in the lives of Indigenous children. Grounded in decades of advocacy for Indigenous self-determination in early learning, this initiative is led by the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC), which represents 31 Friendship Centres across Ontario. Since the 1970s, Friendship Centres have offered Indigenous-led child care rooted in cultural identity, relational learning, and community wellness, serving as vital hubs for urban Indigenous families. Through the Community of Practice model, participating Friendship Centres across Ontario and Québec—alongside other urban Indigenous education partners—meet regularly to share progress updates on their culture-based education initiatives, exchange best practices, and deepen their own understandings of culturally informed child-rearing by

being in community with other leaders in urban Indigenous education. This panel presents data from the Community of Practice Gathering held in May 2025 in Gatineau and Maniwaki, QC, where urban Indigenous partners came together for two days of knowledge sharing, research creation, and land-based learning. Participants—ranging in age from toddlers to Elders—engaged in intergenerational learning and relationship-building grounded in community connection. All research partners identified language learning as the cornerstone of culturally relevant early childhood education and emphasized the importance of uplifting language speakers as leaders within Friendship Centres and other educational spaces. Together, they articulated a vision of high-quality early learning in an urban Indigenous context and explored how Indigenous-led education can rewrite colonial notions of schooling—those left as a painful legacy by Indian Residential Schools, Indian Day Schools, and the ongoing child welfare system. The findings from this research also serve as a powerful advocacy tool as Friendship Centres in Ontario seek to become administrators of Indigenous child care, transitioning away from current municipal oversight. The demonstrated success of culturally informed early childhood education in urban Indigenous communities positions Friendship Centres as the most appropriate and trusted home for Indigenous-led child care, and for nurturing a generation of Indigenous children who will not know disconnection from their cultures.

**Parisa Azari**

**University of Ottawa, Ontario, Canada**

***From Displacement to Diploma: The Role of World University Service of Canada (WUSC) in Advancing the Right to Higher Education***

Despite the recognition of education as a fundamental human right under international law, access to higher education remains a critical challenge for many refugees. According to UNHCR statistics, only 7% of refugees have access to higher education compared to the global average of 40% for non-refugees. For refugees, higher education is not only a matter of human right but also a key to accessing other human rights such as right to work, health, and full participation in society. Following the adoption of the New York Declaration and Global Compacts, higher education has been recognized as an important complementary pathway for refugee protection.

In Canada, since 1978, the World University Service of Canada (WUSC) has implemented the Student Refugee Program (SRP) as a protection pathway for refugee youth. Through establishing local committees at Canadian post-secondary institutions, WUSC combines resettlement with access to higher education. Due to limited academic research and empirical data on the SRP, this research focuses on the role of these local committees and how their peer-to-peer support model addresses major barriers of access to higher education for refugees such as language learning, documentation, and financial constraints.

The findings highlight that WUSC's SRP aligns with international commitments to increase resettlement opportunities as a durable solution, improve refugees' quality of life, and support the goals of sustainable development. The program enhances not only individual academic success but also broader social inclusion and the empowerment of refugee communities. By providing financial aid, academic support, and community-building networks, WUSC helps refugees integrate into Canadian society and develop skills essential for rebuilding their lives. Furthermore, the study emphasizes the importance of institutional partnerships and advocacy efforts in addressing structural barriers to education access for refugees.

**Paula Sharlene Barrett, Alicia Andrene Dameris Gonzales-Morgan & Marsha-Kaye Jones**

**Shortwood Teachers' College**

***The COVID-19 Pandemic and Digital Equity: A Study of Rural–Urban Primary School Access to Digital Learning in Jamaica***

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted education systems worldwide, exposing and reshaping existing inequalities in digital learning access. In Jamaica, significant socioeconomic and infrastructural disparities between rural and urban areas intensified concerns about digital equity in primary education during the sudden shift to online learning. This study examines how the pandemic affected access to digital learning resources in rural and urban primary schools, focusing on whether the crisis narrowed or widened the digital divide.

Employing a mixed-methods approach, the research combines statistical data on device distribution, internet access, and school readiness from the Ministry of Education with qualitative insights from interviews and focus groups with educators, students, and parents in both rural and urban settings. This design aims to capture both measurable impacts of digital initiatives and the lived experiences of those adapting to remote learning during the pandemic.

Findings reveal that urban schools initially had greater digital infrastructure access, but government interventions—such as device distribution and community Wi-Fi hubs—helped somewhat level the field. Nonetheless, rural areas faced ongoing challenges like unreliable internet, limited teacher training, and economic constraints, which hindered equitable learning experiences. Notably, some rural schools increased digital engagement through community-driven efforts and creative use of low-tech solutions such as WhatsApp and printed materials.

The study concludes that while the pandemic highlighted digital inequities, it also sparked new strategies and collaborations to bridge the divide. Yet, these gains remain fragile, requiring sustained investment and supportive policies to secure long-term digital inclusion in education. This research is significant because it deepens understanding of how crisis-driven responses can both reveal and reshape digital equity, especially in resource-limited contexts. Its evidence and recommendations offer valuable guidance for policymakers and educators aiming to build a more inclusive and resilient post-pandemic education system in Jamaica.

**Nicole Bustos**

**Universidad Diego Portales, Chile**

***Resistant But Improving: A Case Study About Teachers' and Principals' Professional Agency Against Standardization and Accountability***

Professional agency is indispensable for school improvement, but little is known about how to achieve it (Zumpe, 2024). Defined as a temporal capacity to implement professional decisions based on past experiences, oriented to future goals and considering the current context (Priestley et al., 2015), the purpose of this study was to understand the teachers' and principals' professional agency for school improvement in a school that has been improving for almost a decade in national standardized tests.

A Chilean private-subsidized improving school was selected because of its sustained increase in school effect and standardized national tests, in order to perform a case study. The Chilean educational policies are based on a new public management model (Bellei & Muñoz, 2023), characterized by a voucher-based financial system dependent on students' attendance, a mandatory national curriculum, and the possibility to obtain additional funds if schools subscribe to specific agreements to support special educational needs and poorest students teaching. In this case, schools must provide exhaustive evidence of the use of resources and increases in their educational outcomes.

A qualitative case study (Stake, 2013) was conducted, performing individual long interviews (McCracken, 1988) with two mathematics teachers and the school principal. The interviews were thematically analyzed following a mix of data-driven and theory-driven codes (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

Despite the low enrolment and, as a result, the low funds to operate the school, these teachers and the principal opted to reject increasing resources through additional agreements to keep the school as far away as possible from accountability and standardization policies, even changing the mandatory learning goals contained in the national curriculum. According to Jenkins (2020), this is a resistant agency against the educational policies, which are viewed as risky, but, paradoxically, this resistance allowed the school to achieve the educational outcomes expected by policies, due to the possibility of implementing a student-centred education.

This study moves the school improvement field beyond the traditional organizational factors identified as key for improvement, also developed in this school, connecting them with the wider context of educational policies and the individual critical thinking that professionals use in their daily practice.

**Asad Choudhary**

**University of Western Ontario, Canada**

***Leading with Faith: Understanding the Work of Islamic School Principals in Ontario***

In the context of growing Islamophobia, increased scrutiny of faith-based education, and intensified school leadership demands, this study explores the multifaceted work of Islamic school principals in Ontario. As Islamic schools experience unprecedented growth across the province, the need to understand how their leaders navigate complex sociopolitical terrains has become urgent. This qualitative research examines how Islamic school principals define, experience, and sustain their work amid external pressures and community expectations. Grounded in Faruqi's Theory of a Tawhidic Worldview and Zine's Critical Faith-Based Epistemology, and informed by Lee's framework on principal time use, this study draws on semi-structured interviews with current principals across Ontario. The data reveal that their work extends beyond conventional leadership models to include spiritual stewardship, faith-based resistance to secular norms, and holistic community engagement. Findings show that these leaders face unique challenges—such as limited resources, Islamophobic discourse, and identity-based tensions—yet remain motivated by religious purpose and communal responsibility. By illuminating how Islamic school principals

enact leadership as both a spiritual and political act, this study contributes to broader conversations about educational justice, renewal, and resistance in faith-based schooling. The implications call for inclusive policy discourse, context-sensitive leadership preparation, and cross-sector collaboration to support educational equity in pluralistic societies.

**Shahtaj S. Dheda & Debra A. Bercovici**  
University of Toronto Scarborough

***Investigating the Effect of Political Value Discrepancy on the Student-Institution Relationship: A Study of Student Activists at the University of Toronto***

The student-institution (S-I) relationship refers to the reciprocal interactions between an academic institution and its student constituents. The conditional effect hypothesis (Kim & Sax, 2009) postulates that this relationship is contingent on the alignment of institutional efforts with student interests. While past literature has implicated sociodemographic characteristics (i.e., race, gender) in S-I interactions, little research has investigated whether this extends to political identity. Within higher education, this identity is prominent in student activist samples (Thomas, 2019), who may feel targeted by opposing institutional civic values. The current study investigates whether political misalignment is linked to subsequent institutional satisfaction and social identification within campus activists. To assess differences between personal and perceived institutional political values, a series of self-report surveys were completed by N = 65 students who currently attend the University of Toronto and provided self-identified endorsement of interest in social justice and/or activism. Students were additionally asked to respond to prompts about their personal experience on organizational satisfaction and social identification. In line with the conditional effect hypothesis, results show that student activists perceived their institution to hold significantly different political values than themselves ( $t = 5.75$ ,  $p = .006$ ) with perceived institutional values considered to be more conservative overall. Ideological misalignment was negatively correlated with evaluations of institutional performance ( $r = -.519$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Qualitative findings suggest that administrative responses against the 'UofT People's Circle for Palestine' protest encampment may drive negative appraisal of the institution. These data suggest a need to more directly investigate the impacts of the protest encampment on the S-I relationship.

**Ardavan Eizadirad**  
Wilfrid Laurier University, Ontario, Canada

***Why Anti-Discriminatory Education Cannot Be Optional: A Global Call to Action for Educational Leadership and Praxis***

This presentation draws from the newly published Handbook of Anti-Discriminatory Education (Eizadirad & Trifonas, 2025) consisting of 57 chapters from global educators which examines how education systems globally must adapt and resist in an era where anti-equity backlash and political attacks on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives are escalating. Grounded in the introductory chapter titled "Why Anti-Discriminatory Education Cannot Be Optional", the presentation explores Anti-Discriminatory Education (ADE) as a necessary and transformative tool that mitigates systemic inequities and facilitates positive life outcomes for all.

The purpose of the project is to map the evolving historical and theoretical landscape of ADE, while showcasing applied practices across sectors and age groups globally. Anchored in frameworks such as critical pedagogy (Freire), intersectionality (Crenshaw), culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris), transformative leadership (Shields), and decolonizing leadership (Lopez), the handbook gathers voices from educators, community leaders, and scholars to share counter-narratives, strategies, and site-specific efforts of resistance and renewal. The methodology involves a hybrid approach—synthesizing qualitative data from case studies and practitioner reflections across early childhood, K-12, and post-secondary settings in multiple countries. The resulting conclusions emphasize the urgency of collaborative leadership to sustain ADE amidst resistance, institutional inertia, and resource constraints.

Overall, this presentation will highlight how leadership in education must evolve as both critical praxis and activism. ADE is not about ideological conformity; rather, it is about equipping students and educators to interrogate power, dismantle structures of oppression, and foster inclusion in contextually responsive ways. The significance of this work lies in its global perspective—linking local actions with international frameworks such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)—and in its hopeful reimagining of what just and thriving school-community ecosystems can look like.

**Ardavan Eizadirad**

**Wilfrid Laurier University, Ontario, Canada**

**Crystena Parker-Shandal**

**University of Waterloo, Ontario, Canada**

***Restorative Justice in Preservice Teacher Education in Canada: A Tool to Facilitate Healing and Actively Help End Violence***

This article explores the strengths and challenges of integrating restorative justice pedagogies into preservice teacher education programs at two universities in southern Ontario, Canada. Such pedagogies can transform educational environments and curate conditions for peace in local schools and communities. Teaching for peace and conflict transformation promotes community building and offers a transformative approach to education that centres relationship building, shared accountability, and holistic understanding. Restorative justice in education also addresses issues of scholasticide, by advocating for trauma-informed, contextually relevant, and bottom-up community engagement and peacebuilding. Using a duoethnographic methodology and critical race theory, the study examines experiences of two professors of colour who taught restorative justice courses. Their students navigated the course material and built relationships with peers, while sometimes misinterpreting or resisting restorative justice's underlying ideologies. Larger implications for critical perspectives on healing from international violence are highlighted. Aligning with the conference theme of "Leadership for Renewal, Sustenance, and Resistance in Challenging Times" this work situates restorative justice pedagogies as an act of educational resistance and transformation. The current global attacks on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives and the rollback of progressive educational policies make it imperative to reaffirm leadership practices that challenge injustices and create inclusive, justice-oriented learning spaces for healing and thriving. This study highlights how restorative justice in education serves as a form of leadership praxis that not only mitigates harm but also actively disrupts dominant paradigms of punitive discipline, white normativity, and exclusion in schools. The article contributes to broader discourses on decolonizing educational leadership by demonstrating how restorative justice pedagogies reimagine power, relationships, and conflict resolution in schools. In doing so, it aligns with the subtheme of "Critical Approaches in Teaching and Educational Practices". It emphasizes that in the face of ongoing inequities, educational leaders must foster coalitions that sustain justice-centered approaches, cultivate peace, and resist the erasure of marginalized voices in teacher education and beyond. By presenting duoethnographic narratives, this study underscores the importance of counter-stories in shaping activist leadership and transformative pedagogy in an era of social and political upheaval.

**Ardavan Eizadirad**

**Wilfrid Laurier University, Ontario, Canada**

**Sabreena Ghaffar-Siddiqui**

***Clash of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion (EDI) and Anti-Woke-ism: Reclaiming and Re-Storying EDI for Thriving Communities***

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) has evolved from a grassroots movement for social justice into a bureaucratic framework often criticized for its performative nature. Initially driven by activism, EDI has been co-opted into a tool for institutional image management rather than a means for systemic change. This shift has fueled skepticism and backlash, particularly in the face of rising anti-woke sentiments that frame equity efforts as divisive. The current socio-political climate demands a reframing of EDI beyond tokenism and corporate compliance. The backlash against EDI, amplified by political figures and ideological opponents, has stalled critical progress and forced a re-evaluation of its effectiveness. Through examination of movements and case studies, we argue that the failure to move beyond superficial inclusion efforts has contributed to a perception of EDI as a zero-sum game, eroding public trust and reinforcing resistance to meaningful reform. To reclaim the original intent of EDI, we propose shifting the conversation toward community-centered frameworks that emphasize belonging, well-being, and long-term impact. Moving from symbolic representation to measurable data-driven change requires embedding equity into structural policies, leadership pathways, and resource distribution. Strategies must prioritize data-driven accountability, community-led solutions, and personal narratives that make equity work relatable and inclusive. This paper argues for a fundamental rethinking of EDI as a framework for thriving communities rather than a compliance-driven mechanism. By listening to concerns—including critiques of ineffective EDI practices—we can refine strategies that dismantle systemic barriers rather than reinforce them through performative measures. Ultimately, revitalizing EDI requires pragmatic, visionary approaches that balance systemic transformation with cultural and political realities. The time has come to move beyond performativity and reclaim equity work as a force for genuine social change. Through intentional action, accountability, and strategic innovation, we can shift from divisive discourse to a collective commitment to justice and inclusivity.

**Ardavan Eizadirad**  
**Wilfrid Laurier University**  
**Zuhra Abawi**  
**York University**  
**Andrew B. Campbell**  
**OISE, University of Toronto, Ontario, Canada**  
***Activist Leadership for Inclusive Schools: Canadian Perspectives***

In the face of increasing attacks on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) initiatives, activist leadership is more critical than ever in resisting systemic inequities in education. Leadership in Canadian schools is often framed through dominant, hegemonic lenses that marginalize alternative forms of leadership rooted in activism and community advocacy. This presentation interrogates these traditional paradigms by centering the voices and experiences of scholars, practitioners, and community activists working towards justice in education. Drawing from our recently co-edited book collection, *Activist Leadership for Inclusive Schools: Canadian Perspectives* (2025 with Canadian Scholars Press), this session explores how activist leadership serves as a site of resistance against policies that erode equity efforts, particularly in the face of neoliberal education reforms. This work challenges hegemonic constructions of educational leadership by showcasing how activist leaders confront systemic barriers in K-12 schools. While Canada is globally perceived as a leader in human rights, provincial education policies frequently undercut this image. For example, Ontario's repeal of the Equity Action Plan and Alberta's restrictions on 2SLGBTQIA+ rights highlight the ongoing struggles for inclusive education. These political shifts exemplify how educational spaces are weaponized to sustain dominant ideologies, making resistance through activist leadership imperative. Grounded in the works of critical scholars such as Carl James, Ann Lopez, and George Sefa Dei, this collection frames activist leadership as a praxis that transcends policy compliance. It highlights the efforts of educators who challenge colonial and white supremacist structures that dictate whose knowledge, histories, and identities are valued in schools. Using qualitative and narrative inquiry, this presentation weaves together counter-stories of activist leaders navigating and resisting systemic oppression. Through critical pedagogy and intersectional frameworks, it illustrates how leadership for justice requires challenging dominant epistemologies and norms and values affiliated with it. Activist leadership is inherently an act of resistance. By centering non-dominant counter-narratives, case studies, and perspectives, this work envisions educational leadership as a collective, community-driven effort towards justice, liberation, and sustenance. This session will engage participants in dialogue on reimagining leadership beyond hierarchical, exclusionary models, fostering new possibilities for thriving and inclusive school-community ecosystems.

**Melissa Enmore**  
**ME-Consulting Inc.**  
***The Emotionally Intelligent Leader - Mental Health and Leadership***

Good leadership is crucial, especially during tumultuous times. While there is both an art and a science to leadership, it is important for good leaders to have high levels of emotional intelligence. Contingent on good mental health, a high level of emotional intelligence in itself is an act of resistance. When leaders are intentional about prioritizing their mental health, and about developing and improving emotional intelligence, they become more effective leaders in the workplace. Specifically, emotionally intelligent leaders enhance their leadership abilities, by creating more positive and productive work environments.

**Cheryl Ernst**  
**University of Delaware, United States**  
***Beyond Grammar: English Language Programs Building Skills That Facilitate Soft Diplomacy***

In the United States, English language programs (ELPs) offer international students the academic and cultural foundations to practice global citizenship as cultural ambassadors during and after completion of their programs of study. The offerings and goals of ELPs inherently foster Soft Diplomacy, a term the author attributed a study abroad experience that defines and highlights the global impacts of such programs on students. While ELPs target students' personal growth through participation in cross-cultural activities and reflective learning, the diplomatic impact they offer is rarely marketed or acknowledged.

This presentation will offer a practitioner-oriented perspective on the role ELPs play in ensuring students' growth beyond English and enhancing their study-abroad experience by highlighting the skills ELPs provide. Vulnerability, a growth mindset, and navigating the comfort zones and growth zones lead to self-reflection, empathy, and appreciation for others. While these

skills may be introduced organically, directly teaching the role and value of each skill provides students the language to articulate their learning experience. Each of these skills are transferable outside of the classroom. They are not limited to language learning, rather they have value in a professional context, too.

When students learn how to talk about their own learning journey in a cross-cultural context, they appreciate and value their own language and culture in their identity and the experiences of others as well. When they return home, they are charged with being welcoming cultural ambassadors and appreciate what their guests are experiencing.

**Amal Farhat**

**Qatar University, Qatar**

***Analysis of First-Year Students of Their Learning Experiences***

This study was prompted by the high number of students who drop out in their first year of university. The first-year experience is often marked by challenges that impact student motivation, satisfaction, and, ultimately, academic success. This research was conducted at Qatar University with the goal of understanding how instructor-related factors, content-related elements, and student background characteristics influence the motivation to learn and satisfaction of first-year students with their educational experience. Using the Instructional Core framework (City et al., 2009) as a guiding lens, the study examined the dynamic relationship among instructors, students, and content. A total of 277 first-year undergraduate students took part in the study by completing a structured questionnaire. The data were analyzed using correlation tests and logistic regression to identify which factors had the most impact. The findings revealed that instructional effectiveness was the strongest predictor of both student satisfaction and motivation. Content quality and the alignment of tasks with that content were also important. There are 66.8% of students who reported positive experiences with the content they were taught, and 70.8% expressed satisfaction with the tasks and assignments, particularly in terms of their relevance and organization. On the other hand, student feedback emerged as an area that needs attention, as only 56% of students reported a positive experience in that regard. Demographic variables such as gender and nationality did not significantly influence the results. However, students from government schools and those who intended to pursue graduate studies showed higher levels of motivation. This research contributes to ongoing discussions about enhancing the first-year experience and underscores the importance of aligning content, teaching practices, and assessment, the idea rooted in the work of Tyler (1949), Biggs (2014), and Wiggins & McTighe (2005). The findings will help guide future faculty development efforts and support more effective and inclusive teaching practices for first-year students.

**Stephen Francis**

**OISE, University of Toronto, Ontario, Canada**

***Examining Colonial Orientations Towards Power in Education Policies of Post-Colonial Caribbean States***

Remnants of European colonialism (e.g., racism, classism, and sexism) continue to affect former colonies. One main way this is evident in Jamaica is in policies regulating student dress and grooming in Public Education Institutions (PEIs). Recently debates on the need for and efficacy of national standardised student dress and grooming policies suggest that a lack of adequate stakeholder engagement has resulted in a policy that valorises Eurocentric colonial standards and is applied in classist, and anti-Black racist ways. This study examines how stakeholder relationships contribute to social injustices arising from this policy. Semi-structured interviews with Jamaican education policymakers, and PEI administrators, and education policy researchers were analysed alongside the 2018 National Student Dress and Grooming Policy Guidelines. The findings suggest that inadequate stakeholder engagement and hierarchical relationships allow racist, sexist and classist views to persist in policy and thereby compromise social justice in the system.

**Jesse Genereux**

**McMaster University, Ontario, Canada**

***Cultivating the Non-Violent Other: Ethical Subjectification After Levinas***

This presentation centers the development of subjects fundamentally opposed to violence in all its forms. Educational leadership for social justice can target the antecedent of oppressive relationships causing contemporary backsliding by working to cultivate the ethical subjectivity described by Emmanuel Levinas.

I argue that Levinasian educational theory errs when it rejects subjectification as incompatible with the demand to welcome the Other. By re-reading Levinas's account of illeity, the third, and the "saying vs said," I show that responsibility for the Other necessarily extends to responsibility for the neighbour of my neighbour, thereby grounding a positive project of subject-formation aligned with social justice education and critical pedagogy. I articulate three pedagogical imperatives derived from my

re-reading of Levinas in education—interruption, suspension, and nourishment—that together cultivate a subjectivity predisposed to identify and resist structurally violent relations, such as contemporary colonialism and authoritarianism.

This presentation offers concrete conceptual vocabulary for designing anti-violent curricula and teacher education by renewing a Levinasian normative horizon for educational theory. In addition, concrete strategies are provided at multiple layers of abstraction to ground this presentation's themes. From precognitive subject-object relations embedded in the hidden curriculum of a Montessori preschool to managing political discussions in the classroom, the presentation situates the often-arcane discourse of Levinas scholarship in education as it exists in real relations.

Fundamentally, what is at stake is the capacity of education to generate beings capable of perceiving and understanding their ethical responsibilities who are also willing to sustain engagement in the world to solve problems and promote peace. Articulating epistemic and ontological violence as a concern in educational leadership lays groundwork for the future work of curriculum and pedagogy development.

**Alecia Andrene Damaris Gonzales-Morgan & Denise Camille Dennis**  
Shortwood Teachers' College

***Uncovering the Hidden Curriculum: English Language Ideologies Among Preservice Teachers in Two Jamaican Teachers' Colleges.***

This study, "Uncovering the Hidden Curriculum: English Language Ideologies Among Preservice Teachers in Two Jamaican Teachers' Colleges" critically explores the implicit ways in which language ideologies are transmitted and sustained within teacher preparation programmes. Grounded in postcolonial theory and the concept of the hidden curriculum, the research investigates how preservice teachers understand, negotiate, and internalize dominant norms surrounding Jamaican Creole and Standard English in educational settings.

The study examines the beliefs preservice teachers hold about language use, the influence of faculty expectations and peer interactions on those beliefs, and the extent to which teacher education programmes support or hinder efforts to decolonize language practices. A qualitative case study approach was employed, focusing on two teacher preparation colleges in Jamaica. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with twenty preservice teachers, focus group discussions, and classroom observations. In addition, course syllabi and institutional language policy documents were analyzed to contextualize language norms and expectations.

Findings indicate that while preservice teachers acknowledge the cultural significance of Jamaican Creole, Standard English is still widely perceived as the more appropriate and professional language for teaching and learning. These perceptions are shaped not only by explicit instruction but also by subtle messages embedded in institutional practices—highlighting the influential role of the hidden curriculum. Although some participants expressed a desire to implement more inclusive and affirming language practices, many felt unprepared or unsupported in doing so.

The study concludes that despite the inclusive values promoted by teacher education institutions, the hidden curriculum often reinforces colonial language hierarchies. These dynamics simultaneously reflect and contradict Jamaica's multilingual identity and national development goals, which call for the recognition and validation of local culture and language.

This research contributes to broader conversations about decolonization in Caribbean education. It calls for intentional integration of linguistic diversity and critical language awareness in teacher training and urges educators and policymakers to disrupt the hidden curriculum by affirming the legitimacy of Jamaican Creole in academic and pedagogical spaces.

**Nancy Hsiung**

OISE, University of Toronto Ontario, Canada

***Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI): Insights from 20 Secondary School Leaders from Across Ontario***

With the rise of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI), there has been limited research on this technology in the context of Ontario secondary school leadership. This study aims to fill this gap by utilizing a basic qualitative research design, where twenty secondary school leaders from various locations in Ontario engaged in semi-structured interviews. The data were analysed utilizing reflexive thematic analysis and e-leadership, pedagogical beliefs, and educational change as the conceptual framework. The GenAI technologies used and approved across Ontario secondary schools and parental and community perspectives were reported by school leaders. Overall, five themes emerged which Ontario secondary school leaders expressed a range of perspectives—both for and against the integration of GenAI—grounding their views in their professional responsibilities and the needs of their students. School leaders indicated several opportunities and challenges of integrating this technology, including varying equity perspectives and different supports in their schools and the system. School leaders

propose several recommendations regarding GenAI in Ontario secondary schools. Implications of this exploratory study are discussed.

**Zenah Hussun & Sumeya Farah**  
OISE, University of Toronto

***From the Margins to the Center: Reimagining Education as a Form of Resistance through the Creation of Third Spaces***

From Margins to Center is the beginning of a story that encompasses the reality of racialized youth within the City of Toronto. The education systems within Toronto have continuously presented gaps in the quality of education that Black and racialized students receive. This is a combined cause of the delivery of formal education and the characteristics of traditional education settings. As a result, it has become a passive environment that disengages students and erases the knowledge they carry, despite the intended purpose to promote growth and inspiration. The purpose of our work is to expand the idea of education as knowledge acquired outside of the conventional school systems and within community “third spaces”. Third Space has been used to describe in-between spaces that are likely to be invisible because they may not have a dedicated physical space associated with them (Whitchurch, 2013). Often these spaces operate within community centres, nonprofits, and spaces where learning is relational, liberating and grounded in lived experience.

We present education as a form of resistance, reclaiming knowledge as a shared, relational process between the learners, teachers and community. We use ourselves as a case study; two black, first-generation educators and learners, whose primary source of gaining knowledge emerges not only through institutions but from community, through the exchange of mentorship and mutual understanding. Building on our experiences, our analysis is informed by theories of epistemic violence and justice that allow us to situate our reflections within a broader political and structural critique of how knowledge is controlled and distributed in education (Fricker, 2007). Through this approach, we showcase how third spaces resist epistemic violence by allowing recipients of knowledge to become producers and co-creators of knowledge. We aim to showcase the journey towards learning and how the act of “knowing” in itself is an act of resistance for marginalized communities and how creating intentional spaces allows us to answer the question: Where is knowledge found, and who gets to share it? It is a fundamental question rooted in working towards epistemic justice to move those in the margins to the center of equity-driven learning environments.

**Salima Ibrahim-Khan**

OISE, University of Toronto, Ontario, Canada

***Transformative Peace Leadership: Gandhian Perspectives Towards Education for Peace***

My research explores a non-western alternative for transformative leadership. Through education for peace, critical pedagogy and a Gandhian philosophy of nonviolence known as ahimsa, this presents a unique lens of leadership practice. In this study, I used narrative inquiry to understand how Ali, an administrator of an elementary school enacted education for peace through Gandhian principles and unearthed nonviolent approaches to his leadership practice. Specifically, it explores nonviolent ways of moving leadership practice that integrates transformative leadership and notions of slow peace. The idea of slow peace emerged from Nixon’s work on slow violence, that grows gradually out of sight and dispersed across time and space (2011). Analysis of the data found that when 1) a Gandhian philosophy of ahimsa “to do no harm,” (1940, 1943, 2015), 2) Freire’s notions of critical pedagogy and transformative leadership (Freire, 1970, 2000 & Bennis 1986) and 3) Joshee et al. approaches of slow peace (2022), work together in a sustained and intentional practice, transformative change and agency can occur. Ali’s stories show that transformative change and agency can occur when these three elements of nonviolence work together in a sustained and intentional practice. Additionally, the stories from my study demonstrated that the involvement of the school community takes time through consistent and ongoing dialogue and hope for the goodness of humanity in students. In sharing these narratives, I hope to share valuable insight into a reimagined model of educational leadership that promotes peace and justice for all: transformative peace leadership.

**Samia Javed**

University of Western Ontario, Canada

***The Designated Early Childhood Educator (DECE) Glass Ceiling and its Impact on Full-Day Kindergarten (FDK): A Critical Inquiry***

This inquiry questions dominant equity discourses by examining the glass ceiling faced by Designated Early Childhood Educators (DECEs) within Ontario's X Public School Board (XPSB) Full-Day Kindergarten (FDK) program. Through critical analysis, it explores how inequitable leadership structures, evident in DECEs' limited access to professional growth, leadership development, decision-making, and career progression, impact children's holistic development, contribute to the 'schoolification' of the FDK program, reinforce hierarchical power dynamics, and perpetuate systemic inequities.

Developmental neuroscience underscores the profound impact of high-quality early childhood environments in shaping brain development and foundational skills like self-regulation, social-emotional competencies, and early literacy, key predictors of children's future health, well-being, and life trajectories. High-quality early years programs depend on intentional pedagogy, stimulating learning and play-based environments, and a skilled ECE workforce, necessitating DECE ongoing professional and leadership development, and supportive working conditions. However, the systemic devaluation of DECEs' expertise in child development, play- and inquiry-based learning often reduces their contributions to care work, positioning them as secondary to dominant teaching practices. This devaluation is compounded by teachers' greater access to leadership development, mentorship, and career advancement, opportunities denied to DECEs, deepening their marginalization. The cycle of 'Othering' reinforces power imbalances by determining whose knowledge is valued and who holds influence. The lack of DECE agency and voice in classroom decision-making fuels the 'schoolification' of FDK, which prioritizes preparing children for school rather than adapting schools to children's needs. Displacing play-based learning with academic rigor, stifles children's natural curiosity, undermining their developmental growth, and diminishing readiness for lifelong learning. Embedded in hierarchical classroom structures, this marginalization of DECEs actively shapes children's early understandings of racial norms, power, privilege, and oppression.

Grounded in critical theory, this ongoing inquiry utilizes transformative and adaptive systems leadership approaches to interrogate and address systemic inequities. Originally designed to address anti-Black racism, the Name, Own, Frame, Sustain framework is employed to centre and diagnose the classism faced by DECEs within FDK. This framework is paired with Stroh's 4-Stage Change Model to assess system change readiness and plan organizational change.

**Toby Jenkins**

**University of South Carolina, United States**

***Rethinking Mindsets: Mining Counter Cultures for Mindsets of Bold & Creative Leadership***

"The masters tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us to temporarily beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change (Lorde, 1984)." The brave and brilliant Audre Lorde reminded us that very rarely do institutions built on a foundation of oppression do the necessary work of educating for freedom (Lorde, 1984; Woodson, 1977; hooks, 2003). I educate seasoned higher education professionals on how to become more inclusive, creative, and innovative leaders. Over the years, I continue to revisit this quote. Lorde is referencing larger systems—that the master's tools can't be used to destroy the very systems they were used to build. But it seemed that we were also using these same tools to guide the way we lead our institutions. Why were we using the master's mindsets to guide our professional lives—to adopt timid, soulless, unimaginative leadership practices that are rooted in our own subjugation?

To advance in impact, relevance, and innovation, higher education must contest traditional approaches to practice and make room for new praxis of possibility (Jenkins, 2020; hooks, 1994; Nagda, Gurin, & Lopez, 2003; Rautins & Ibrahim, 2011; Robinson, 2006). This session encourages educators to move beyond defensively responding to a shifting landscape. Using culture as a guide to transform our mindsets, this work is focused on the spirit building, creative thinking, and audacious mentality that you must embrace to have the power to act.

This project critically mined hip-hop culture to uncover how community derived ways of thinking, being, and doing offer a fresh new educational leadership framework. The goal of this project was to expand theoretical ideas related to educational leadership and leadership mindsets. Using a grounded theory approach, data was triangulated from multiple empirical studies of hip-hop and African Diasporic ways of being. The work resulted in the development of a new leadership framework called, "The Hip-Hop Mindset." Approaching leadership from a culturally based foundation might be the fresh, powerful, brave and bold approach needed to counter equally bold contemporary strategies of oppression.

**Janelle Joseph**

**Brock University, Ontario, Canada**

***Embodied & Relational: Decolonizing Educational Leadership for the Next Generation***

Every person has leadership qualities innately within them. I learned this from my infants who demanded to be changed, from my graduate students who dictated when we could meet, or my colleagues who set research agendas with their grant applications. A good research leader leans into relationships, guiding groups towards goals every member is invested in, helping and influencing individuals to reach their potential and realize their ideas. This presentation explores decolonizing educational leadership which takes on additional dimensions in Canadian universities for Black academics: resisting racist individual assumptions and organizational structures that prevent Black leaders from being understood, respected, given the benefit of the doubt, or rewarded. Resistance to Black leaders can come from above (e.g., administrators or agencies), beside (e.g., committees and boards), or below (e.g., students and research assistants) within a power hierarchy, exacerbated when a Black leader is the only one present. To learn to excel in research leadership, Black scholars require mentorship and support in building relationships, communicating effectively, supervising research staff, and articulating ideas and accomplishments – all of which require firm theoretical grounding and decolonial praxis. A critical element of this praxis is attention to the body and to rest. Research at the intersection of disability justice scholarship, antiracism studies, and educational leadership suggests the colonial legacies of leadership must attend to the primacy of the body and that antiracist resistance is always embodied. Regardless of role or discipline within educational institutions, by our mere presence a Black leader who invests in relationships and engages in everyday decolonial embodied acts that transform institutions.

**Sharon Kang**  
**McMaster University, Ontario, Canada**  
***Student Organizing, Leadership and Care Work as Resistance***

a) Purpose of Study / Project Objectives

Around the world, student voice and activism is actively being suppressed. This can impact the experiences of student organizing within university settings. This study will explore how student-led initiatives are received within university settings, with a focus on their impact on racialized and marginalized students engaged in this form of care work. It examines how universities support and suppress student-led initiatives and examine the tensions between institutional ideals and student realities.

b) Methods, Techniques, or Modes of Inquiry

The Social Work Symposiums and Town Halls held at McMaster University between 2024-2025 will be used as case studies to highlight the support and opposition to student-led initiatives. Through personal reflection, an autoethnographic approach will draw on the researcher's experiences as a student organizing the events through their BSW and MSW programs. Feminist ethnography will also explore how gender, race, and unpaid care work shape activism and institutional culture. Counter-narrative methods are used to center student voices and lived experiences to their organizing within academic settings.

c) Data Sources

Data includes autoethnographic narratives, institutional documents (policies, public statements) and records from student caucus activities like meeting notes, grant proposals, and symposium attendee feedback. This feedback provide perspectives from students, faculty and social work professionals who attended the events. Theoretical analysis will draw on scholars such as Paulo Freire, Sylvia Federici, Mirna Carranza, and Sara Ahmed to contextualize findings within critical frameworks.

d) Results and/or Substantiated Conclusions

These case studies outline how student organizing is emotional draining and labour intensive, unpaid care work, which require institutional recognition and support. In times when racialized student voice is being suppressed, these student-led initiatives create space, build solidarity and act as forms of resistance.

e) Significance of the Research or Project

There is a need to support leaders in student organizing. Institutions can move beyond performative equity work and truly support grassroots student organizing. The research contributes to broader conversations in social work around justice, labour, and education, through building collective as a form resistance in the face of capitalist and neoliberal pressures.

**Eric Keunne**  
**York University, Ontario, Canada**  
***Centering Internationally Educated Teachers in the Renewal of Ontario's Francophone Education System***

a) Purpose of the Study / Project Objectives:

This study investigates how educational leadership—particularly within Ontario's French-language public school system—can act as a site of resistance to systemic exclusion and a catalyst for structural renewal in supporting internationally educated teachers (IETs). It explores how equity-focused leadership practices can recognize and leverage the pedagogical, cultural, and linguistic capital of IETs, especially in contexts where language, race, and migration intersect to compound marginalization.

b) Methods / Modes of Inquiry:

The study adopts a practitioner-researcher approach and draws on narrative inquiry, autoethnographic reflection, and critical leadership theory. It is grounded in frameworks of culturally responsive leadership and epistemic justice. The analysis is informed by my professional journey—from internationally educated teacher to Vice Principal in Ontario—and integrates field-based observations from both Anglophone and Francophone school settings.

c) Data Sources:

This inquiry draws from four main sources:

Autoethnographic reflections based on 15+ years of experience in Ontario's education system

Documentation and analysis of mentorship and supervision practices involving IETs

Policy review of provincial regulations affecting IET credential recognition and career advancement

Scholarly literature on educational leadership, anti-oppressive education, and teacher workforce diversification

d) Results / Substantiated Conclusions:

Findings highlight entrenched barriers including credentialism, lack of mentorship, and deficit-based discourses that marginalize IETs in French-language schools. However, school leaders who implement culturally sustaining, equity-oriented, and community-rooted leadership practices are able to challenge these patterns. Such practices elevate the legitimacy of IETs, diversify school culture, and contribute to the broader goals of inclusion and educational excellence.

e) Significance of the Research / Project:

This work offers a replicable leadership model for linguistically and culturally diverse school systems. It positions IETs not as subjects of integration, but as agents of transformation. By articulating leadership as resistance and renewal, this research responds directly to the 2025 CLD conference theme and contributes meaningfully to national and international conversations on justice in education.

**Daisuke Kimura**

**Tohoku University, Japan**

***Building Cultures of Sustainability and Inclusion through Global Citizenship Education: Leadership Insights from Japanese Schools***

In an era marked by growing challenges to diversity, equity, and inclusion in education, this study examines the alignment between global education policies, particularly SDG 4.7, which encompasses Global Citizenship Education (GCED) and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in Japan. The recent backlash against equity initiatives and attempts to reverse progress in educational policies highlights the need for resilient school leadership. Such leadership is crucial in cultivating a culture of sustainability and a culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion, promoting critical dialogue, and sustaining progress towards a just and inclusive education.

**Rashin Lamouchi**

**George Brown College, Ontario, Canada**

**Leah Brathwaite**

**YMCA of Greater Toronto, Ontario, Canada**

***Sense of Belonging as 'Being at Home': Challenges Faced by Forced Migrant Youth in Southeast Asia***

This paper is part of the Youth Migration Project (YMP), a research in progress that brings into view the developmental needs and aspirations of forced migrant youth who are temporarily residing in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Malaysia is a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), and a participant to UNHCR sustainable developmental goals (SDG). However, the country has not ratified the 1951 Refugee Convention or the 1967 protocol, which has implications for the treatment of migrant youth and the nations legal obligations to them.

Through purposive and snowball recruitment methods this participatory research asks 40 youth (ages 13-16) what is it like to grow up 'on the move' with a shattered sense of home and belonging to a nation-state. These youth originated from countries in conflict in Asia and Africa, including Myanmar, Afghanistan, Syria, Pakistan, Iran, and Somalia.

This paper explores the child rights and human rights challenges that refugee children face in Malaysia due to their migration status. Of the 40 youth interviewed, this study focuses on the experiences of seven Farsi-speaking girls who are all refugees covered by United Nations and are awaiting resettlement in other countries.

This study asks how does the process of forced migration informs migrant's youth sense of belonging? We attempt to answer this question by asking participants to communicate their displacement experiences through a mixed-methods approach – Storyboard Peers (SP) – to make meaning of concepts such as home, culture, community, and belonging. A reflexive thematic analysis was used to look for youths' accounts of their sense of 'being at home.' The results show that social and physical safety are indicators which generate feeling of belonging as being at home. Our study calls for equitable policies which protect children's right by sharing their stories of forced migration and exploring migrant participants' perceptions of their own best interests in finding sustainable, equitable solutions to their displacement.  
Key words: Forced migrants, Youth, sense of belonging, being at home, feeling at home

**Heather Lawless**  
University of Toronto, Canada

***Critical Approaches in Teaching and Educational Practices: Podcasting as a Path towards Equity in the Health and Wellness Space***

Lack of access, deep inequities, and mistrust in public health care systems around the globe may lead marginalized learners to seek critical health and mental wellness information from alternative sources. As pedagogy shifts towards digital learning experiences for students, the relatively new medium of podcasting is seen to be favourable given it is accessible, affordable, sustainable, and (for now) has resisted corporate centralization. Podcasts are, "relatively cheap to produce, are often freely available to people with Internet access, and are untethered to federal regulations and corporate scheduling" (Donison and Mussi, 2024, p. 278). From a justice and equity perspective, podcasting has the ability to reach national audiences and can highlight the voices of those who may have otherwise been marginalized, thereby opening up a world of cultural knowledge around health and mental wellness. For example, podcasting is an ideal medium for Indigenous podcasters according to Lisk (2020) given they can remain unlicensed and truly entrepreneurial, allowing creators to maintain sovereignty and self-determination. The author argues that social media harnesses the power of collective community. For Lisk (2020), "growing up in a city center and away from community made me feel isolated in my experiences. Now global platforms have instead brought a broader community together" (p. 11).

However, despite the promising attributes of podcasting, it is important to apply a critical lens to the consumption of information given podcasting is not regulated the same way as traditional media. While podcasting affords opportunities to learn about health and mental wellness, it also has the potential to mislead, spread disinformation and potentially cause harm. My research aims to explore how podcasting can be a promising learning tool in terms of promoting the prevalence of marginalized voices, while balancing the need for digital literacy and critical analysis in this unregulated space.

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**Tanya Lewis**  
Bureau Kensington  
Sree Nallamothu  
Toronto Neighbourhood Centres

***Sustaining Social Justice Work in Uncertain Times: A Systems Psychodynamic Approachmes: A Systems Psychodynamic Approach***

Rapid political shifts, global violence, funding depletion, and climate crises are creating profound uncertainty across Canada's social justice and nonprofit sectors. At the same time, sector leaders and frontline staff are facing escalating demands: reduced budgets, labour shortages, growing client complexity, and shifting service models. (Riley, 2023) Frontline workers often carry unprocessed anger, guilt, and grief from their daily encounters with structural injustice. Leaders must navigate pressure from both sides—urgency from those demanding systemic change and resistance from within institutions tasked with implementing it.

Leadership in this context is not only strategic; it's deeply relational and psychological. Those in leadership roles must grapple with how their intersecting identities, experiences with power, and the projections they receive from others shape their capacity to lead. They must learn to work through dynamics such as scapegoating, competition, resistance, and unconscious fears—within themselves and their teams. The ability to hold space, stay in difficult conversations, and build trust across difference has never been more essential.

This presentation shares the work of Toronto-based Bureau Kensington (BKl) and Insight for Community Impact (ICI), which support leaders in developing systems psychodynamic insight. Drawing on the Tavistock tradition, this experiential learning in the “here and now” helps leaders uncover the unconscious group dynamics, desires, and resistances that shape action—and inaction—in organizations and institutions. This work builds the emotional and psychic intelligence needed to lead transformational change in complex times

Through this approach, leaders build not just strategies, but capacity—for reflection, containment, relational repair, and cross-difference collaboration. This work is essential for sustaining justice leadership and imagining new ways of working together in an increasingly uncertain world.

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### **Camille Logan**

**Former Associate Director, Peel Regions District School Board, Ontario, Canada**

#### ***The Perils of Leading While Black and Female: Confronting the “Triple Bind” in Educational Leadership***

This presentation will explore the complexities of educational leadership as experienced by Black women in the K-12 context. The purpose of the presentation is twofold: 1) to expose the inherent systemic barriers embedded within hiring and promotion processes that contribute to the persistent underrepresentation and marginalization of racialized women in leadership, 2) to offer recommendations that support equitable hiring, retention and advancement, 3) to provide strategies and approaches for Black women to lead with authenticity, while navigating the complexities of leading while Black and female.

Using Black Feminist thought as a theoretical framework along with critical race theory, the presentation draws from a narrative inquiry. By incorporating the lived experiences of the presenter, qualitative and quantitative data from relevant Canadian studies on the experiences of racialized educational leaders, including those examining hiring practices across the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) by school board, the session will identify key elements for academics and education practitioners.

Key data sources include the presenter’s dissertation (Logan, 2018) along with peer-reviewed scholarship (e.g., Tillman and Scheurich, 2013; Lopez, 2011, 2021; Jean-Marie et al., 2009), GTA-based qualitative studies (e.g., Ryan, Pollock, & Antonelli, 2009; Abawi, Z., 2021), and professional observations from over three decades of leadership in public education. Together, these data points surface patterns of exclusion, marginalization, hyper-surveillance as well as the impact of misogynoir; the unique oppression at the intersection of anti-Black racism and sexism.

Findings of this research underscore the persistence of what the presenter has referred to as the “triple bind” (race, gender, and leadership expectations grounded in whiteness) as significant barriers to access, mobility, retention and agency for Black women educational leaders. Despite the numerous equity mandates of school boards and the Ministry of Education, they continue to reproduce Eurocentric leadership norms and frameworks that negatively impact Black women. In response, this presentation provides actionable strategies for school boards to adopt more equitable hiring, mentorship and processes for accountability.

This presentation will offer participants frameworks to challenge school boards and ways to demand systemic change, along with strategies and approaches to support Black women in navigating the complexities of educational leadership so they may lead authentically.

### **Ann Marie Luce**

#### ***Inclusive Leadership Beyond the Gender Binary***

**Purpose and Objectives:** This publication brings together diverse voices from across the gender spectrum to examine how traditional gender binaries limit leadership potential and organizational effectiveness. The project aims to document lived experiences of gender-expansive leaders while providing evidence-based strategies for creating inclusive leadership environments. Key objectives include challenging conventional leadership paradigms through first-person narratives, synthesizing research on intersectionality and leadership, and offering practical frameworks for organizational transformation that embrace authentic leadership styles beyond restrictive binary thinking.

Results and Substantiated Conclusions: Through ethnographic case studies and research contributions from intersex, transgender, non-binary, queer, and gender-expansive authors, the publication reveals how binary constructs systematically exclude valuable perspectives and limit organizational innovation. Contributors document persistent challenges including workplace discrimination, lack of mentorship opportunities, and institutional barriers, while also demonstrating successful strategies for authentic leadership. The compilation shows that leaders navigating multiple marginalized identities develop enhanced resilience, empathy, and innovative problem-solving approaches. Evidence from educational institutions, sports organizations, healthcare systems, and public policy environments demonstrates that inclusive practices improve employee engagement, retention, and organizational outcomes. The work establishes that psychological safety, comprehensive mentorship, bias-aware policies, and intersectional approaches are essential for unlocking diverse leadership potential. Key findings reveal that organizations implementing gender-inclusive practices experience measurable improvements in innovation, team performance, and adaptability.

Significance: This publication addresses critical gaps in leadership literature by centering voices typically marginalized in traditional academic research, providing unprecedented insight into how gender identity intersects with leadership effectiveness across multiple professional contexts. By combining personal narratives with empirical research, the project offers practical guidance for educational institutions, corporations, and organizations seeking to create more equitable leadership development programs. The work demonstrates that gender-inclusive leadership isn't merely about social justice—it's strategically essential for organizational success in diverse environments. This publication empowers leaders, educators, and policymakers with concrete tools for transformation, ultimately contributing to a more inclusive understanding of effective leadership that harnesses the full spectrum of human potential while driving measurable organizational success.

**Jamila Maliha, Shelly Hopper & Erin Van De Wiele**  
**Western University, Ontario, Canada**

***The Power of Story: Leading Through Lived Experience in the Pursuit of Justice, Wellness, and Reconciliation***

In educational systems often shaped by dominant narratives, storytelling offers a powerful counter-narrative, one that reclaims voice, restores humanity, and reimagines leadership. This session explores the transformative potential of storytelling as a leadership strategy for equity, wellness, and decolonization, drawing from the lived experiences and dissertation research of three doctoral education leaders.

Through an anti-oppressive lens, we examine how school leaders can build capacity to confront systemic racism and cultivate inclusive learning communities. One dissertation investigates the barriers that prevent predominantly white administrators from enacting equitable leadership, offering a framework grounded in culturally responsive, distributed, and transformative leadership to name, own, frame, and sustain anti-racist action.

The second dissertation centers on trauma-informed leadership and socio-emotional learning, emphasizing how adverse childhood experiences impact student achievement and well-being. By embedding trauma-informed practices into school culture through educator capacity building, classroom-based socio-emotional learning, and community partnerships, this work calls for psychologically safe environments that promote healing and equitable outcomes.

The third dissertation explores how public education continues to marginalize Indigenous learners by failing to incorporate Indigenous leadership approaches. Grounded in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action and prioritizing both Transformative and Two-Eyed Seeing leadership frameworks, this work offers a model that integrates both western and Indigenous ways of knowing, emphasizing community voice as a way to strengthen belonging and student success, while developing Indigenous leadership capacity for school leaders.

Together, our stories weave these strands: anti-racist leadership, mental health and wellness, and Indigenous knowledge, into a collective offering. As we reflect on our professional journeys and research, we share how story has deepened our leadership practices, challenged our assumptions, and helped us resist and renew in complex systems. We invite participants to explore how stories, when shared ethically and relationally, can become tools for transformative leadership, supporting educators in fostering justice, resilience, and relational accountability in their communities.

**Alison Mitchell & Dennis A. Francis**  
**University of Glasgow School of Education, United Kingdom**  
***Troubling Leading Anti-Racism in Scottish Schools***

Internationally and in Scotland, educational leaders are compelled to commit to educational for social justice, peace and liberation, in the wake of global challenges to human rights, freedoms and democracy. In this paper, we highlight what happens when we centre epistemologies towards justice and anti-racism in a joint initiative between the University of Glasgow and Glasgow City Council; a Leading Anti-Racism (LAR) programme.

Targeting all levels, from teacher leadership to headship (principalship) in schools, and leadership of teacher education in universities, the LAR programme aims to deepen personal and professional understanding and reflection on race, racism and the concept and practice of leading (for) anti-racism. A key intention of the program was to open up race, racism and anti-racism as entry points for discussion, reflection and social action. By using pedagogies grounded in democratic participation, including art-based methods such as forum theatre, the programme sought to enhance participants' racial literacy and their courage to lead anti-racist practices, as well as raising critical consciousness and driving positive change in their educational settings.

Prioritising the valuable everyday stories and experiences of the participants, provided insights and entry points into their everyday contextual experiences and responses to race, racism and anti-racism. Such insights are a critical aspect of the data presented in this paper. Building on this data, we track what hinders or facilitates educational leaders' commitments to responding to racism and anti-racist practices in their school and university contexts and what they say is needed to support them in their efforts to lead social justice activism and social change processes. The paper concludes with implications for leading anti-racism practice.

**Gonzaga Robert Mukasa & Chikee Ifeoma Christiana**  
**Texas Tech University**

***Before the Blackboard: Reclaiming Indigenous Wisdom and Curriculum Futures in the Global South***

Long before the advent of colonial schooling, education in the Global South thrived within homes, forests, shrines, farms, and community circles. It was participatory, embodied, and intergenerational, rooted in storytelling, apprenticeship, proverbs, ritual, and communal values. In this paper, we examine precolonial systems of education across African and broader Global South contexts, where teachers were elders, blacksmiths, herbalists, griots, and midwives. These educators imparted knowledge through daily practice and oral traditions, focusing on character formation, ecological sustainability, communal responsibility, and spiritual well-being.

Drawing from ethnographic reflections and decolonial scholarship (Dei, 2008; Serpell, 1993; Ocitti, 1973), we contrast these traditional models with contemporary competence-based curricula (CBC) currently implemented in several African countries. While CBC aims to address practical skills and contextual learning, the voice of indigenous educators remains marginal in both design and implementation processes. In Africa, it is said, "You cannot build a house and ignore the stone cutter." Despite good intentions, these reforms often fail to incorporate indigenous pedagogical tools or epistemologies, instead relying on Western frameworks of knowledge (Fanon, 2008; Alsubaie, 2016).

This paper critiques the ongoing dominance of Global North philosophies, such as those of Piaget, Dewey, and Vygotsky, in shaping education systems that claim to serve Global South communities, while largely ignoring African theories, including Ubuntu, Ujamaa, and Sankofa. The result is a curriculum that is misaligned with local needs, often unable to address persistent development challenges, including youth unemployment and environmental degradation. We argue that the failure lies not in education per se, but in its disconnection from the lived realities, cultural logics, and aspirations of its people.

The paper proposes a re-imagining of curriculum grounded in the philosophies, languages, and communal ethics of the Global South. Anchoring reforms in indigenous knowledge systems can produce education that is not only relevant but also regenerative, bridging generational wisdom with contemporary innovation. Only when local educators and theories are centered in curriculum design can education truly become a transformative tool for sustainable development.

Key Words: Global South, Dominance, Philosophies

**Dionisio Nyaga**  
**Algoma University, Ontario, Canada**

***Incalculable Life, Dreams and the Futures of Care in Social Work Teaching and Learning***

This presentation attempts to work around several ethical questions relating to social work care provision as a social (Debra Hayes, 2004), economic (Ornellas et al, 2020) and political technology of practice (Levenson, 2017; Mishna et al, 2021) and the ways in which care provided by social worker inadvertently establishes new forms of death dealings (Kaika, 2017) while concealing structural colonial violence. I implicate the western classroom with such forms of social death founded in what I call

Necropolitics of care technologies. While this argument may sound and feel out of place and time due to its unseeable ways, this presentation seeks to unpack care technology in social work teaching and learning by engaging with various existing psychic methodologies of care (Barnes, 2012; Debra Hayes, 2004; Hay, 2019) to bring about a social justice and substantive form of care that pays attention to the racialized students histories, values and realities of care recipients. The presentation equally seeks to break the existing dualism and schism in care provision between care receivers and care providers to open new methodologies of care that are ethical, reciprocal, respectful and relational. The current neoliberal essence of gendered colonial split between the recipient and the provider helps situate Rene Descartes cartesian at the very centre of care provision therefore opening avenues that verticalizes care in social work teaching and learning and causing genocidal acts in the bodies of racialized student .

**Raphael Camargo Pentead**  
**Universidade São Judas Tadeu**  
***Demystifying Meritocracy in Education: An Ideological Critique for Equitable Leadership***

This article offers an ideological critique of meritocracy within the context of educational leadership, aiming to promote more equitable management practices. The central purpose is to unveil how the ideology of meritocracy is embedded in human resource management practices through educational processes in capitalist organizations, often concealed by a technicist discourse that legitimizes contradictions. The methodology employs a materialist and dialectical Content Analysis, drawing on Franco (2018) and Guerra (2006). Ideology is understood as a material expression observable through discourse and symbolic forms (Thompson, 2011), with analytical categories emerging inductively from the data to reveal contradictions. Distinct from recent international studies, such as Batruch et al. (2023), which empirically examine how belief in school meritocracy legitimizes social and income inequalities, this research provides an in-depth qualitative analysis of the ideological content within widely used human resource management textbooks, predominantly authored by Global North scholars and adopted by major Brazilian business management universities.

While prior works have focused on individual beliefs and policy attitudes in various national contexts, this study interrogates the curricular and discursive mechanisms through which meritocratic ideology is constructed and perpetuated within the educational materials that shape future organizational leaders in Brazil. By analyzing how these textbooks present meritocracy as a technical and neutral concept, the study reveals the specific ways in which educational discourse naturalizes social hierarchies and reinforces colonialist and individualist logics in the Global South.

Five categories emerged: textbooks as ideological vehicles, worker self-responsibilization, updated control mechanisms, naturalization of labor division, and worker evaluation. The analysis shows that textbook propositions, often lacking scientific foundation, promote entrepreneurship and individualism ideologies, reinforcing control and labor exploitation.

The significance of this study lies in offering a critical, context-specific perspective on the reproduction of meritocratic ideology in organizational education, complementing and extending international research by foregrounding the role of educational content and its implications for equitable leadership and social emancipation.

**Umar Qureshi**  
**OISE, University of Toronto Ontario, Canada**  
***Exploring School Principalship Competencies at High Need Elementary Schools in Ontario: A Qualitative Approach to an Equity Based Framework for Sustainable Student Support***

This study investigates school principals in high need elementary schools in Ontario that serve students from low-income neighbourhoods. In an elementary school that is deemed high need within Ontario, the leadership competencies required are context specific to address the student achievement gap. The question of how to effectively support student achievement for at-risk students in high need schools must be addressed to ensure educational equity. Okilwa and Barnett (2016) describe high need schools as achieving below grade level due in part to high rates of student absences, suspensions, drop out rate, high teacher and principal turnover, in addition to other socio-economic factors that contribute to low student and school achievement. The difficult realities of high need schools require a focused and collaborative approach to school leadership for educational justice by supporting marginalized communities. Using a qualitative approach, this study examines the work of 11 principals in elementary high need schools in Ontario urban communities to compile leadership competencies to support high need schools. Findings indicate complex and intense school days, the work of school principals has become more complex and intensified with more responsibilities (Pollock, Nielsen, and Singh, 2023; Pollock and Hauseman, 2016), and significant time constraints. The findings have significance for policy and practice in Ontario, and future research on how principals in urban low-income communities can be better supported to promote equitable education for children living in poverty. This research

directly addresses the critical need for a re-imagined systems-level approach to school principalship at high need elementary schools that ensures an intentional equity lens is implemented for student success.

**Daniel Roldan**

**York University, Ontario, Canada**

***Beyond Empathy, Toward the Other: Ethical Leadership and Response-Ability in Unjust Times***

We are living through a crisis in which established approaches to justice, equity, and inclusion are not only under attack but are revealing their limitations. The political rollback of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives signals not just institutional resistance but a more profound rupture: a disruption of the very frameworks through which we have come to understand ethical responsibility, community, and justice in education. In this moment of profound uncertainty, what kind of leadership is needed? What types of refusals and reimaginings must we embrace?

Grounded in the ethical frameworks of Sharon Todd (2003, 2004) and Ann Chinnery (2003, 2007, 2017), this presentation draws from my experience as a high school teacher, graduate student, and corporate diversity instructor. It critically interrogates the dominant use of empathy in DEI initiatives and social justice education, particularly empathy's tendency to erase difference, center the self, and collapse the unknowable other into the familiar (Todd, 2004; Chinnery, 2017).

In place of empathy as an endpoint, I propose "response-ability"—the active capacity and ethical commitment to respond to the Other's call. This approach embraces uncertainty and relational openness, serving as a form of leadership and teaching that resists the comfort of sameness. Instead, it remains open to ambiguity, interruption, and the ethical demands of the Other. Drawing on narrative inquiry, lived experience, and reflective practice, this theoretical and praxis-oriented presentation considers how justice-oriented leadership might resist co-optation, enact refusal, and make space for what Chinnery (2007) calls "community without identity."

In this crisis of meaning, leadership must be reimagined as a small, sustained act of ethical becoming, not grounded in mastery, understanding, or managerial competence, but in the willingness to be undone, to act without full knowing, and to create conditions where others might speak and be heard. This work offers a contribution to demystifying equity discourses and reimagining new educational futures not by reinforcing what we already know, but by learning to stay with what we do not yet understand (and likely will never know).

**Alice Romo**

**OISE, University of Toronto**

***School Safety for Whom? School Discipline and Effects of Policing Youth in Schools***

"That same police officer I had asked for help, came over to me and arrested me, in front of everyone, then escorted me to the police car handcuffed - but I didn't do what he said I did" said a youth in Toronto as I sat in a school board hearing with his mother and other community parents and organizers. This was not the first time I was listening to a Black youth recount being falsely accused and arrested at their school. The controversial School Resource Officer (SRO) program is one of many iterations of historically punitive school disciplinary policies. In Toronto it was initiated in 2008, assigning uniformed police officers to schools across both school boards. Upon the SRO program's inception, an increase in school-related arrests of racialized youth in low-income Toronto neighbourhoods prompted parent and community advocacy against the program. This sparked a review by the Toronto District School Board (TDSB), which resulted in trustees ending the program in 2017.

Questions of reviving the SRO program in TDSB have recently resurfaced. Other school boards throughout Canada have also now voiced a need for further review of police programs in their schools. My research draws from theories of the Prison Industrial Complex (PIC) and its intersection with education, also known as the School to Prison Pipeline or School-to-Prison Nexus, to understand the increased rates of punitive exclusionary discipline with the use of SROs and the racial disparities accompanying. I hypothesize that the removal of the SRO program in the TDSB is associated with a decrease in suspension rates and school related arrests, in comparison to neighbouring school boards that continue to use the SRO program. Secondly, I hypothesize that the most severe encounters with police continue to disproportionately impact Black and other racial minority students. The qualitative portion of this study seeks to highlight these cases in particular for which the impact cannot be centred in the same way with quantitative findings. This presentation will look at preliminary findings of this study.

**Alice Romo**

**OISE University of Toronto, Ontario, Canada**

**Karen Robson**

**McMaster University**  
***Examining Inequity in Outcomes for Latin American Students in Toronto***

Latin American students represent a small but growing demographic in Toronto schools. Despite their diversity and resilience, they are often underrepresented in conversations about equity. This research aims to shed light on their educational experiences and outcomes.

Data for this research study are derived from results of the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) Student Census (collected about every 5 years) combined with administrative records. Data were organized into cohorts, with a cohort representing the year the student entered grade 9. Each cohort was followed for all secondary school and 2 years after graduation to examine direct and indirect post-secondary entrance. Cohort analysis includes cohorts from 2004 to 2015, showing longitudinal trends in student outcomes. The main research questions for this study are: (1) How do Latin American students compare to other students in terms of grades, graduation, and transition to post-secondary?; and (2) How do Latin American students compare to other students in terms of special education needs, suspensions, and dropouts?

Our findings show that although there are overall improvements in educational outcomes for all students in the TDSB over time, there are still substantial differences and inequities that students from the Latin American diaspora experience. These findings are in line with historical research and advocacy in this community. Brief implications and policies are described.

**Valeriya Roshka & Pratim Sengupta**  
**University of Calgary, Alberta, Canada**  
***Dis/Orienting University Leadership by Centring Complex Intersectionalities in Student Activism and Protests***

In this paper, we offer a critical discourse analysis of ideological constructions deployed by presidents of three major Canadian research universities in their public justifications of police brutality on pro-Palestine protesters on university campuses. We argue that educational leaders (university presidents) construct and deploy ideological myths that position pro-Palestinian protestors on campus as threats to public safety and security, similar to how political leaders (country presidents) deploy ideological myths in their public justifications of wars. Our analysis also reveals an ongoing pattern of how colonial and White ideologies (Harris, 1993; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Jones, 2019) are carried forward in the form of ideological myth-making (Donald, 2012) by university presidents in PWI (predominantly white institutions).

Scholars have noted the omission of the issues of historical, systemic and structural racism and marginalization in University leadership discourse on violence on campus. For example, Jones (2019) argued that educational leaders' responses to racial violence in PWI (predominantly white institutions) must be viewed in the context of the dominance of White ideologies (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2016), which positions these institutions as upholders of political neutrality and objectivity. The effect of these ideological framings is to render invisible the complex intersectionalities (Collins & Bilge, 2020) highlighted by student protests, and even normalize accounts of contrapuntal violence (Said, 1991; Philip & Sengupta, 2021) - i.e, the physical violence and racial microaggressions - while also positioning the protests of marginalized students as threats to, and violations of, free speech on campus (Casellas Connors & McCoy, 2022; Jones, 2019).

Given this background, our research seeks to make two contributions. Firstly, it reveals how University leadership in Canada and US have, historically and recently, responded to student protests using colonial approaches that position protesting students as threats to campus life and public education, often by deploying ideological myths about the protestors. Secondly, it argues that student-activism and political protests on campus should be seen as an expansive and humanistic educational opportunity (Freire et al., 2018), while also offering a participatory pedagogical approach for making visible the complex, intersectional interplay of racialized oppression, settler-colonialism and gender-based violence at the heart of students' protests.

**Cynanie Sawyers-Haylett**  
**University of West Indies, Mona, Jamaica**  
***Learning to Lead Differently: Decolonising Leadership Practices for Effective Higher Education Institutions***

This conceptual paper explores the critical intersection between decolonising educational leadership and learning-leadership behaviours within the framework of institutional effectiveness in higher education, with a focus on postcolonial contexts such as Jamaica and the wider Caribbean. Drawing on Peter Senge's (1990, 2000) seminal work on learning organisations and Garvin et al.'s (2008) framework emphasising leaders' role in fostering supportive learning environments, the paper reimagines leadership not merely as managerial or strategic, but as a deeply transformative and culturally responsive practice. Decolonising educational leadership challenges the persistent colonial legacies embedded in higher education governance, knowledge production, and performance evaluation. It foregrounds the need to dismantle hierarchical and Eurocentric leadership models that marginalise Afro-Caribbean epistemologies. This paradigm centres relational accountability, equity, and justice, emphasising leadership as an ethical and collective endeavour committed to healing and social transformation. Learning-leadership behaviours—characterised by reflection, collaboration, and adaptability—are traditionally understood as drivers of institutional learning and effectiveness. This paper argues that when these behaviours are enacted through a decolonial lens, they become vehicles for institutional liberation rather than mere organisational efficiency. A key connection is the role of trust: foundational both to Senge and Garvin's frameworks, where trust cultivates psychological safety and open dialogue, and to decolonial leadership, where trust is built through cultural affirmation, truth-telling, and power redistribution. The paper further critiques conventional metrics of institutional effectiveness, advocating for redefined indicators that prioritise community relevance, epistemic justice, and social accountability over neoliberal benchmarks. Through this integration, it proposes a conceptual framework that positions decolonising learning leadership as essential to fostering higher education institutions that are responsive, inclusive, and transformational. This work contributes to ongoing discourse on educational leadership by offering a nuanced, contextually grounded approach to leadership development and institutional evaluation in postcolonial settings. It invites scholars and practitioners to rethink leadership not only as learning but as a purposeful act of decolonisation and justice.

Keywords: Decolonising Educational Leadership, Learning Leadership, Institutional Effectiveness, Trust and Psychological Safety, Postcolonial Higher Education

**Heather Lillie Taylor**

**University of Glasgow, Scotland, UK**

***Active Youth Participation within Community Decision Making in the North-West End of Glasgow:  
Understanding the Views of Participants***

This study aims to investigate the methods in which youth participate in local decision-making. Although there seems to be an increase in research on Glasgow's young people, the main subjects of study are violence, disorder, and disconnection. This undermines the incredible work that is being done with young people in the community and ignores the valuable contributions that young people have made and continue to make in Glasgow's northwest end. As "co-researchers," the six young people from Glasgow's northwest who have been selected as they are members of a youth committee. Through the utilisation of focus group sessions, an open-ended, dialogue centred strategy was used to gather the data. The experiences of the participants revealed common themes concerning their perceptions of parts of their identity, the dynamics within the youth committee, and their ties with the community, all of which were examined through the process of thematic analysis. The results made clear how crucial it is to give these young people the chance to speak up and to reject assumptions about what it means to be a young person in Glasgow's northwest neighbourhood. Therefore, it is intended that by considering the experiences and viewpoints of the youth committee members, this study will challenge the prevalent stereotypes about youth in the northwest end and offer recommendations for future research, with an extension in the form of a policy brief that outlines recommendations for practice.

**Rose Torres**

**Shingwauk Kinoomaage Gamig, Center of Excellence in Anishinaabe Education, Ontario, Canada**

***The Interface Between Mothering and Academic Leadership: Reframing Power Through Care***

The Interface Between Mothering and Academic Leadership reimagines the relationship between motherhood and academic leadership, offering a new lens through which to understand the complexities of leading in higher education. This presentation challenges the traditional view of academic leadership as rational, competitive, and disembodied, and instead foregrounds mothering—with its emphasis on care, resilience, relational authority, and long-term vision—as a powerful and transformative practice for academic leadership.

Drawing on autoethnographic reflection, feminist theories of leadership, maternal thinking, and real-world narratives from mother-academics, this presentation explores the intersections of mothering and academic leadership as not merely a set of challenges but as a source of wisdom, creativity, and strength. The presentation seeks to provide both theoretical insights and

practical strategies to help academic leaders embrace care, empathy, and inclusivity as integral components of their leadership styles.

The questions that my presentation seek to address are: What if care was not a soft skill relegated to the margins, but a central ethic of leadership? What if the messy, unpredictable, emotionally charged labor of mothering could inform a new leadership praxis—one that values vulnerability, interdependence, and the labor of care? By weaving together theory and experience, critique and hope, this presentation invites everyone to consider how the practices of care inherent in mothering can inform more just, sustainable, and compassionate models of academic leadership.

**Tamiru Jote Tulu**  
**Kotebe University of Education**  
***Leading for Inclusion in Low Income Country***

This study explores how school leaders in Ethiopia enact inclusive education practices within complex and resource-constrained contexts. Drawing on data from 72 school leaders across five regional states in Ethiopia, the research examines their perceptions, leadership strategies, and experiences related to fostering inclusive learning environments. The study is grounded in a transformative framework that understands inclusion as an ethical, rights-based imperative, extending beyond disability to encompass marginalization due to poverty, language, ethnicity, and gender. The methodology employed a qualitative, phenomenological design involving semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. The analysis revealed that school leaders conceptualize inclusion primarily as addressing learning needs and promoting participation for all children, but face systemic challenges such as lack of teacher training, insufficient resources, and large class sizes. Despite these barriers, leaders demonstrated creativity and commitment, often leveraging community engagement, collaboration, and professional development to advance inclusive practices. Findings suggest that effective inclusive leadership in Ethiopia hinges on adaptive and collaborative strategies tailored to local contexts. However, this study highlights disconnect between national policy aspirations and the day-to-day realities faced by school leaders. The research concludes by emphasizing the need for targeted support, capacity building, and contextualized policy implementation to strengthen inclusive leadership and ensure equitable education for all learners in Ethiopia. This study holds both practical and theoretical significance for the advancement of inclusive education in Ethiopia and similar contexts globally. Practically, the findings of this study can inform the design of leadership training and professional development programs tailored to the realities of Ethiopian schools. Insights into the challenges faced and the creative strategies employed by school leaders can guide policymakers, education officials, and development partners in crafting contextually relevant interventions that empower leaders to champion inclusion effectively. The study also offers a valuable evidence base to support the implementation of national inclusive education policies, ensuring that these are responsive to the needs and capacities of school-level actors. Theoretically, the study contributes to the broader discourse on inclusive leadership by offering perspectives from Global South. It challenges universal models of leadership by highlighting context-specific practices.

**Ramon San Vicente**  
**Toronto District School Board**  
**Alison Gaymes San Vicente**  
**Waterloo Region District School Board**  
**Kim Pividor**  
**Toronto District School Board**  
***Towards School Improvement for Liberation***

This chapter draws on the fieldwork of three educational leaders engaging in school improvement processes in Ontario, Canada. The findings illuminate core components of a liberatory school improvement process. For too long, liberatory leadership practices have been “in addition to” or done by the goodwill of individuals. As leaders, our job is to support schools with the implementation of a co-constructed change process that challenges discriminatory practices by working with individuals, as well as groups of students, staff, and community to improve relationships, classroom practice, and school processes. With respect to our leadership practices, if we know that we are committed to change and why, then the improvement process becomes about shifting away from dominant norms. We believe that a liberatory education is needed and is consistent with the policies of many districts and boards of education in North America and beyond. To start from a liberatory philosophy and pedagogy, a leader must begin with guiding questions such as, “How might we commit to strengthening our individual critical consciousness while creating a liberatory culture of action and improvement?” This question centers anti-discrimination and anti-oppression,

thus challenging discriminatory practices such as streaming and exclusion. To address discriminatory practices within the education system, we must utilize the school improvement process as a systemic tool for change—one grounded in the critical consciousness of the lead educators facilitating the change process.

**Carrie Wright**  
Wilfrid Laurier University, Ontario, Canada  
**Angel Caglin**  
University of West Indies  
***Educator Responses to Equity Dialogues***

The Caribbean Innovation and Leadership Lab has been delivering professional development dialogues focused on gender equity and inclusion with teachers and principals across three Caribbean countries (Dominica, Saint Lucia and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines) for the past year. The project, funded by the Global Partnership for Education, in collaboration with the International Development Research Centre, aims to reach 75% of educators in each country by 2027 to build the foundation for more equitable teaching and learning in the Eastern Caribbean. Professional development activities are structured as 'dialogues' rather than more traditional, instructor-led workshops, because educators need time and space to reflect, share stories and build a new shared model of gender equity and inclusion to meaningfully shift normative views. These professional dialogues are anchored in local student data that reveal how gendered norms shape classroom dynamics, disciplinary practices and participation. By engaging teachers, school leaders and Ministry of Education officials in these discussions, the project surfaces hidden assumptions and helps educators recognize how their actions can unintentionally reinforce or challenge these norms.

The presentation will share details of the professional development engagement model being applied in the project, which also includes small group coaching supports to help teachers bridge theory and practice, and guided reflection for principals so school leadership can effectively support the transition to more inclusive school practices. The presentation will also describe how educators are responding to data collected from students that report perceived differences by gender and educator short- and longer-term responses to the professional dialogues. Finally, the presentation will highlight how educators are using the program's structured Innovation Sprints and Communities of Practice to collaboratively design and test gender-responsive solutions in their classrooms and schools. Early results show shifts in teacher mindsets, stronger collaboration across roles, and emerging policy discussions about equity and inclusion. Participants will leave with a practical framework for using dialogue-based professional learning to help educators recognize and respond to equity challenges, particularly around gender inclusion, while also aligning grassroots innovation with broader education system goals.

**Shella Zagada**  
OISE, University of Toronto  
***Kapwa-informed Antiracist Leadership Praxis among Filipino Leaders in Social Service Organizations***

Racism persists across all levels of society, upheld by systemic privileges that benefit dominant groups and maintain racial hierarchies. While many Whites may be reluctant to challenge these structures, marginalized groups have a vested interest in confronting their oppressive realities (Freire, 1970/2018). Tackling racism requires structural transformation, sustained leadership, and antiracist practices that cut across societal spaces and forms of resistance.

This qualitative study examines Kapwa-informed antiracist leadership practices among Filipino leaders in Canadian social service organizations. Kapwa, a Filipino worldview that emphasizes shared humanity and interconnectedness, offers a relational and humanizing approach to addressing racial inequities. Kapwa is also associated with the values of dignity (Karangalan), justice (Katarungan), and freedom (Kalayaan).

Using a critical framework, this research explores how Filipino leaders practice antiracist leadership while upholding the value of Kapwa through semi-structured individual interviews using pakikipagkwentuhan or Kwento (Pino, 2023) method. Participants are leaders, identifying as Filipinos, who are currently or previously engaged in shaping organizational directions, making operational decisions or involved in governance processes and holding positions such as executive director, manager, program leader, team lead, supervisor, director, or board member.

Key research questions focus on the experiences of Filipino Canadians as racialized leaders, their understanding and application of Kapwa, and how this worldview informs their antiracist leadership practices. The study aims to contribute to antiracist scholarship by highlighting the subjugated knowledge of racialized communities, particularly Filipinos in Canada,

whose leadership practices may be grounded in Kapwa and the indigenous practice of pakikipagkapwa-tao (engaging with others, showing concern for others).

By centering Filipino-Canadian perspectives and drawing on the work of Filipino-Canadian scholars, this research seeks to illuminate the contributions of Filipinos to social change and racial justice in Canada, expanding the scope of racial justice work and scholarship (Bonifacio, 2013, Coloma, et.al. 2012, Pino, 2023, Sato, et.al., 2022, Tolentino 2023, Ty, 2012).