Introduction: Empowering Graduate Students in Publication Spaces

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In this introduction to the first volume of the sixth issue of Emerging Perspectives: Interdisciplinary Graduate Research in Education and Psychology, we reflect on our experiences as members of the Editorial Team, advocate for the relevancy of graduate student journals, and introduce the three articles featured in this issue.

Since the inception of Emerging Perspectives: Interdisciplinary Graduate Research in Education and Psychology (EPIGREP) in 2015, our journal has been committed to empowering graduate students in all aspects of the academic publication space. Seven years later, publishing continues to be an essential part of the graduate student experience, as we facilitate graduate students in communicating their research findings, establishing their voices in their fields, and preparing for future careers in academia and beyond. Our colleagues and founders of EPIGREP have reflected upon the significance of building an academic journal by and for graduate students (Woodend et al., 2017) as well as the needs of graduate student authors (Syeda et al., 2020). This introduction builds upon these findings by illustrating the practical ways that graduate students can be empowered in publication spaces and advocating for graduate student-led journals. We also introduce three newly published articles featured in this issue of EPIGREP.

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Why Graduate Student Journals?

Within the fields of educational research and educational psychology, graduate students are often mentored by faculty as co-authors of academic publications, but are rarely the sole authors of their publications (Garbati & Samuels, 2013; O'Hara et al., 2019). Publishing in a journal can seem mysterious and intimidating as a first-time or graduate student author, requiring tacit knowledge and etiquette (Jalong et al., 2014). While we cannot understate the value of supportive faculty members to demystify publishing in our fields, we believe it is just as important to offer spaces where graduate students can safely explore the publication process among peers. EPIGREP is a journal *for* graduate students; all submissions have a graduate student listed as the first author and many are sole-authored by graduate students. Our editorial team and reviewers provide developmental feedback and mentorship to our authors from submission and revisions through to copyediting and publication. After publishing with EPIGREP, it is our aim that graduate student authors have communicated their research in a rich forum of interdisciplinary conversation while learning the intricate, step-by-step procedure of publishing a journal article. This experience can be particularly valuable to first-time authors or first-time lead authors who can now be empowered to publish in other journals.

Secondly, EPIGREP is a journal *by* graduate students. With the support of faculty mentors, our journal has always been led by an interdisciplinary team of graduate students from the fields and subfields of education and psychology. Being in a similar stage of our academic journeys as the authors submitting to EPIGREP allows us to empathetically tailor our ways of working to the graduate student experience. Our editorial team engages in a process of experiential learning (Syeda et al., 2020) as we learn how to manage the 'behind the scenes' of an academic journal. This is a unique experience that would prepare a member of the EPIGREP editorial team to serve in a similar role on the editorial board of another journal, and has facilitated more depth in our understanding of our own submissions to other journals. Every new editor who joins the EPIGREP editorial team is mentored by a more experienced editor, allowing for continuous capacity-building.

We acknowledge that there are valid critiques of graduate student journals. The legitimacy and impact of publishing in a graduate student journal has been questioned, leading some to advise 'saving' a publication for a higher-impact journal (Doran et al., 2012). We advocate for the relevance and necessity of graduate student journals, including EPIGREP and similar journals in our field. As outlined in our experiences with EPIGREP and by other graduate student editorial teams (see Arsenault, 2021), graduate student journals are a space of developmental learning for graduate student authors and editors. The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have led to a decline in motivation and opportunities for many graduate students to publish their work, while the expectations of graduate student productivity have continued to increase (Arsenault, 2021; de Caux, 2021). In these contexts, we believe that graduate student journals have an essential role to play in reducing the barriers for publication, offering a space of learning, and celebrating the valuable contributions of graduate students to scholarly research.

Overview of the Articles

With great appreciation for our graduate student authors, we are pleased to introduce three new EPIGREP articles, all of which highlight the work of graduate students to promote mindfulness, equity, and emotionality in diverse educational and learning contexts.

Christopher Siegle shows that among secondary school student populations, teachers and parents report that the impact of learning during multiple pandemic-related lockdowns have impacted students' well-being. While teachers may have tried to bring mindfulness practice into their virtual or physical classrooms to support some of these concerns, Siegle explores the tension between mindfulness being used to advance equity and mindfulness practices which, perhaps unknowingly to many educators, maintain the very power structures we hope to challenge in our classrooms. Teachers will often seek the benefits of mindfulness practices embedded in social emotional learning (SEL) curricula to positively influence student behaviour and readiness for learning. Seigle uses a hermeneutic approach with a small population of teachers in Western Canada to suggest that, in their well-meaning intentions to bring SEL and mindfulness into the classroom, teachers view students with a deficit-model and consequently maintain systemically oppressive educational practices within schools. As we move towards post-pandemic teaching and learning, trauma-aware and mindfulness practices in schools could inform many student-centred learning and teaching initiatives and Siegle recommends that, rather than looking towards pre-packaged SEL products, educators match their intent to improve classroom community with their actions by critically examining their classroom interventions.

Harrison Campbell and Joshua Grieman explore literacy and meaning-making through the lens of cake artistry, expanding the idea of what it means to be "literate" within different professions. Specifically, they draw upon post-humanist perspectives on literacy to demonstrate the ways in which storytelling, reflection, and emotional expression – key aspects of literacy – can be found in the design and baking of beautiful and detailed cakes. Showcasing two different Pride cakes, they reflect on their own positionality in the LGBTQQIP2SAA community by deftly highlighting how their personal stories and reflections are embodied in the cakes' designs. Campbell and Grieman also show how fiction and reality were intertwined in the storytelling behind a wedding cake for two of their best friends. They note the ways in which understanding cake artistry as literacy has implications for resisting the mind/body binary, as the physicality of pastry arts requires attending to embodiment as a key aspect of literacy and meaning-making. Additionally, these authors explore how viewing literacy as a social practice rather than a static skill can make the importance of relationality visible, strengthening connections between literacy and professions in which relationships and communication are critical to success. Campbell and Grieman conclude with a call to language educators to consider how other professions and lived experiences, such as with pastry arts, can be used as opportunities to explore embodiment, relationality, and meaning-making and thus spark new conversations around literacy within and beyond the classroom.

In the final article of this issue, Julie Sleilaty discusses the impacts of a regular mindfulness practice on teachers by synthesizing a critical review of the literature. Motivated by the increasing demands made of teachers that challenge their ability to maintain positive mental health and well-being, and approaching the work through the lens of both an educator and a mindfulness practitioner, Sleilaty reviewed 40 articles that used a variety of approaches and methods to measure the impact of regular mindfulness practice on in-service teachers. She found that regular mindfulness practice improved the overall well-being of teachers, including their ability to handle stress, burnout, anxiety, and depression, as well as their physical health. Sleilaty's review also revealed positive emotional and social impacts, including teachers' self-awareness, emotional regulation, and relationship skills. Finally, the articles indicated that regular practice also fostered educators' prosocial values of self-compassion, empathy, and forgiveness. Sleilaty concludes by pointing out some gaps in the literature: participants in such studies are predominantly female and there is a lack of studies conducted in developing countries. She argues for future research that seeks to determine the efficacy of specific mindfulness techniques, and/or investigates the relationship between teacher mindfulness and the outcomes of their students. For educators who are interested in engaging in mindfulness, Sleilaty also includes a curated list of resources and activities that can be incorporated into teachers' busy schedules.

Conclusion

We would like to congratulate the authors of these outstanding articles. We look forward to continuing EPIGREP's mission in future issues: to celebrate the academic and scholarly endeavors of graduate students in education and educational psychology while providing a forum for collaborative knowledge exchange and translation.

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