

CUS

Research Brief

RETHINKING
Early Childhood
EDUCATION

EDITED BY ANN PELO



Introducing the Graduate Student Research Assistants at the Centre for Urban Schooling

By Audrey Hudson



Our Mission Statement

The Centre for Urban Schooling was established in 2005 to connect OISE to urban schools and communities. The Centre conducts research on and advocates for critical practice that is focused on how to better serve historically marginalized and racialized children and youth in public schools.

Happy New Year! In this issue we introduce you to the Centre's team of graduate students: **Pamela Baer, Shainiya Balachandran, Will Edwards, Audrey Hudson, and Austen Koecher**. Our graduate student research assistants help us in various aspects of the research at CUS. Below, we have highlighted the work they do with the centre and the focus of their research projects.

Pamela Baer

My name is Pamela Baer, I am a first year PhD student in Curriculum Studies and Teacher Development and am currently the Research Manager for the LGBTQ Families Speak Out About School Project, with Dr. Tara Goldstein as the Primary Investigator.

My thesis work will be exploring the experiences of LGBTQ families in Ontario schools. I plan to engage LGBTQ-led families, and young people with LGBTQ parents in a creative process through which they can share their experiences. Together we will create an original piece of multi-media theatre. The process of creation will be a collective site of research through which youth, families, and artists can work together to collect and analyze data about their experiences. The project will result in original artwork that will continue to facilitate new conversations about the experiences of LGBTQ families in Ontario public schools.

Shainiya Balachandran

I work alongside Rob Simon and Will Edwards as a co-coordinator of the Critical Practitioner Research Collaborative. This collaborative is centered upon shared interests in critical research and urban sites, providing our peers and faculty an opportunity to engage in dialogue outside of the classroom. This collaborative is currently partnered with the University of Pennsylvania, focused on creating a shared space for these research interests to be discussed. We are also developing a local site of a Writing Project for Toronto teachers and educators interested in urban schooling.

I am currently in the second year of the MA in Higher Education, with a focus on student services support for minority groups, with a focus on how these services aim to ease the transition into higher education. I have worked with undergraduate students for the past four years and developed an interest in the ways students choose to engage with various services in the university.



Will Edwards



I work alongside Rob Simon and Shiny Balachandran as a co-coordinator of the Critical Practitioner Research Collaborative. This collaborative is centered around shared interests in critical research across urban sites and is conjoined with the University of Pennsylvania. We are also in the process of establishing a Writing Project.

As a 4th year PhD student, educator and principal investigator of a critical practitioner research study situated within a large urban college in Toronto, I'm beginning to inquire into how my insider/outsider positionality may bolster and/or delimit my practice as a teacher researcher. Over the past two years, I have researched and participated within an After School Reading and Writing Group comprised of upgrading students who have, for one reason or

another, experienced some degree of failure. Building upon practitioner researcher models that approach teaching and researching as coextensive (Cochran-Smith & Lytle 2009, Campano, 2007), my study investigates the experiences of six students and documents how they navigate increasingly complex institutional demands. Within this alternative space, we use poetry, narrative prose, fiction and non-fiction as a catalyst for generating new understandings of literate engagement and "academic proficiency".

Audrey Hudson

I am a graduate assistant for CUS where I work with Dr. Tara Goldstein and Dr. Nicole West-Burns on the Black Student Achievement project in partnership with the TDSB. I am also responsible for knowledge mobilization at the centre, which includes social media, website management and research briefs.

I am a third year PhD student in CTL. The focus of my research is to examine how Hip-Hop acts as a means of solidarity between Black and Indigenous communities. My thesis project aims to discuss settler colonialism, Indigeneity, solidarity and social identities through an arts based Hip-Hop educational program. My project examines how hip-hop acts as an interruption of a "master script" (Swartz, 1992) in curriculum and creates a sense of solidarity/alliance between Black and Indigenous communities to ignite 'organic critical literacies' (Campano, Ghiso, & Sanchez, 2013) in participants. For me, hip-hop is a way to bring these rich knowledges and voices into pedagogical spaces and discuss histories of colonization, race, representation and sovereignty. I view hip-hop as a tool to begin decolonizing education because of the attention to minority voices and to the powers it speaks back to.



Austen Koecher



As a research assistant, I am working with CUS on two projects: LGBTQ Families Speak Out About Schools, and Improving Black Student Achievement. LGBTQ Families Speak Out About Schools is a video interview study of the school experiences of LGBTQ families in Ontario, headed by Prof. Tara Goldstein. Improving Black Student Achievement is a joint project between CUS and the TDSB, which engages early years teachers in critical practitioner inquiry to investigate ways to improve Black student achievement in Toronto schools. This project is headed by Prof. Tara Goldstein, and is coordinated by Dr. Nicole West Burns from CUS and Karen Murray from the TDSB.

As a second-year MA student in Curriculum Studies and Teacher Development at OISE, my thesis work has focused on the narratives of people who have experienced homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia in schools and who have had contact with the mental health system. Using a life history methodology, my goal is to examine the intersections of school experiences of homophobia, transphobia, and biphobia and experiences of mental health systems along the frameworks of medicalization and students read as “at risk.”

Thank you for interest in the Centre for Urban Schooling! We'll stay in touch. To join our list serve and receive announcements about our events, please e-mail: Audrey.hudson@mail.utoronto.ca with the subject heading: Put me on the CUS list serve.

Check out our website and find us on social media!

<http://cus.oise.utoronto.ca>



*The Centre for Urban Schooling Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto
252 Bloor Street West, 10th Floor Toronto, ON M5S 1V6*



Centre for Urban Schooling
Centre de la Scolarité Urbaine

Communities
Universities
Schools



Editor: Tara Goldstein