

# Section Editor Introduction: Critical Issues Essays

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## Introduction

When we, as editors, decided earlier this year to launch a new section of the journal, focused on shorter essays addressing critical issues facing young children, families, communities, and those in related fields including early childhood education, childhood studies, and critical policy studies, we were unsure about what the response might be. With a plethora of local to global issues, often linked systemically, affecting our work and lives and those of the children and families with whom we work, our intention was to provide a space for shorter critical personal narratives that spanned the “nested contexts” (Lubeck, 1985) of early childhood and put us into dialogue with each other. As editor of this section, I have been very pleased with the response to our call for essays in terms the array of issues addressed, the growing global representation of authors and their sites of work, and the themes linking personal experiences and reflections to issues and provocations for the field.

This issue of the *International Critical Childhood Policy Studies* journal is dedicated solely to these essays, which will continue in smaller numbers in upcoming special issues, as an ongoing section of the journal. The previous issue included two essays, focused on impacts of anti-DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion) discourse and policies in the US and ways they are impacting early childhood through higher education curriculum, teachers, families, and children in negative ways. The two essays took both existential and instrumental perspectives in their analysis.

The eight essays in this issue reflect a widening set of urgent issues and draw from more global and transnational experiences, reflecting nuanced intersectional identities and social justice commitments of the authors. The essays begin with a hopeful example of uplifting children and their cultural communities via public art and engagement in scholar activism in ways that reflect growing arts-based, post-foundational work in the field. Scarlett Brown describes an example of using collective arts to nurture children in diasporic communities, with focus on Somali children in UK. This essay, rich with visual examples of public art that the author, Scarlett Brown, and local children and families created. Her examples of this and similar projects offer hope and inspiration in these challenging times.

One of the themes that cuts across several of the essays is the need to discuss and unpack persistent racist and colonial patterns in research and practice, including deficit constructions of childhoods and “damage-centered research,” (Tuck, 2009). Several authors express their resistance via scholar activism and anti-racist scholarship and praxis in ways that position scholars on the “edge of each other’s battles” (Lorde, in Abod, 2002). Other related essays examine impacts of far-Right policies and persistent neoliberal paradigms, including those that play havoc with research plans and cause researchers to confront temporality and limited spaces to do their work. In particular, Kerry-Ann Escayg and Flóra Faragó’s essay examining their reflections on being at the crossroads of anti-racist and RECE identities and Zuhra Abawi and Nidhi Menon’s essay about confronting whiteness and colonial logics within refugee, international, and migration education studies foreground issues of identity and highlight possibilities for scholar activism.

Related to these themes, Philip Saagyum Dare's transnational essay on Right-ism and neoliberalism doing battle in the early childhood field connects traveling education discourses and persistent colonial practices to pressures on local and national early childhood policies in ways that limit possibilities. This is followed with Noor Ali's very personal essay on her preschool experiences in Afghanistan and the US. This sensitive essay reflects on the invisible labor and relational care of early childhood educators and the toll it takes. Both these essays look at early childhood policy and practice through transnational lenses, with the former more focused on macro analysis of Western impositional policies and the latter, on deeply personal experiences of care, including reflecting on the invisible labor and intimacy of child care, including the joy as well as impossibilities it can bring.

Ozge Ergin's essay, "Research in a Time of Anti-Immigrant Politics: Temporal Rupture and the Limits of Future-Oriented Impact," broadens the discussion of impacts of current political climates to question the common practice of framing research in terms of future impacts. All the essays make a case for transformational praxis – from pedagogy and community engagement to research.

Continuing with nuanced analysis of the anti-immigrant theme in global and local contexts, Maria Mavrides Calderon's essay, "Narco-Violence, Schooling, and the Early Childhood Stakes for Ecuador's Children," brings her personal connections to issues facing children in Ecuador as well as immigrant children in New York City into a nuanced critique. Philadelphia Berro further contributes to the critique and discussion of anti-immigrant policies as she unpacks the frustrations and complexities of dual language programs for young children – with (white) parents wanting the social capital of Spanish for their English-speaking children but not the willingness to learn the language, and ways bilingual educators are devalued.

Taken together, the essays in this issue convey an organic and connected array of issues that compel us to pay closer attention and consider the consequences of many current policy trends affecting our transdisciplinary fields. They remind us we must not become complacent or look away from troubling issues and the ongoing work of scholar activists in the RECE tradition who have authored these essays. I deeply appreciate the insights and passion of the authors and know readers will as well.

I look forward to ongoing submissions to this new section that speak to the power of critical personal narrative in challenging times, and to having Mark Nagasawa, a long-time collaborator from Bank Street College, join me as co-editor of this section this month.

### References

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