

Editor Introduction to the Special Issue

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Abstract

This article focuses on a brief introduction to the newest special issue of peer-reviewed articles for the journal *International Critical Childhood Policy Studies* (www.iccpsonlinejournal.org). The special issue is co-edited by Janice Kroeger and Iris Berger whose Introductory article describes the special issue's focus on hope and sanctuary within educational spaces and highlights the seven articles that follow their introduction. In this issue of the journal, there are also two new important shorter articles in the *Critical Policy Issues Section* of the journal that focus on more current attempts to censor or eliminate academic speech and ideas of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the USA.

Keywords: Hope, Sanctuary, Critical Childhood Policy, Early Education

The current issue of the journal *International Critical Childhood Policy Studies* is the first with the journal's new website: www.iccpsonlinejournal.org. As always, and as a political and critical scholarly act, the journal is free, online, and accessible to a global audience.

This issue highlights a wonderful special issue co-edited by Janice Kroeger (Kent State University in the USA) and Iris Berger (University of British Columbia in Canada), and seven peer reviewed articles that focus on the critically important concepts of hope and sanctuary in childhood studies and in educational and pedagogical spaces. In the lead article by Kroeger and Berger, they foreground the philosophical and educational imperatives that guide their own and authors' visions of hope and sanctuary. They also provide a brief summary of ideas within each of the seven articles that they have selected to be in this special issue, after independent reviews.

In addition to these eight articles (including the lead article by the special issue editors), there are two shorter articles in a section we've titled "Critical Policy." This section of the journal is for shorter essays responding to current major local and global events related to childhood policy. The section is edited by Beth Blue Swadener, and has resulted in multiple shorter "blog" type of essays being suggested, with the first two published in this issue. These two are focused on censorship and disciplinary technologies that are being used to force universities in the USA, and individual scholars within them to change the content of what they teach. They are part of a changing and unpredictable academic environment that aims to eliminate and/or to alter the way knowledge is presented and discussed—the very way that "truth" is determined.

Critical scholarship has, to my knowledge, always highlighted the relationship between *power* and *knowledge*, so the new policies are not the first time that powerful forces have shifted how or when or where ideas can be presented. Nonetheless, the new restraints on faculty go against long-held ideas of academic freedom, and the pursuit of knowledge through a "fearless sifting and winnowing" of ideas. With the new constraints, we see fear, important changes in what can be presented or debated, and an elimination of departments and programs, research and scholarship that highlighted previously "hidden" or rarely examined subjects or ideas. Joy Anderson's essay provides an overview of five states' policies, and Xiaohan Zhu's essay provides an important and difficult personal testimony to the effects of recent policies.

It is good, I think, to pair these critical policy short essays with the longer research articles that are part of the Kroeger-Berger co-edited special issue. Their focus in the initial call for articles over one year ago was to highlight research that reflected hope and ideas of sanctuary in childhood studies. The articles published here draw on and elaborate diverse theoretical approaches as well as methodologies the authors use in their research ranging from feminist materialist and post qualitative (Boucher and Malloy, Schofield, Goddard) to intersectional and feminist/womanist and anti-carceral inspired by a “bell hooksian idea of love” (Menon & Karmiris) and Audre Lorde’s commitment to a “Livable Future” (Bookser). Emily Clark uses childism theory and research to look for ways in which children as well as teachers and parents might work in less of a hierarchical way, moving away from developmental or standardized models to draw on children’s knowledge differently. Chan and Ritchie illustrate the importance of recognizing and sustaining *Te Whāriki* in the face of demands for standardized and neoliberal as well as narrow language and curriculum models by the current neoliberal New Zealand government.

In each of the articles, and in the introductory article by Kroeger and Berger, there is an emphasis on small acts of hope, and different ways to find sanctuary in the spaces we work and live, given the dangerous, unpredictable, and often unjust as well as cruel times in which we now find ourselves. These discussions are the at the core of the special issue and I urge readers to look for authors’ individual ideas within each essay as well as collective ideas across the essays.

I end with one quote from Cornell West which the authors drew me toward. While written for a different time, I hope it is meaningful in this context too.

We need a moral prophetic minority of all colors who muster the courage to question the powers that be, the courage to be impatient with evil and patient with people, and the courage to fight for social justice. In many instances we will be stepping out on nothing, hoping to land on something.

That’s the history of black folks in the past and present, and of those of us who value history and struggle. Our courage rests on a deep democratic vision of a better world that lures us and a blood-drenched hope that sustains us.

This hope is not the same as optimism. Optimism adopts the role of the spectator who surveys the evidence in order to infer that things are going to get better. Yet we know that the evidence does not look good. The dominant tendencies of our day are unregulated global capitalism, racial balkanization, social breakdown, and individual depression. Hope enacts the stance of the participant who actively struggles against the evidence in order to change the deadly tides of wealth inequality, group xenophobia, and personal despair. Only a new wave of vision, courage, and hope can keep us sane-and preserve the decency and dignity requisite to revitalize our organizational energy for the work to be done. To live is to wrestle with despair yet never to allow despair to have the last word (West, 2005).

<https://www.historynewsnetwork.org/article/prisoners-of-hope>,
retrieved March 9, 2026.

Finally, I’d like to thank the authors who have contributed to this special issue of the journal, the Special Issue Editors, Janice Kroeger and Iris Berger, and Journal Editor Beth Blue Swadener for soliciting and editing two excellent articles for the Critical Policy Section of the journal. I’d also like to thank all the reviewers who gave powerful advice to each of the authors.

It has been my pleasure and honor to work with my coeditors, all of the wonderful authors, reviewers of articles, and the journal's esteemed editorial board members over the past years. I particularly want to thank Dr. Lucinda Heimer, Professor at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater and now one of the Editors for the journal. As Associate Editor of the journal, she gave great assistance to me; she also facilitated financial support for copyediting and formatting articles that was provided by the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater. Great thanks also to the journal's other editors: Drs. I-Fang Lee and Beth Blue Swadener, and to Drs. Chao-Ling Tseng and Shirley Kessler for their advice and help over the past years as Associate and Assistant Editors of the journal. I also want to thank Eileen Troemel our current copyeditor. Last but not least, thank you to the *Reconceptualizing Early Childhood Education* (RECE) organization for its current sponsorship of the journal.

Reference

West, Cornel (January 17, 2005). Prisoners of Hope. News at Home. <https://www.historynewsnetwork.org/article/prisoners-of-hope>, retrieved March 9, 2026.

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