Reflections on *Harriet’s House* and *Ana’s Shadow*

**Insights for Teacher Educators**

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Commissioned by Tara Goldstein with funding provided by the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada: Public Outreach Grant
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**Introduction**

The following are personal reflections from recent Bachelor of Education students, as well as current graduate and undergraduate students from the University of Toronto who have had an opportunity to work with *Harriet’s House* and *Ana’s Shadow* in their classes.

Representing a variety of academic disciplines, teaching experiences and research interests, these reflections provide insights into the range of pedagogical possibilities that the plays may open up for students who work with them.

It is our hope that you will draw on these reflections in order to consider how you might use these plays in your own teaching, and to imagine new conversations and possibilities for discussion with your Bachelor of Education classes.
Sookie Bardwell

I first encountered *Harriet’s House* and *Ana’s Shadow* in the ‘Sexualities and Schooling’ and ‘School and Society’ courses that I took with Tara Goldstein as components of my Bachelor of Education degree at OISE.

I have a background in Drama, so I was very excited to be able to interact with a dramatic text in a non-theatre-based classroom setting. In many classes at the university level, the majority of the texts used are highly theoretical. It was refreshing to be able to study a text that presented some of the issues that our students might face in a more tangible way. Focusing on the experiences of the characters in both plays allowed us to have a practical discussion regarding how, as educators, we might attempt to address the needs of students from backgrounds similar to those of the characters in the play, or students facing similar issues in our classrooms.

The challenges faced by the character Ana in particular resonated with me as an educator as I tried to imagine what it must be like for a young person in her position to try to focus on her school work in context of her other responsibilities. Not only is Ana struggling to assert her identity in the face of an overbearing sibling who constantly pressures her to fit a certain mould as a transnational adoptee, but in *Ana’s Shadow*, she is also coping with her feelings around potentially losing a mother for the *second time* while taking on a challenging caretaking role. With all of this going on, she ends up withdrawing from school. This scenario provides an excellent case study for educators to think through how a student like Ana might be supported in her struggles to balance personal responsibilities with the responsibilities of school, as well as for thinking about whether or not traditional schooling would even be able to meet the needs of a student like Ana.

I think that *Harriet’s House* and *Ana’s Shadow* would be excellent texts to use in an English, Social Science, or Drama classroom at the high school level. In addition to providing a starting point for discussions around issues like same-sex parenting, serious illness, and (transnational) adoption, I think that both texts also provide an excellent basis for discussions around the complicated topics of
identity politics and intersectionality. As a teacher, I believe that it is helpful to be able to base classroom discussions around the experiences of fictional characters. Being able to do so provides students with an opportunity to consider the issues presented as they might relate to their own lives in a non-threatening way, while also providing students who have no direct experiences with the issues addressed in the plays with an opportunity to consider how these complex issues play out in the lives of relatable characters.

**Jessica Cleeve**

My first encounter with *Harriet’s House* and *Ana’s Shadow* was in Dr. Goldstein’s ‘Schooling and Sexualities’ class. As a class, we each chose a character and acted out the script together. Then we were asked to have a discussion based on the play and to speak about what type of impact this play could have in a classroom and/or in an educational setting. During this discussion in class, interesting insights developed from speaking about the themes that were identified in the play. It got our class thinking about how each of the themes we had identified intersected, and how this play provides a great example of the human experience, depending on where you choose to take it.

I find the play to be very useful in the sense that it can work in many different educational settings and can be modified to fit different classrooms. I think it also offers students an opportunity to get motivated to participate and become active in their learning. In addition, I believe these plays specifically speak to a range of significant issues in a way that students can understand and relate to. However, I was initially concerned that without developing a strong context in which the play could be brought up, the importance of minor themes might be lost within the overarching themes. I think that in order to bring a play like this into the classroom, a teacher must first introduce the specific topics they are going to discuss and have students use the play as a place through which to develop powerful conversations.

As a Family Studies teacher, I believe that this play could be introduced to classes through the many topics that are discussed
within this field of study. For example, this play could set the bar for rich discussions around the concepts of “What is a Family” or “Types of Families.” In exposing students to Harriet’s family and how it came to be, the play helps students to gain perspectives on families such as Harriet’s, which, in turn, can help to cultivate acceptance and understanding of the broad range of families in the world.

The scene in the play that resonates most strongly with me is the scene in which Marty ‘comes out’ to Ana, and Ana is completely accepting of her and Harriet’s relationship. I believe that this is an important scene for students to see, as it can provide an entry point into discussions around ‘coming out’ and how it does not always have to result in conflict.

Overall, I felt that the use of this play was very positive for the ways in which it allows students to become involved in the material being discussed. I feel that this play could be used in all secondary level classes and can be made to fit many different theoretical principles being discussed.

**Georgia Cowling**

This introduction to performed ethnographies has helped me to build on my own critical thinking and practical approaches to teaching and learning. Exploring issues ranging from individual to collective identities, expressions, discriminations and the complexities of social systems, these ethnographies can create moments and spaces through which to acknowledge the diverse voices of many communities of learners, not only in schools, but in society.

I feel invigorated and more connected to my own learning and teaching pedagogies. Through these ethnographic scripts and stories, I shared in what I felt to be an enriching learning experience with fellow students, more than I might have experienced through exposure to textbook theories. The performed ethnographies transformed for me what were previously ‘imagined’ experiences from the plays’ characters, situations and themes, bridging through group interpretations ways to apply ‘real’ practical classroom strategies.
These connections come from digesting not only what is thought, but also what is felt.

The arts provide teachers and students with opportunities to experience new ways of exploring, thinking and communicating. Tara Goldstein notes that “ethnographers invent rather than represent ethnographic truths” (2012:9). Like microscopic and telescopic lenses, the ‘inventions’ of research-informed theatre can give audiences the tools magnify what can be personal and universal themes. As a visitor to Canada, I am living and learning about another country’s society and culture which is different from my own. My lenses are widening. I can see how performed ethnographies can promote more thoughtful understandings of social, political and cultural complexities, and can portray and celebrate the diversity of our local and global communities.

In the process of working through these performed ethnographic texts with others, a new collaborative space is formed, engaging us through observing, reflecting and questioning our world and ourselves. Here, we develop new perspectives and create alternatives. And this is an exciting space to share in teaching and learning.

Reference:


Carly Glanzberg

Prior to my introduction to Harriet’s House and Ana’s Shadow in Dr. Goldstein’s ‘Sexuality and Schooling’ course, I was already exploring different ways in which Drama and Theatre Arts scripts could be used in the classroom for a variety of purposes. Namely, in my Drama teachable course, we discussed many possible ways in which Drama can be used to enhance students’ critical thinking skills, specifically
through the experience of identifying and enacting multiple perspectives on a given issue. Drama offers an accessible entry point through which to explore complex themes and issues by way of characters and stories that are concrete and relatable rather than abstract and theoretical. *Harriet’s House* and *Ana’s Shadow* do just that.

While I feel that it is important to include other texts to complement some of the critical themes within the play, the scripts themselves offer a rich and sophisticated entry point for investigating both broad and specific issues and concepts. I felt that doing a ‘read aloud’ of the script with the whole class was an engaging way to get acquainted with the characters and the issues at hand. Furthermore, having a facilitated discussion where we as readers were able to pull out moments that stood out for us personally was a great way to hear and identify how parts of the plays resonated differently with each individual. I would strongly encourage doing a ‘read aloud’ with students and allowing them to identify crucial moments before introducing more structured activities.

I found that using a play within the university classroom was a unique and useful way to approach discussions. It was refreshing to move away from articles and to initiate class discussions based on written characters’ experiences and perspectives. While we were lucky to have the playwright in the classroom, I feel that any teacher could take up this work and facilitate interesting dialogue with students, as with each new reading, new ideas, themes and discussions emerge. I really value using written plays as a pedagogical tool, as students can find aspects of the story and characters to relate to or identify with regardless of whether their lived realities are close to or far from those of the play’s characters, and plays offer insights into human experiences and emotions. Furthermore, each individual student can enrich class discussions by bringing in their own lived experiences.

I feel that an important component of *Harriet’s House* and *Ana’s Shadow* is that they are based on real-life interviews. This is a reminder that the themes and issues are not created or imagined, but rather are a collection of real peoples’ experiences, captured in a poignant and connectable piece.
My introduction to *Harriet’s House* and *Ana’s Shadow* was through Dr. Goldstein’s ‘School and Society’ course at OISE. The class is intended to give us, as teacher candidates, an overview of the kinds of challenges that students face in society and how these systemic challenges can affect students in our classrooms. Dr. Goldstein used the scripts for both *Harriet’s House* and *Ana’s Shadow* - among her other high school-based performed ethnographies - to encourage us to engage with our hypothetical future students as informed, empathetic, self-aware teachers capable of addressing issues of racism, sexism, homophobia in a diverse classroom.

Through a process of reading the plays out loud, engaging in class discussion and personal reflection, we connected to the stories of each character, giving the life experiences of Harriet, Ana, Luisa, Clare, Marty and Anita humanity. Themes such as ‘Home’, ‘Family’, ‘Voice/Silence’, and ‘Illness, Loss and Death’ which were developed for the secondary-level guides, provide potent access points through which to delve into the effects of transnational adoption, LGBTQ identities, blended families, fear and prejudice, navigating multilingual spaces, and all of the other complex and socially relevant factors of these characters’ lives.

In our arts-based cohort, bringing these characters to life was exciting and easy, with many of us willing and eager to perform. The opportunity to get under the skin of a certain character provided us with unique insights into their individual worlds; we each connected to the characters as people and as players in a very personal web of relationships. The class-directed discussions, facilitated by Dr. Goldstein, channelled our empathetic responses to the characters into broader questions about the nature of power and privilege. The stories of *Harriet’s House* and *Ana’s Shadow* became catalysts for the personal stories that each of us brought into the discussion, weaving a tapestry of human experience that transcends the original contexts of the stories into the contexts of our lived histories, of our classrooms and of our expectations for our future classrooms. Through our own personal reflections on the plays, we consolidated
these expansive conversations, often through a question that invited us to reflect on our personal practice.
When asked, “How does knowing something about Ana, Luisa and/or Clare’s family life help you as a teacher to engage or connect with them as students?”, I responded with this (excerpt from journal entry):

“The play mentions that Luisa has a scholarship for university; clearly, she has found a way to excel at an academic level. That success may have been mediated by a number of attentive and flexible teachers who were able to reach beyond cultural divides and engage a student whose attention is elsewhere; however, it may be that academic success was easy for Luisa and was achieved with no accommodations. As a teacher, it’s important for me to recognize that even students who are fulfilling the criteria to be successful at school may be facing personal issues that compete with academic success and they may not be truly engaged in the classroom. Understanding Luisa’s background can provide teachers with opportunities to connect the learning in the classroom to real world success, giving a purpose to her academic studies. Knowing students’ personal backgrounds (at any level) is also useful as a teacher to ensure that the classroom is as safe and comfortable a learning environment as possible. As a Social Sciences teacher specifically, it’s important for me to remember that the issues that are brought up in class don’t exist in a theoretical vacuum. Some students have lived experiences with poverty, racism, and living in developing nations. Being cognizant of the range of experiences students bring into the classroom is crucial to determining what material is brought into the classroom and how it is approached with the class.”

Exploring social issues through ethnographic performance is an excellent way to begin conversations around power and privilege in society, in the classroom, and within ourselves. I believe that the arts are an extremely powerful medium for education, and I hope to bring this philosophy of teaching through the creation, performance and discussion of art into my classroom. Using these plays provided me with an excellent exemplar for using these instructional methods in my own classroom, and I greatly appreciate their presence in my own teacher education experience.
I first met Dr. Goldstein in a Research Methodologies class where she was guest lecturer. I had read her chapter on performance ethnography in our course textbook, *The Methodological Dilemma* (Gallagher 2008) and was intrigued by the concept of "bringing the research back" to the students, which she spoke about during her guest lecture.

As an artist-educator, I am passionate about the ways in which research and theories can translate into meaningful and relevant experiences for students and educators alike, through artistic forms. So, when Dr. Goldstein handed out her script for *Harriet's House*, I was elated to discover that research could find its way back to an audience in such an accessible and exciting way. Having been a high school Drama teacher before coming back to school myself to take my MA in education, I was constantly on the lookout for something like this to use in the classroom. Reading the script, I was struck by both the strong narrative quality of the playwriting, and by the complexities and depth of the topics covered.

My own research focus is arts-based educational research methods and methodologies, and the use of art as research/research as art. What attracted me to Dr. Goldstein's work and to her methodology is that it aligns itself with the intersections of being an artist, researcher, teacher and scholar. As is evident in her plays, borders and boundaries are not clear, distinct lines or markings, but are tracings on a map that is in constant motion and flux.

Through arts-based educational research, the arts are not a means to illustrate a point in the text; they are a part of the text itself. Art is integral to the researching and acquisition of knowledge, as well as to the way in which it is communicated back to an audience. In her plays, Dr. Goldstein provides a way in which her research/art has multiple access points and meanings for the reader/participant. I feel that the possibilities are monumental for using this type of work to deal with complex and challenging subjects which are too often not dealt with in education because of the discomfort and unease that
can arise in speaking about difficult topics. It is using art as agency. As arts-based educational researcher Stephanie Springgay notes:

Art as agency uses art making not simply as a subject discipline but as a mode of communication, which re-constructs power, privilege and structures of knowledge (Springgay 2001:35).

As an artist and educator, it is exciting to be part of a project such as this which is willing to address wounds and disrupt norms, to use art in aesthetic, theoretical and practical ways, which recognizes the value of the arts as research to promote awareness, critical dialogue and ultimately, systemic change.

I am curious as to how Dr. Goldstein's plays will further develop conversations in the classroom over time. As an educator, I find it crucial to find ways in which to break down dominant discourses and invite the voices of others into the conversation. Working on these discussion guides was a wonderful opportunity to be part of an ongoing project which I believe has great pedagogical and creative potential to inspire, disrupt and motivate change.


**Sarah Papoff**

As an experienced classroom teacher, a new grad student and a theatre student in a former life, I was delighted to encounter research-informed theatre and performed ethnography. I met Dr. Goldstein as she cheerfully plunked scripts on the table, gave out roles comfortably after a friendly roundtable introduction to her class as a guest lecturer in our Qualitative Research Methods class. She did not lecture, instead we read excerpts from Harriet’s House and Ana’s Shadow in role – which drew us in quickly (arts and non-arts people alike) and invited us into a genuine discussion about the plays and the methodology behind them.
Dr. Goldstein framed her research in methodological theory clearly, and I think that this type of discussion is important for future use of the play by classroom teachers. In a Bachelor of Education class, it may be interesting to take up some of these thoughts through her essay “Performed Ethnography: Possibilities, Multiple Commitments and the Pursuit of Rigour” in *A Methodological Dilemma: Creative, Critical and Collaborative Approaches to Qualitative Research* (Goldstein in Gallagher 2008). Here, she discusses the “potential pedagogical power of performed ethnography to provoke critical analysis.” (2008:85). For me, that possibility was awakened.

The play was written in my language. As a long-time Drama teacher who engages students by being in role, and with process drama, I was fascinated by a play that was so carefully crafted and researched. While I would suggest from my undergrad Theatre Studies and Dramaturgy training that all plays are carefully researched to a degree, Dr. Goldstein’s work was able to balance the notion of narrative-driven theatre with staying true to her ethnographic study. I was fascinated by the work of theory and genre together. For the first time, I found myself thinking: “This is accessible. I wonder if I could write up my research in this way?”

The characters bring such a rich look at the complexity of the ideas by making them real and personal. I love being in role with students, and the plays offer a wonderful place through which to start a dialogue about so many issues. I think reading in role to start the class was a powerful beginning. It raised more questions than answers, and invited us into a new world, with big ideas and a way to explore relationships – those of mothers, daughters, lovers, friends—Harriet’s world, and the world of her daughters.

In working on the discussion guide, what struck me as particularly useful for new teachers and what would have been useful for me many years ago was reading the essay “Courageous Conversations” (Singleton and Hays 2008:18-22) to think about how these plays can open doors for youth to speak about important issues such as power, relationships, home, heteronormativity, family, and adoption. I came to love the theme-based approach. Mapping the themes and how they intersect draws out important ideas. I loved the Venn diagram
mapping that Dr Goldstein has done in classes to make those intersections clear.

I hope that as you embark on your own teaching and sharing of “difficult knowledge” (Britzman 1998), you find many points where themes intersect and where important – not easy – conversations can begin.

References:


Sarah Peek

I first encountered the plays Harriet’s House and Ana’s Shadow in Professor Goldstein’s Initial Teacher Education course “Sexualities and Schooling: Approaches to Anti-Homophobia Education”. Throughout my time as a learner in Tara’s classrooms, I have had the opportunity to explore and reflect on the role of performed ethnographies as an educational tool and their potential to spark and facilitate discussions of power and inequity in schools and in our larger societies.

That performed ethnographies use personal narratives, which allow us to explore our own selves, as well as how we understand and
interact with one another, is an appealing feature. Moreover, plays like *Harriet’s House* and *Ana’s Shadow* offer alternative entry points for critically understanding and analyzing complex and challenging issues such as racism, homophobia, and colonization, in ways we cannot access strictly through conceptual analysis.

At the outset of the teacher discussion guide, a member of our research team included a quote from Thomas King’s book *The Truth About Stories: A Native Narrative* (King 2003). In this book, King explores how stories shape who we are and how we understand and interact with other people. Inversely, we can use stories to explore and ask difficult questions about our own selves, the larger social worlds in which we live, and the interactions between the two.

Using one’s own experience to explore social relations of power is not an entirely new practice and in fact, has a long history, in particular in fields of study such as Gender and Women’s Studies. I believe that stories can play a powerful role in engaging students, and that as teachers, we need to explore new and innovative ways to bring diverse stories into our classrooms and use these stories as tools to disrupt dominant narratives - particularly in our study of histories, but also, in studying our contemporary world.

In a Civics classroom for example, I may use these performed ethnographies as an avenue for exploring the complex material impacts of citizenship on people’s lives. I see using performed ethnographies as a powerful way to centre student voices in the classroom; to encourage students to use their own knowledge and experiences – in other words, their stories – to co-construct meaningful knowledge that might spark or further individual and collective reflection and action for social change.

**Adam Saifer**

I am suspicious of those who claim that the arts are necessarily positive in nature. I’m troubled by the commonly-held belief that the arts exist in a vacuum, outside of social processes (art for art’s sake), as well as the equally prevalent belief that the arts inevitably contribute to social justice, inclusion, and equity.
I was drawn to working with *Harriet’s House* and *Ana’s Shadow* because I feel that education may be the only avenue through which to experience art without unconsciously (re)producing the unjust power relations that structure our society.

As a musician, writer, and educator, I have spent years trying to make sense of the social value of art. In the process, I’ve encountered plenty of politically solid art that, due to its heavy-handedness, loses all aesthetic value. Through my work on these two plays, I’ve begun to feel that stories are all we are.

Good stories reflect reality (though not necessarily in the Realist sense). Reality is governed by unjust power relations. Therefore, it is our job as educators to use stories – and some of the best stories are fiction – to help our students to develop the critical literacy skills necessary to make sense of the world around them.

*Laura Sparling*

As a non-theatrical individual with paralyzing stage fright, I had never considered the immense value that theatre could bring to learning at all levels and across various disciplines prior to studying *Harriet’s House* and *Ana’s Shadow* with Dr. Goldstein in her “Sexualities and Schooling” course at UT/OISE. In our readings of these plays in class, our conversations extended organically from discussions of sexuality and anti-homophobia education to broader interrogations of issues such as colonialism, identity, and inclusive societies.

As research-informed performed ethnographies, Dr. Goldstein’s plays serve as invaluable classroom materials that present reliable portrayals of social and global issues and provide accessible entry points into diverse subjects of inquiry. Since studying these plays and other plays researched and written by Dr. Goldstein in my university classes, I have become an advocate of drama education as a critical pedagogy strategy that includes all learners in diverse ways and touches on diverse topics.
Spiro Vavougios

I first came across *Harriet’s House* and *Ana’s Shadow* in a course taught by Dr. Tara Goldstein called “Equity and Activism in Education.” I felt an immediate connection to the plays because many of the issues and challenges faced by the characters in them resonate with obstacles that I have had to overcome and continue to deal with in my own life. For example, the various attitudes toward homosexuality that are portrayed in the plays parallel my own feelings and responses to homosexuality at different points of my life.

Moreover, upon reading the plays, I felt an immediate connection to the character Ana. Since my first year of university, I have been a primary caregiver for my grandmother who suffers from Alzheimer’s disease. Like Ana, I have had to balance my responsibilities as a caregiver with other aspects of my life.

I was also drawn to Goldstein’s plays because I view them as a revolutionary approach to teaching that serves as a form of social activism. For instance, because the plays derive from ethnographic data, the challenges and dilemmas presented in them reflect real issues faced by the families that educators interact with. Both plays can be seen as challenging the class, racial, and heterosexual assumptions that schools may have about their students. In this sense, *Harriet’s House* and *Ana’s Shadow* have the potential to alter how educators see and interact with their students, which will assist them in providing culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy. I believe that providing education in such a manner (such that it is responsive and relevant to the diverse needs of students) is essential to ensuring student success.
Contributors

Sarah Bardwell is a recent graduate of the Intermediate/Senior panel of the Bachelor of Education program at OISE/UT. Her previous academic life was spent studying Cultural Studies and Critical Theory, Studio Art, and English at McMaster University. After her time at McMaster, Sarah spent time coordinating the Hamilton Youth Arts Network (a youth engagement program in Hamilton, ON centered on the arts), and spent 15 months teaching ESL in South Korea. Through these experiences, Sarah has become interested in exploring how the arts can be used as a tool through which students can engage in 'courageous conversations' around a variety of challenging topics.

Jessica Cleeve is a recent graduate of the Bachelor of Education program at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE/UT). Jessica's interest has been in Queer Theory and its place in education. Jessica was first introduced to Harriet's House and Ana's Shadow in Dr. Goldstein's 'Sexualities and Schooling' class. Jessica will be studying her Masters in Social Work at Laurier University, with a focus on individuals and families.

Georgia Cowling has worked as a collaborative artist and project worker in elementary, secondary, arts and community-based settings. She has a Bachelor of Arts in Drama and Media Arts and a Master of Education in Arts Administration. Georgia has designed, implemented and facilitated a youth arts-focused network and numerous arts-based projects and programs within local communities of the eastern regions of Melbourne, Australia. During her stay in Canada, she is completing graduate teaching studies (Monash University), focusing her research on the pedagogical innovations of multimodal collaborations amongst artists, teachers and students, and the role they play in education.

Carly Glanzberg recently completed her Bachelor of Education at the University of Toronto (OISE/UT). She participated in Dr. Goldstein's ‘Sexualities and Schooling’ course, which further informed her anti-oppression education framework. Carly is currently completing an internship at The Triangle Program in Toronto where she has had the opportunity to work with LGBTQ students in an alternative school setting. In the future, Carly hopes to continue working with youth, specifically in the areas of sexuality and gender education.

Kali Greve is a recent graduate from the Intermediate/Junior stream of the Initial Teacher Education program at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto (OISE/UT). She had the privilege of having Dr. Goldstein as her ‘School and Society’ instructor, where she first encountered the rich complexity of research and artistry found in Harriet's House and Ana’s Shadow. Kali hopes to echo this integration of social issues and art in her personal pedagogy.
Natalie Kauffman is an artist and art educator. She has taught Visual Art, Photography, Media Arts, and Drama to a wide range of students, from preschool through university. She ran a photography business for 15 years, exhibiting at galleries and art fairs across North America. She earned her Bachelor of Fine Arts from Concordia University in Montreal in 1994, and is currently completing her Master of Arts in Education at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, specializing in Arts Education.

Sarah Papoff is an elementary school teacher at Toronto District School Board’s Crescent Town Public School, currently on leave. She is working towards a Master of Arts at OISE in the Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning. She has delivered many workshops for schools, Family of Schools, ETT, the Council of Ontario Dance and Drama Teachers (CODE), as well as for pre-service teachers at York University. She has taught grades 3 to 8, and worked as a generalist teacher and drama/dance specialist. She volunteers with CODE. She enjoyed being part of the Ministry writing projects with CODE to create new, innovative curriculum. She is passionate about embedding the arts and social justice into teaching. Sarah was delighted to be part of the discussion guide writing project for Ana’s Shadow and Harriet’s House.

Sarah Peek is a recent graduate of the Bachelor of Education program at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto (OISE/UT). In her B.Ed., she focused her studies on teaching for equity in urban schools. Sarah holds a Master’s degree in International Affairs and has worked on numerous academic research projects both within Canada and internationally. She is currently working with Professor Goldstein on “10 Years of Inqueeries,” a project that explores the experiences of anti-homophobia educators and the impact of this work on themselves and their students.

Adam Saifer is a Master of Arts student in the department of Curriculum, Teaching, and Learning at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE/UT). He works on the Urban Arts High Schools Project, where his main focus is the role of socio-economic status as an exclusionary mechanism in schools. Adam’s own research examines how the imagined role of the arts in schools changes within different class contexts. He is also interested in looking at the ways in which themes of social justice and resistance are addressed in creative writing spaces.

Laura Sparling is a recent graduate of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) of the University of Toronto. Her Bachelor of Education degree focused on learning in an urban context and has certified her to teach Canadian and World Studies at the Intermediate/Senior level. Prior to attending OISE, Laura completed a Master’s degree in International Affairs and dedicated a year to collaborating with women’s rights groups in Chiapas, Mexico. As an advocate of arts-based learning, Laura was enthusiastic to join this project, especially after studying under Professor Goldstein in her B.Ed.
Spiros Vavougios is currently an undergraduate student from the University of Toronto, where he studies Political Science and Equity Studies. Spiros’s interest in education was sparked while taking a course with Dr. Goldstein that approached issues surrounding education and schooling from a critical, anti-oppressive and social justice perspective. Spiros hopes to be able to apply his background in equity to either a legal or medical—or, perhaps both—field of work in the future.