ME to WE Social Entrepreneurship: A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing

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Abstract

The story of the WE enterprise, also known as ME to WE or WE Charity, presents us with a cautionary tale for teachers who welcome social enterprise into schools as a way of bringing community engagement and social justice into their educational programs. Our article is a cautionary tale that, like all such tales, opens with the statement of a warning about social entrepreneurship in schools. As the narrative unfolds, this warning is disregarded, and the violator ultimately experiences an unpleasant fate. Using the large-scale data available on Instagram, this article reveals in detail how WE represented itself, how others perceived it, and how it worked in and with schools to achieve its corporate goals. We conclude the

tale by discussing how, by delinking education from corporate interests, schools may serve equity and the public good instead of creating brand fanatics in the service of elite interests.

Keywords: social entrepreneurship, social justice education, educational policy, ME to WE, WE Movement, digital methods, Instagram

Résumé

L'histoire de l'entreprise « WE », aussi connue sous le nom « ME to WE » ou « WE Charity », constitue une mise en garde pour les enseignants qui accueillent des entreprises sociales dans leur école comme un moyen d'intégrer l'engagement communautaire et la justice sociale dans leur programme éducatif. Notre article raconte cette histoire qui se veut un avertissement. Comme toutes les autres histoires du genre, elle commence par une mise en garde contre l'entrepreneuriat social dans les écoles. Au fil du récit, cet avertissement est ignoré et, en définitive, le contrevenant finit par connaître une expérience désastreuse. En utilisant la grande quantité de données disponibles sur Instagram, cet article dévoile en détail comment l'entreprise WE se présentait aux autres, comment les autres la percevaient, et comment elle a travaillé dans et avec les écoles pour atteindre ses objectifs corporatifs. Nous concluons ce récit en discutant de la manière dont, en dissociant l'éducation des intérêts corporatifs, les écoles peuvent favoriser l'équité et le bien public au lieu de créer des fanatiques de la marque au service des intérêts d'une élite.

Mots-clés : Entrepreneuriat social, éducation à la justice sociale, politiques éducatives, ME to WE, mouvement WE, méthodes numériques, Instagram

Introduction

For nearly 25 years, WE was a celebrated household name within schools and school systems across Canada, known for promoting social good among students as celebrated through in-school leadership activities and extravagant concert-style events called WE Day. Despite some critiques and cautions, the WE enterprise captured a solid place in Canadian education until public controversy erupted in the summer of 2020 over WE Charity's $912-million contract to run the Canada Student Service Grant, a program intended to provide volunteer experiences for young people as a response to COVID-19. The contract raised questions that revealed shrouded business relationships between the organization and high-level Canadian politicians. Public criticism erupted following a flood of media stories telling of racist activities within WE (Merali, 2020; Robertson, 2020; Vennavally-Rao & Cousins, 2020), problematic international development relations (Tiessen, 2020), and questionable investment of charity funds into real estate holdings (Brown, 2020; Lilley, 2020). Citing the impacts of COVID-19 on WE's activities ("Putting children first," 2020d), co-founders Marc and Craig Kielburger announced the closing of WE Charity Canada in September 2020, following weeks of controversy. Of course, hindsight is 20/20, and we can now look back on how WE embedded itself in education systems to the organization's benefit. Many teachers are left feeling both abandoned and misled. What can be learned from this tale that can be applied to educational partnerships moving forward? More specifically, what do organizations that use a social entrepreneurship paradigm bring to education, and how should schools and teachers respond?

The story of the WE enterprise, also known as ME to WE, WE Charity, or just WE, presents us with a cautionary tale for teachers who welcome social enterprise into schools as a way of bringing community engagement and social justice into their educational programs. Our article is a cautionary tale that, like all such tales, opens with the statement of a warning and a depiction of danger. As the narrative unfolds, this warning is disregarded, and the violator ultimately experiences an "unpleasant fate, which is frequently related in expansive and grisly detail" ("Cautionary tale," 2021). Applying issue mapping to the large-scale data available on Instagram, this article explores cautions and consequences of inviting corporate interests into schools by analyzing how WE represented itself, how others perceived it, and how it worked in and with schools to achieve its corporate goals.

While Instagram is known for a polished, promotional, and positive form of networked visual communication, a close analysis through digital methods reveals in grisly detail the impacts of WE's corporate agenda. The tale ends with the closing of the organization and with teachers wondering what happened.

Tales of Caution: Social Enterprise in Schools

Research about the impact of corporations accessing children and youth inside of schools and school programs flourished in the early 1990s when neo-liberal government policies touted the inefficiency of public institutions and the primacy of private enterprises to deliver results (see, for example, Harrison, 2005; Harrison & Kachur, 1999; Hill & Kumar, 2009). Concerns included that the financial gifts from corporations in exchange for the captive attention of children was too high a price to pay and that schools had a moral responsibility to protect students from the raw corporate goals behind dollars for sport clocks and team jerseys (complete with corporate logos front and centre, of course). A study by the Canadian Teachers' Federation in 2006 quoted a study participant, a teacher:

> …too many children have been transformed into miniature consumption machines who keep swallowing the corporate message that meaning comes from acquiring and a sense of self-worth from owning. You don't have one? What a loser. (Canadian Teachers' Federation, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, & Fédération des syndicats de l'enseignement, 2006, p. 3)

More recent studies describe the context of increased marketization and privatization of education and the normalization of market values and procedures in everything from school buildings to curriculum materials and teaching aids, in a rise of edu-business that is creating shifts from education as a public good to education as a profit-making industry (Ball, 2007, 2009, 2012). Our study is concerned with the impact of this increased privatized power impacting students and teachers.

Efforts to challenge commercialization and corporatism in schools have been softened by the discourses of social entrepreneurship, and in our study of the WE enterprise, or *WEconomy*, as the Kielburgers describe their efforts (Kielburger et al., 2018), we saw

how the language of entrepreneurship was used to embed the organization within class-rooms in many jurisdictions. The concern with social entrepreneurship is "whether social enterprises present a genuine alternative to their profit seeking counterparts, or whether they play into the hands of neo-liberal governments whose commitment to reduce public expenditures is manifest" (Shaw & Bruin, 2013, p. 738). Peattie and Morley (2008) provide a description of a range of positions social entrepreneurs use to mediate the different goals, as well as the beneficiaries, capital, workforces, and suppliers related to social enterprises achieving their goals (p. 97), placing social goals and corporate goals at opposite ends of a continuum. While Shaw and Bruin are generally optimistic that scaling up social enterprises will result in increased "innovation, productivity, and encourage[ment for] reflection and reconsiderations of the merits of capitalism" (p. 744), Roy and Grant (2020) call for a more critical reading, highlighting the challenges in mediating the economic goals of corporations and the social goals of public institutions. They explain that social enterprises are challenged to bridge market logics that demand they maximize profits even while they strive to build public trust to allow them access to the public goods and to policy spaces where they can shape public policies that would provide them with the public support they need to maximize their profits (p. 182). In the case of the WE enterprise, here is where we identified the wolf lurking, carefully wrapped in sheep's clothing and disguised as an innocent agency interested in engaging school children. As Kielburger et al. declare in WEconomy (2018), "early success stories in the WEconomy reveal what can be achieved when you blend the power of capitalism with the heart of altruism" (chapter 20, para. 1). Capitalism wrapped in altruism is cause for caution in this tale.

Setting the Scene: WE Becomes Embedded in Schools with Some Early Warnings

WE events and materials prominently feature the origin story of WE Charity, a story of 12-year-old Craig Kielburger being moved to action in 1995 by a news article about the murder of 12-year-old Iqbal Masih, a former child slave and human rights activist. Inspired by Masih, Craig Kielburger dedicated his early teenage years to advocacy against child labour, and Free the Children—now WE Charity—was born. Over time, WE Charity expanded to encompass development projects via WE Villages, which works in

various locations across the global south to provide "access to five key pillars—education, clean water and sanitation, health care, food security, and alternative income—and [empower] a community to lift itself out of poverty" (WE Charity, 2020b). In 2009, Craig and his brother Marc Kielburger founded ME to WE, a social enterprise aimed at providing sustainable funding for WE Charity and WE Villages by "creating employment for vulnerable populations and/or selling goods and services to fund charitable activities" (WE Charity, 2020e). This for-profit arm of WE sells various socially responsible products and trips abroad to WE Villages, branded with WE and integrated with other WE activities. ME to WE asserts the value of the social enterprise model:

> By applying innovative business approaches, social enterprises can find solutions to the world's greatest social and environmental challenges—solutions that would be beyond the capacity of traditional charities. And because they speak the same language, social enterprises have far greater power to build partnerships with the business world, leveraging corporate connections and infrastructure to scale impact even more—as ME to WE does through partnerships with socially conscious companies around the world. (WE Charity, 2020e)

ME to WE provides metrics for its social impact (WE Charity, 2020a), featuring statistics such as the $20 million in donations to ME to WE, 12,000 stores carrying ME to WE products, and 42,000 travellers volunteering abroad. While ME to WE has received significant support from corporate sponsors, Craig Kielburger has also proudly announced that "more than 60 percent of Free the Children's annual budget comes from youths.… We receive Christmas money, Hanukkah money, Tooth Fairy money, birthday money" (Rockel, 2010). So, while Kielburger still shares the story of Iqbal Masih and child labour, his for-profit enterprise benefits from the donations of children. One of the early criticisms of the WE enterprise was the lack of transparency about how funds moved between the different WE entities and how the Kielburgers benefited from the work of these thousands of children (see Jefferess, 2012).

The impact of ME to WE has indeed been sweeping, and the organization has become a mainstay in education systems across Canada and increasingly across the globe. Foremost among ME to WE initiatives for students was WE Day, a series of concert-style events that drew crowds of young people to local stadiums to experience the "who's who of social change" (Belton, 2020), take a spin on WE's blue carpet, and soak up the

inspiration and entertainment provided by ME to WE performers. To attend WE Day, young people were required to complete a requisite number of volunteer hours through the WE Schools program, which offered experiential service learning opportunities proven to boost "academic engagement, civic engagement and college and workplace readiness" (WE Charity, 2020g). Operating in over 18,000 schools, the reach of WE Schools is remarkable, with metrics indicating increases in teacher fulfillment and student leadership, all while generating $8.3 million for social causes and 10.8 million pounds of food to meet local needs. Over time, WE Day became an anticipated annual event for students, and WE became a trusted household name in many high school classrooms. School districts partnered with WE for everything from mental health resources through WE Wellbeing to the development of school curriculum (Furey, 2020).

Despite the popularity of WE in schools and among youth, as well as the economic success of ME to WE social enterprise, cautions about the structure and activities of ME to WE go back a decade. Early cautions expressed how WE Day elided systemic issues impacting poverty and ignored the role of the state in upholding public good in favour of corporate impacts (McCracken, 2013). Though the organization aligned itself with social justice and global citizenship aims, further cautions expressed how WE in fact prevented meaningful social participation by enabling students to develop symbolic capital through corporate-consumer affiliation with WE Day and other WE activities (Jefferess, 2012). This caution extended to WE Schools curriculum materials, which problematically centred western notions of development and social change, celebrated the actions of celebrity humanitarians, such as Craig Kielburger, and prescribed student responses within the suite of ME to WE campaigns and events (Karsgaard, 2019). Curriculum materials and the larger WE enterprise were thus mutually reinforcing, subtly strengthening the brand.

How Did the Wolf Get In the Pen? The Story of WE Through Issue Mapping and Digital Methods

One of the challenges of studying WE is its skillful brand management, both within its own marketing and through media manipulation (Brown, 2015a, 2015b; Merali, 2020; Nardi, 2020). While national media coverage is increasingly exposing the inner workings of the social enterprise, this article is concerned with what we can learn about WE

through those that engage with it online. Social media platforms such as Instagram provide space for users to picture, describe, and connect to WE, leveraging such affordances as imagery, text, and hashtags like #wemovement. This article draws on the large-scale data available through Instagram to map the perspectives of students, teachers, sponsors, celebrities, staff, and the Kielburgers themselves—of anyone who posts and hashtags #wemovement on the platform—in order to more systematically explore WE in public life.

To trace the online life of WE, this article applies digital methods to issue mapping. Grounded in a Latourian (Latour, 2005) understanding of the social world as performative, issue mapping (Marres, 2015; Marres & Moats, 2015; Marres & Weltevrede, 2013; Rogers et al., 2015; see also Venturini 2010, 2012, on controversy mapping) takes "as its object of study current affairs and offers a series of techniques to describe, deploy, and visualize the actors, objects, and substance of a social issue" (Rogers et al., 2015, p. 9). Issue mapping enables crossing between dimensions in exploring collective phenomena, upholding how "controversy and innovation unfold in social and epistemic, political, and technical dimensions all at once, and indeed, the merit of controversies as research objects is that they render visible 'heterogeneous entanglements' between different types of entities" (Marres & Moats, 2015, p. 3). Thus, taking ME to WE as an issue rather than an entity, issue mapping enables us to trace the contested nature of ME to WE in relation to schools, events, products, culture, celebrities, WE Day participants, media, Craig Kielburger, school boards, Canadian identity, WE villages, individual teachers—or anything/one else that may emerge over Instagram—providing a multidimensional analysis of the social enterprise.

Instagram provides a particularly fitting site to explore WE. Instagram is popular among young people, with 26.3% of users in Canada falling between the ages of 13 to 24 (Statista, 2020). It is the fastest growing social media platform in Canada, with an anticipated 12.6 million users in 2020 (Newberry, 2019). Visual communication dominates Instagram, but imagery and videos can be accompanied by text, emoticons, stickers, and animations, and posts can be networked to the media of other users through hashtags and GIS-based location tags. At a material level, media production is centred in mobile phone technology rather than desktop computers, and it is dominated by personal snapshots that are edited, filtered, and shared on the platform. As Instagram is materially embedded in everyday life, the "online and the offline, the digital and the embodied, are able to be hybridized in performative assemblages" (Gibbs et al., 2015, p. 7) around such entities as WE.

Digital Methods

In order to trace the nature of WE on Instagram, our study operationalizes issue mapping via digital methods, which works with the tools embedded in social media platforms, including time stamps, images, and hashtags, repurposing them for social research (Rogers, 2013, 2015). Our study follows established digital methods regarding hashtag analysis (Bruns & Burgess, 2015; Highfield & Leaver, 2015; Marres & Gerlitz, 2016), which emphasize the strategic and connective use of hashtags by users interested in participating in a particular dialogue. While the image-centric nature of Instagram in some cases necessitates analysis of the visual content of posts, our research is interested with the ways users connect their experiences to those of others via hashtags, which enable public groups to form ad hoc in response to discrete issues, topics, and events (Bruns & Burgess, 2015; Bruns & Moe, 2014; Marres, 2015), such as those activities, campaigns, events, overseas trips, and other experiences related to WE. Due to strategic and connective use of hashtags by users interested in participating in an issue dialogue, "co-occurrence of hashtags can be read as discourse" (Sánchez-Querubín et al., 2017, p. 100). While imagery is central to Instagram, we have opted to focus on hashtags as opposed to analyzing images, which may reveal the identities of individual users. Following the quantitative network analysis provided by digital methods, we therefore shift to an interpretation of the resultant network graphs to identify key issues and considerations for educators.

Methods and Data Set

Data were collected using the "—tag" function on "instagram-scraper," a Python-based software tool available on GitHub (rarcega, 2018). Initially, we queried Instagram for a number of hashtags related to WE, namely #wemovement, #weschools, #metowe, #weday, and #wevillages. In each case, we limited our query to 2,000 posts in order to collect a significant yet manageable sample for analysis. Following initial exploration of the data, we decided to focus our study on #wemovement, as this hashtag was associated with the broadest range of WE-oriented hashtags, including the other four. The #wemovement corpus also exhibited minimal bleed into unrelated topics, unlike the more commonly used #metowe, which has clearly been taken up for other purposes.

The resultant #wemovement corpus contains 2,000 posts from June 26, 2019 to July 7, 2020, with two outliers in 2017 and 2018. It thus provides a current overview of

Instagram activity relating to WE. Spikes in activity pictured in the graph, "#wemovement post frequency by date" (Figure 1), are associated with WE Day events at the United Nations in New York on September 25, 2019; in Atlantic Canada on October 16, 2019; in Alberta on October 22, 2019; in Vancouver, British Columbia on November 19, 2019; in Ottawa, Ontario on December 10, 2019; in Montreal, Québec on February 3, 2020; and in the United Kingdom on March 4, 2020 (WE Charity, 2020f). The first WE Day Japan was scheduled for March 20, 2020 but was cancelled due to COVID-19. The frequency of WE Day events is reflected in the predominance of WE Day-related hashtags throughout the data set, shaping the kinds of hashtag discourses that emerge in relation to #wemovement, as discussed in more detail below.

Figure 1

#Wemovement Post Frequency by Date
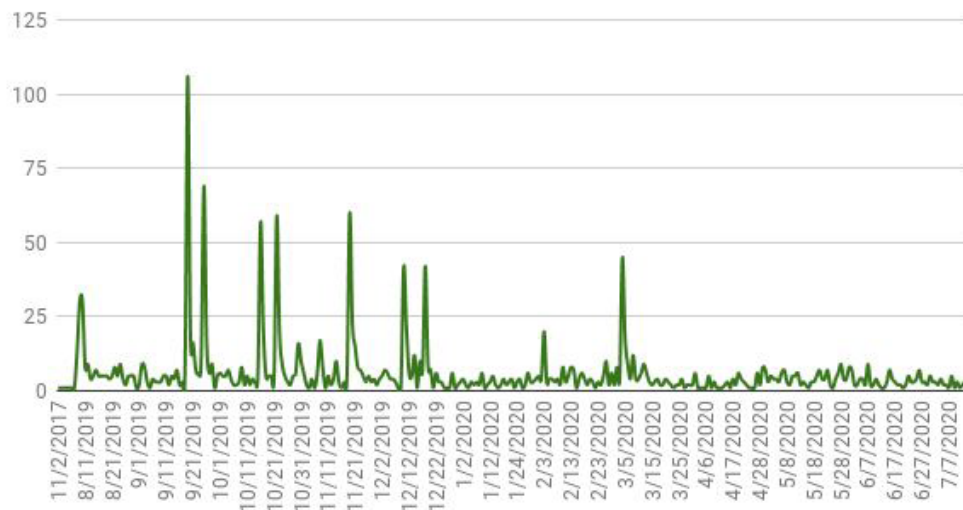
Our study focuses on co-hashtag use to understand how Instagram users connect #wemovement to a variety of other topics. In order to conduct a co-hashtag analysis, we used the visualization software Gephi (Bastian et al., 2009) to highlight frequently used hashtags via the size of nodes and accompanying text, as well as to map associations between hashtags frequently used in conjunction. We also applied a modularity algorithm, which identifies the density of connections between posts and clusters by colour

accordingly. In order to identify patterns in the posts, we removed hashtags from the network that were used fewer than three times. These highlighted hashtags and clusters provided the basis for our analysis.

The Grisly Detail of the WE Enterprise on Instagram: Co-Hashtag Analysis

Through the "Co-hashtag graph for #wemovement" (Figure 2), we can see that Instagram activity centres on the experience of WE Day, which is the most frequently used hashtag in the data set and is central to the WE Movement network. In order to centre our analysis on topics most pertinent to educators, we examine the WE Day cluster (Figure 3), along with neighbouring clusters that focus on Selena Gomez and other WE Day celebrities (Figure 4), the other activities of the ME to WE social enterprise (Figure 5), and WE Schools (Figure 6). Other clusters are evident in the co-hashtag graph, including a WE Day subcluster focusing on the event in Japan (Figure 2, purple at bottom) and a collection of hashtags centring on Evolution Travel (Figure 2, green). Reading through these posts, there are no evident links between Evolution Travel and WE, so it is likely that this company is using the same hashtag for different purposes.
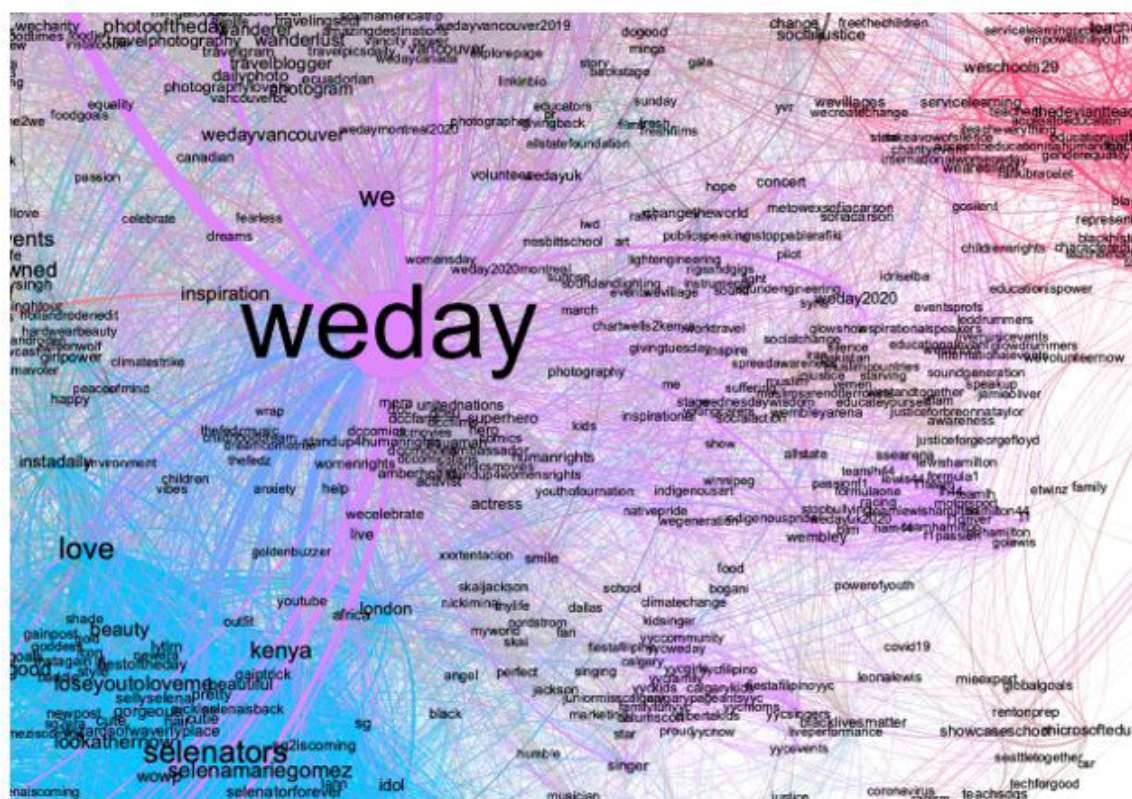
WE Day and Celebrity

While WE Day is described by WE as the "greatest classroom in the world" (WE Charity, 2020f), the co-hashtag cluster centred on #weday (Figure 3), along with the neighbouring cluster focused on #selenagomez (Figure 4), contains little indication of education and instead expresses the event ecstasy, branding, celebrity, and commercial nature of WE. Kielburger et al. (2018) discuss their effort to build "brand fanatics": "Brand fanatics – those who not only fall in love with your products but also convince their peers to buy them, are not just harder to come by but also harder to lure, using old-school advertising" (chapter 5, para. 8). School children are prepped to become *brand fanatics* through their participation in the WE classroom activities that promote fundraising and social activism.

Figure 2

Co-hashtag Graph for #Wemovement
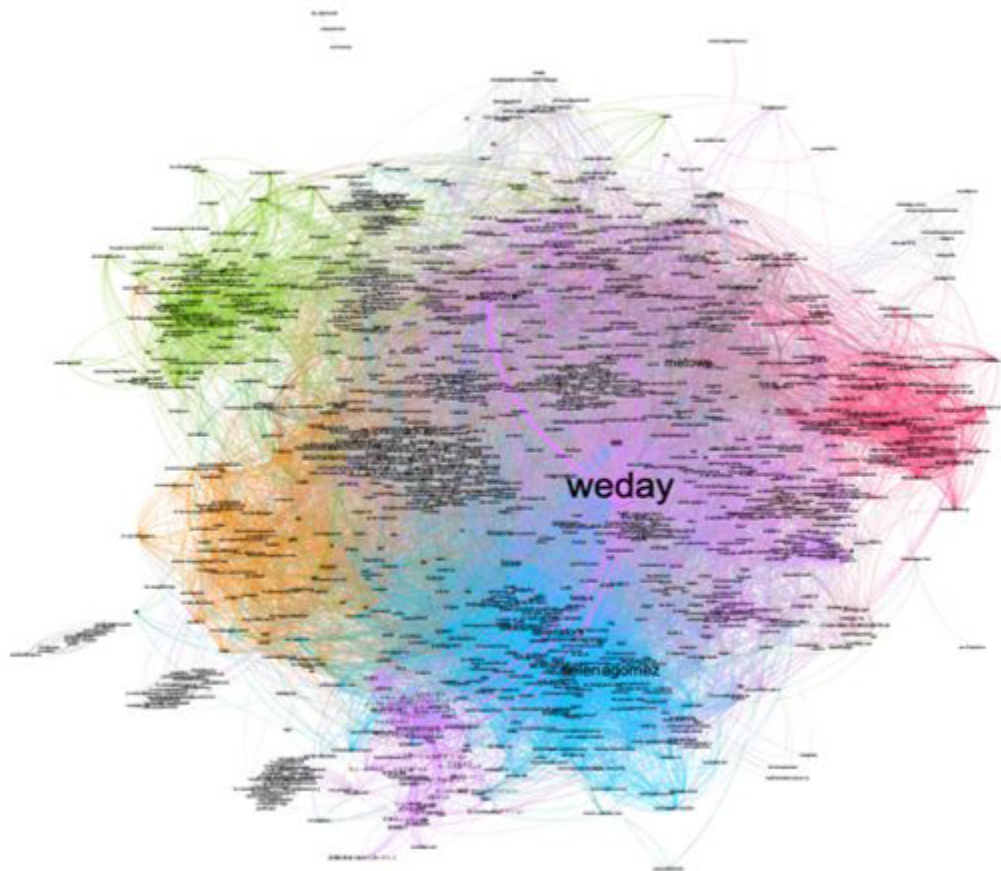
The ecstasy of WE Day participation is evident in hashtags such as #inspiration, #celebrate, #fearless, #dreams, #passion, and #powerofyouth. While the passion of young people for social justice is a laudable aim of many teachers who conduct WE-developed curriculum in order to gain entrance to WE Day with their students, there is little evidence in the network graph that WE Day is in fact educational in nature—or that it promotes justice. While some important issues such as #climatechange and #womensrights are connected to WE Day, it is instead the spectacle that dominates on Instagram, as evidenced through names of event venues, along with hashtags such as #concert, #soundandlighting, #lightengineering, #shows, #gala, #singer, #star, and #backstage. These spectacles take place in cities, which are tagged in a number of ways, including through

references to a city itself (#vancouver), a specific WE Day event (#wedayvancouver), or through airport codes (#yyc for Calgary). Through such tags, the network draws attention to the urban nature of WE Day events, which either exclude rural students or demand they travel, making access an issue. As WE Day participation is predicated on competition and earned through participation in WE Schools activities, it already promotes hierarchies of privilege; these hierarchies are compounded by the urban and spectacular venues. While these inspiring concert-style experiences may indeed be fun for students, the co-hashtag graph evidences the problematic nature of WE Day events from an educational perspective, and specifically in relation to justice.

Figure 3

WE Day Cluster

A further mismatch between teacher aims in educating for social justice and the activities of WE Day is evidence that the reward for carrying out in-school activities

is not only the ecstatic experience described above but also access to celebrity and opportunities for personal branding. Next to #weday, the most prevalent hashtags in the #wemovement co-hashtag graph—so much that they create a separate cluster (Figure 4)—relate to Selena Gomez, a long-time WE celebrity. Other celebrities such as British actor #idriselba; Canadian singer #shawnmendes; celebrity chef #jamieoliver; American actress and singer #sofiacarson; and American singer #taylorswift also receive mentions, among others. Interestingly, the hashtags #rolemodel and #idol appear in relation to celebrities, evidencing the complex positions of these WE speakers as both motivators for student action and opportunities for young people to build status by sharing their proximity to such idols on Instagram. Problematically, in the spectacularized and motivational context of WE Day, such speakers may inadvertently reinforce celebrity subjectivity over marginalized and oppressed voices despite their advertised roles in inspiring positive change for these very people. The complex issues, global relationships, and identities introduced through the most justice-oriented components of WE curriculum and events may be glossed over by the

> celebrity [who] embodies the false promise of individual power as a force of social change, the illusion of a single person fighting against structures of injustice. The consequence is a reduction of the complex problems of development into "soundbite" politics that carry the logic of a "quick fix." (Chouliaraki, 2012, p. 4)

Rather than struggling with the uncomfortable learning required to challenge unjust systems, students at WE Day instead are enabled to feel they are in alignment with the trajectories of inspiring celebrities, experiencing self-fulfillment as co-stars with these celebrities in WE's story of change for good (see Bryan & Bracken, 2011, p. 73; Karsgaard, 2019). Problematically, such positioning may contribute to the "exaltation" (Thobani, 2007) of Canadian students as naturally superior to those they aspire to help, according to "white savior" (Cole, 2012) logics that pervade humanitarianism, including in both education (Aronson, 2017) and mediatized spaces (Schwartz & Richey, 2019). We do acknowledge that WE's celebrity orientation may be magnified by the Instagram platform, where a consumer orientation places emphasis on "passive viewership of celebrity and microcelebrity culture" (Duguay, 2016, p. 5). At the same time, Instagram may be understood not as a false magnifier but part of the WE assemblage that actively promotes

personal branding through affiliation—and online sharing of celebrity affiliation—via promotion of making a difference as an individual endeavour and personal brand.

WE Day events are also opportunities for corporate marketing, as evidenced through hashtags such as #allstate, #microsoftedu, and #nordstrom, which highlight a few of the sponsors that constitute ME to WE's primary revenue stream, only a fraction of which is put into WE Charity, the humanitarian arm of the organization (Kerr, 2018). In this context, the hashtag #kenya requires some consideration. Though Kenya may be a topic of WE Day presentations, it is also a primary destination for ME to WE Trips (ME to WE, 2020a). These trips are run for profit at a high fee of $5990 for nine days (TourRadar, n.d.) and are actively advertised at WE Day events (Kerr, 2018), which may explain the prevalence of the hashtag #kenya in the WE Day cluster. While many schools and school districts restrict or even ban advertising in schools, both celebrity and corporate presence at WE Day events evidences the shrouded corporate agendas inherent in WE activities, exemplifying WE's co-option of education for corporate gain through a spectacular veneer of doing good and changing the world. In *WEconomy* (2018), authors Kielburger, Branson, and Kielburger describe how excited corporations are to fund and participate in WE Day events when they quote this Microsoft representative: "We can't buy that kind of press. WE Day broadcast viewers were 2 times more likely than non-viewers to see Microsoft as a company that uses technology for good" (chapter 5, para. 4). The prevalence of corporate influence is not merely a by-product of WE's own business model, but it is also pedagogical:

> We want youth to start thinking about companies, their consumption, and their own future employment as mechanisms for helping the planet. We want them to understand that consumption and talent have power; they can vote for the good companies with spending habits and career choices. (Kielburger et al., 2018, chapter 5, para. 7)

WE Day is intentionally set up to establish students as consumers rather than citizens.

Figure 4

Selena Gomez Cluster
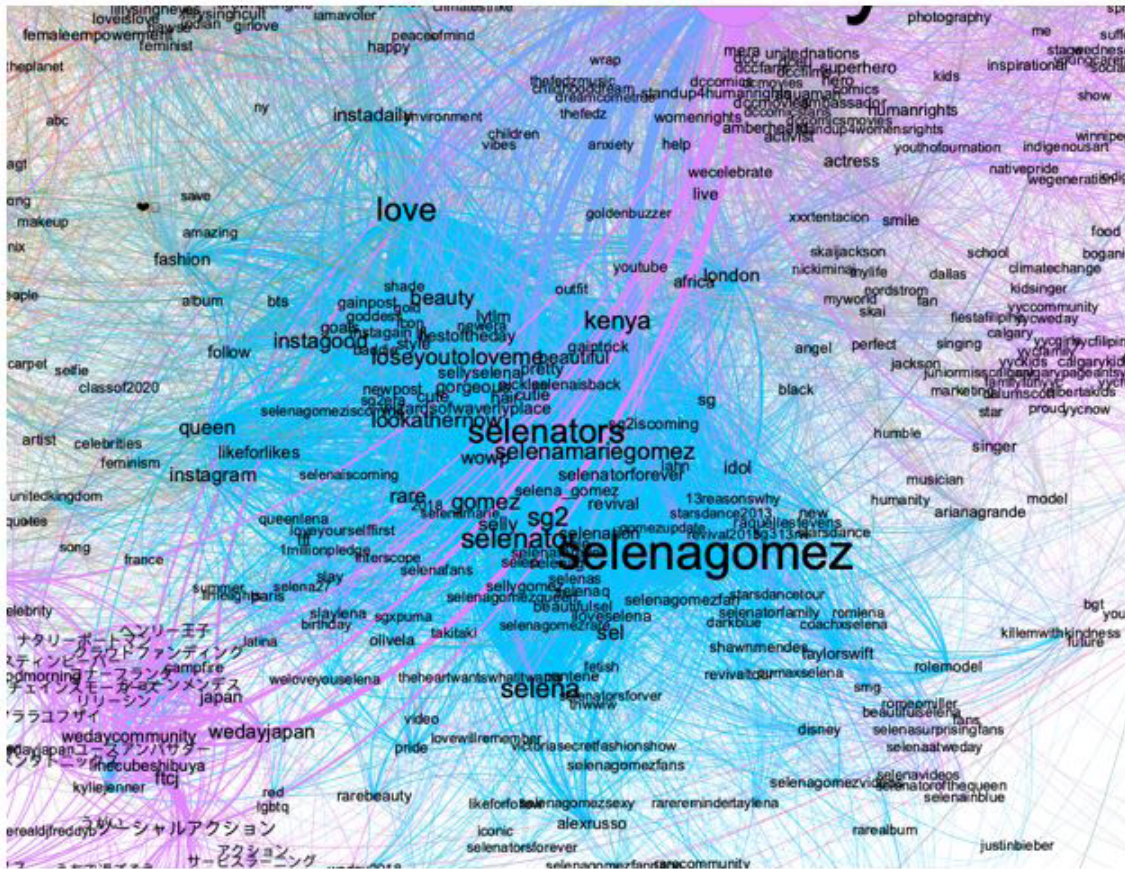
ME to WE

Intermingled with the WE Day cluster is a set of posts associated with the hashtag #metowe (Figure 5). This tag links to other key WE entities, such as WE Day and WE Schools, as well as a number of WE campaigns, tying together various components of the brand. Most noticeably, however, #metowe is closely linked with a set of hashtags pertaining to travel and travel photography that reference #ecuador, the #amazonrainforest, the South American #naporiver, and #southamericatrip. Like Kenya, Ecuador is a key destination of ME to WE Trips, which is hashtagged in this cluster, and it is a location where WE Villages operates. On a youth trip to Ecuador, WE advertises that participants

could "step into an indigenous community to volunteer with local women's groups, join a minga—a community call to action for the greater good—to help build a school or clean water project and explore the rich history of Ecuador" (ME to WE, 2020a). Through the WE Villages program, WE states that it works "in partnership with these communities to eliminate barriers that prevent children from accessing education, to improve health care and to open up income opportunities" (WE Charity, 2020c). While the voluntourism (Brown, 2015a, 2015b; Buchmayer, 2017; Greschner, 2015) and development (Tiessen, 2020) programs offered through WE have already undergone extensive critique, we want to focus here on the ways that Instagram users depict Ecuador. The absence of substantive development work of any kind is immediately obvious. Instead, we see a collection of travel-oriented hashtags expressing #wanderlust, such as #amazingdestinations, #travelifestyle, #traveltheworld, #travelbucketlist, #travelingsoul, and #wanderer. These tags do not indicate the kinds of purposeful travel associated with development work but instead evoke the freedom of wanderers to enjoy lifestyles of exploration and to consume places as destinations or checkmarks on a list, according to "voluntourism" practices based on white savior logics that appropriate regions of the Global South for elite heroism and pleasure (Bandyopadhyay, 2019; Bandyopadhyay & Patil, 2017). Further, the prevalence of photography-related hashtags such as #travelphotography, #photographylove, #photooftheday, and #travelpicsdaily, indicates the desire not only to experience but to publicly document travel—including for Instagram specifically, as #travelgram and #photogram indicate. Such social media documentation is inherent to both voluntourism (Schwarz & Richey, 2019) and digital expressions of humanitarianism, according to ongoing racist and colonial representations of others that buoy up those posting on social media as "everyday humanitarians" (Richey, 2018). While consumptive travel may not be the aim of ME to WE, this cluster evidences how WE Trips are, like WE Day, opportunities for personal fulfillment and branding rather than actions toward social justice or public good.

Figure 5

Me to WE Cluster
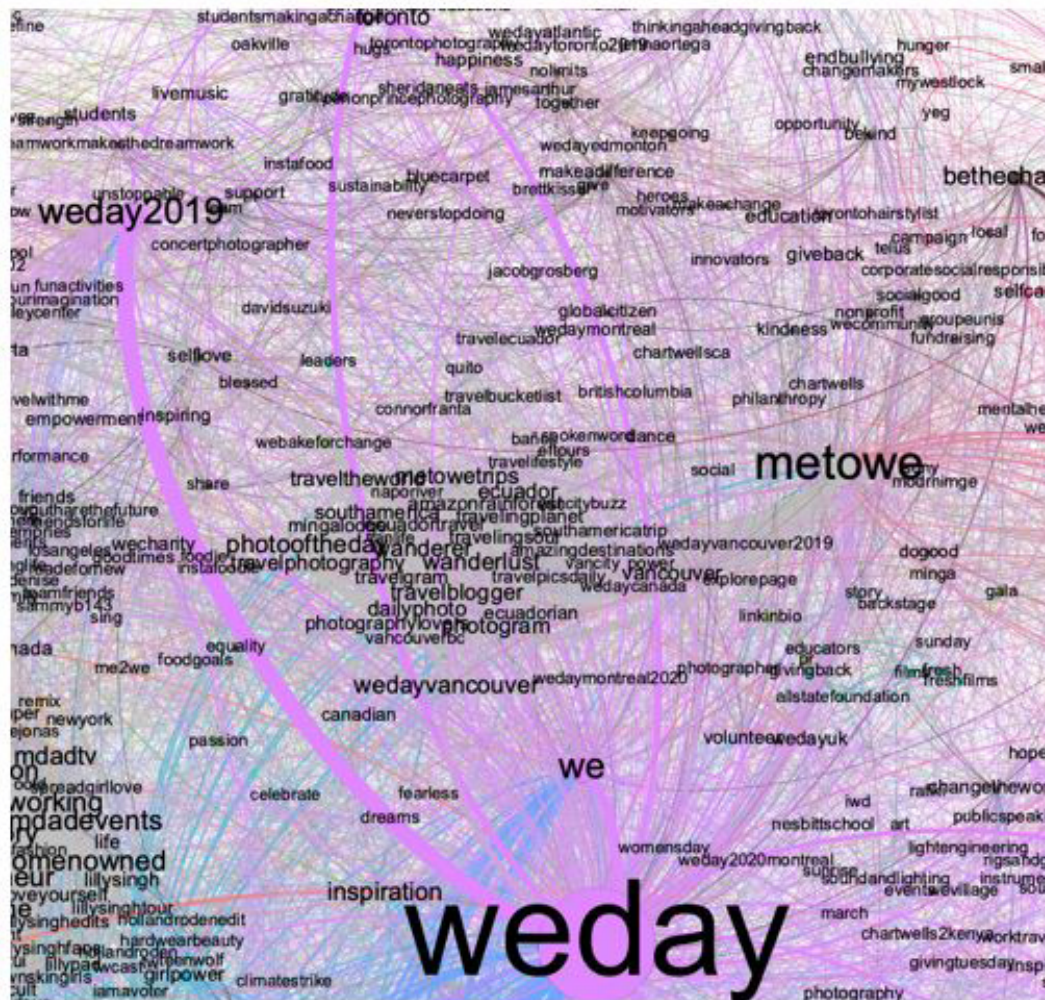
Figure 6

WE Schools Cluster
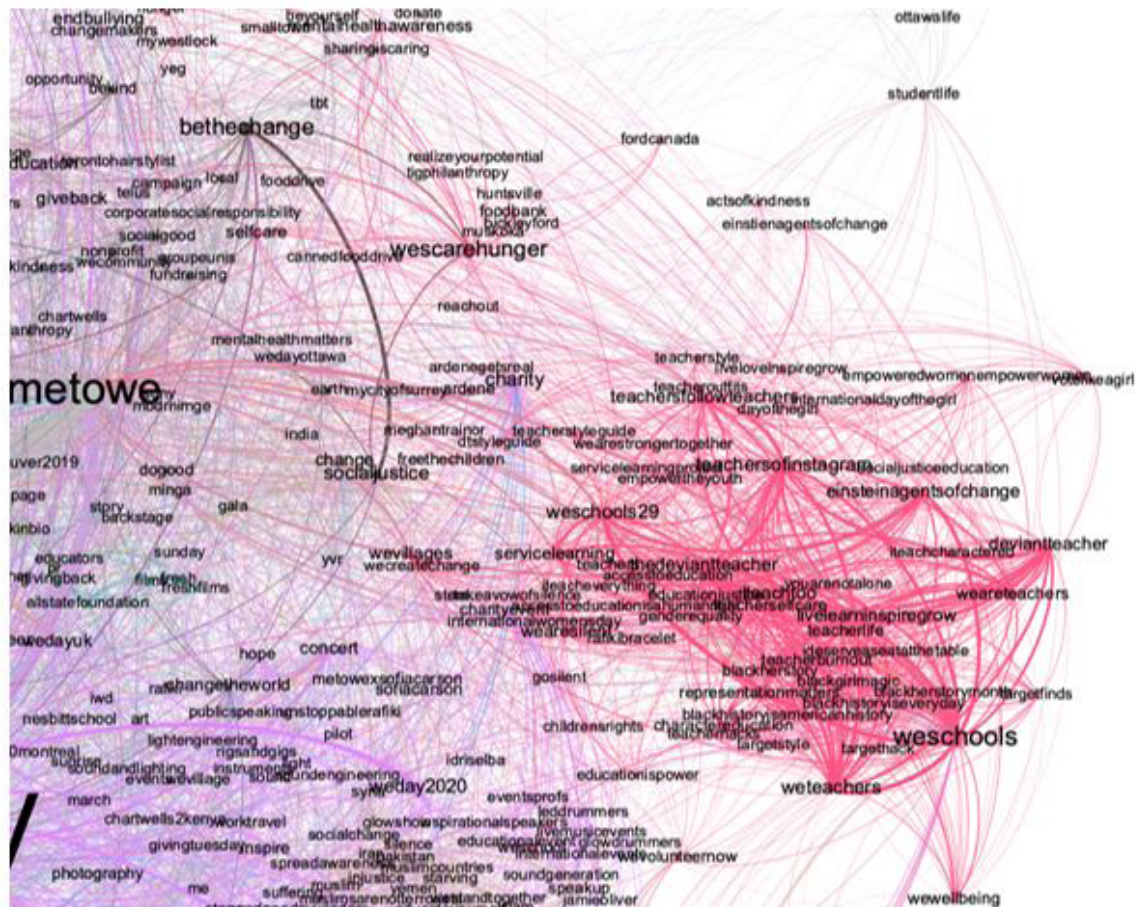
WE Schools

A cluster associated with #weschools (Figure 6) is adjacent to the WE Day cluster but connected through hashtags that indicate schools' focus on #socialjustice and a desire for students to act on key issues—to #bethechange. The school-oriented cluster is dominated by hashtags related to teachers, some of which relate directly to WE, like #weteachers and #weareteachers; some that appear more oriented towards the visuality and commodity-culture of Instagram, such as #teachersofinstagram, #teacheroutfits, and #teacherstyle; and others that are harder to classify but perhaps are linked with teacher identity, such as #deviantteacher, #teacherhacks, #iteachcharactered, and #teacherburnout. The prevalence

of teacher-orientation hashtags in this particular cluster is evidence that teachers are link-ing to WE's educational activities, campaigns, and events more than the student partici-pants. It is not possible to speculate as to specifically why and how teachers are making this connection; for instance, it is not obvious in the network graph whether teachers post in order to promote their school's participation in WE Day as an educational opportunity, whether they experience their own sense of pride at being #weteachers, or whether they are invested in the justice issues that are also linked within this cluster. What is clear, however, is that teachers connect to the educational components of WE more than they do the celebrities and spectacularized WE Day event, indicating a different position in relation to WE from the students (see Figure 5 as comparison).

Also unique to this cluster is the prevalence of various current issues and cam-paigns, which range from #mentalhealth to #genderequality, #blackhistory to #endbully-ing, and #childrensrights to #internationaldayofthegirl. The diversity of issues evidences the fluidity of WE in encompassing multiple issues. Such fluidity may enable flexibility for schools to address issues according to school or student interests, though it may also work against possibilities for collective change, where young people come together to address key issues across their different positions and interests. Notably, a number of the issue-related hashtags are directly connected to WE campaigns, including #wewellbe-ing, a community-oriented program fostering well-being; #wescarehunger, a food bank fundraiser; #wecreatechange, a fundraiser that provides a goat for a family in a develop-ing community; and #wevillages, WE's international development model. The prevalence of these campaigns evidences how WE provides packaged models for action that indeed make it easier for teachers to carry out projects in their schools. At the same time, these packages build the WE brand through subtle advertising of WE in schools and quantifica-tion of school engagement through participation in these campaigns, which can be pro-moted online as a success metric of the WE Schools program (see WE Charity, 2020g). Furthermore, packaged campaigns restrict citizenship education and the nuanced learning required to address complex social issues in favour of charity work that feeds students' and teachers' sense of fulfillment, as evidenced through such hashtags as #realizeyourpo-tential, #wecreatechange, and #learnloveinspiregrow. Interestingly, it is here that we see the hashtag #freethechildren, a reference to the origin story of WE, when Craig Kiel-burger, as a young teenager, sought to eradicate child labour through political advocacy. The persistence of this origin story, despite the transformation of Free the Children to a

multi-million-dollar social enterprise, may indicate both a desire on behalf of participants to address such social issues and efforts by WE to shroud how this is no longer a primary aim of the enterprise in its current format.

Me to WE and Social Entrepreneurship: The Wolf Is Captured

The WE corporate entity built its market identity by bringing together teachers' interests in social justice education, school leadership education curriculum outcomes, and the goodwill and labour of millions of children and youth. The WE social enterprise, based on social entrepreneurship, which actively tried to remove the separation between profit generating goals and the social goals of education, was, on the surface, highly successful at both. The wolf looked like a real sheep. But as the tale neared its end, it became clear that, more and more, the social goals of social justice education and youth's community engagement served the WE enterprise profit goals in ways that diminished the children, the teachers, the schools, and their communities. By WE placing corporations, including WE itself, at the centre of the engagement with youth, a shift of focus was created away from their work in their communities.

The corporate sector was extremely engaged in WE Day events where there was opportunity to market to a captive and highly excited group of young people. Corporate logos were everywhere as these students gathered by the thousands to celebrate being part of a mobilized "we." WE moved from its earliest iteration, *Free the Children*, a civil society voluntary organization, to the We Charity Foundation and to what we view as *the WE enterprise*, a corporation using its previous embeddedness for increased profit while embracing this duality of social entrepreneurs. This transformational trajectory reflects external, global neo-liberal shifts from public solutions for social problems to capitalist capture of these same public issues and spaces. The WE enterprise charged high fees to speak at schools and events while meeting with politicians to negotiate exclusivity agreements for access to these same schools. Viewing the contortions WE exhibited in the media to maintain the brand of innocence connected to *Free the Children* while developing an almost empire-like hold on global citizenship and social justice education across the Canadian education sector, was remarkable as this digital issue mapping study found. Roy and Grant (2020) describe how "elite actors, through entities such as

neoliberal states and institutions, may manipulate the relative positioning of market and society in order to maintain their hegemonic positions" (p. 186). For schools, this results in the importation into schools of elite representations of celebrity humanitarianism, raced and gendered expressions of leadership, white/western saviorism, and replacement of citizenship with consumption, all of which we see reverberating throughout the Instagram graphs. Roy and Grant describe how social entrepreneurs can use their embedded positions to promote the primacy of the market (p. 187). The Kielburgers demonstrated a dedicated focus on becoming embedded in the triad of the corporate sector (for example, by bringing large international corporations into their events and giving them access to eager children), the public sector and state actors (for example, by creating exclusivity contracts with schools and governments to deliver school programming), and civil society (for example, by building international service learning partnerships with organizations in Kenya and Ecuador).

Conclusion

The unpleasant fate of WE at the end of this cautionary tale continues to unfold in the media as WE Charity Canada works to close down its activities, and the impacts of the Canadian controversy continue to spread to WE sites in other countries. Could the story of schools, however, be reversed, ending not with a similar fate but with a twist? With WE now removed from schools and WE Day festivities concluded, the jig is up, the sheep costume removed, and the wolf retreating—at least, *this wolf*. Before another comes to take its place—and considering other wolves may already be lurking—is it time to restructure our education systems so they do not rely on commercialization and corporatism? By delinking education from corporate interests, education again holds potential to serve equity and the public good instead of creating brand fanatics in the service of elite interests.

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