A Critical Discourse Analysis of

Manitoba's Safe Schools Documentation and Implications for Students

Submitted by

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A Thesis in Partial Fulfilment of a

MASTER OF EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Students who have been labeled as exhibiting behaviour difficulties in the school system have some of the worst academic and social outcomes of any student group. In most Canadian provinces, responses to student behaviour and misbehavior are legislated through Safe Schools policies, directives, guidelines and curriculum support documents, which guide school districts and individual schools in responding to student behaviour and misbehavior. This project aims to conduct a critical discourse analysis of Manitoba's *Safe and Caring Schools* documentation in order to consider the ways in which provincial policy directives and guidelines construct children and their behaviours and subsequently to consider how to better support students, particularly those who tend to be marginalized by existing school based responses to student behaviour. By deconstructing the ways in which children, behaviours, and school responses are constructed in policy documents, the project aims to make recommendations for policy-makers and educators to better support students, particularly those who are most marginalized by/within the school system.

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Safe Schools Policies and Student (Mis)Behaviour

Early on in my role as a support teacher, I was working with a school team, planning classroom placements for the following year. An administrator at the table brought up a new student who had significant medical conditions. Unfamiliar with the social norms of school due to her long stays in a hospital ward, Jenny made what the school deemed to be multiple "behaviour errors" and "social errors." A discussion about different supports, social groups and additional learning opportunities that Jenny could participate in broke down, when the principal stated, "The main problem is, the student has a diagnosis of B.A.D." The other educators at the table looked quizzically at each other, and one asked aloud, "Is that a diagnosis I haven't heard of?" The administrator responded, "B A D – she's a bad kid. She's simply choosing to be naughty." This cavalier statement about the behaviour of the student quickly became a value judgment about the student herself. By defining Jenny as "bad", the administrator changed the discourse from what the school could do to support Jenny, to what Jenny needed to do in order to be allowed to stay in the classroom, dehumanizing her in the process. Indeed, this framing of (mis)behaviour as something warranting the disqualification of a student from the right to education is more prevalent in our education system than one might think.

In their work, *Behaving badly: Critiquing the Discourses of Children and their (Mis)behaviours*, Janzen and Schwartz (2018) use the term *(mis)behaviour* "in an attempt to signal the binaried and subjective nature of children's behaviours, and importantly, the socially constructed nature of these ideas" (p. 120). Since behaviour can be understood as not merely

disordered conduct, but rather a form of communication, of protest, of learning or of dialogue (Millei & Petersen, 2014), my project will use the same terminology of "(mis)behaviour" as an ongoing reminder that often student behaviours are deemed misbehaviours insofar as they are labeled as deviant or inconvenient by the school system (Gore & Parkes, 2008). However, student actions need to be considered beyond the binary of "good' and "bad", rather, it is imperative to consider that particular student's individual reality (Davies, 2008).

In the last two decades, Manitoba, in line with education jurisdictions across Canada and the United States, implemented both inclusive schools legislation—which mandate inclusive practices for all students in all schools—and Safe Schools legislation—which emphasizes proactive and reactive responses to student (mis)behaviour. Inclusive schools legislation has been implemented in large part in response to: recommendations from the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Constitutional Act, 1982; Pellicano, Bolte & Stahmer, 2018; United Nations, 2006); a shift in the education system to approaching inclusion as a human rights issue (Allan, 2005; Porter & Smith, 2011; Smith, 2014); research on the importance of belonging in positive youth development (Brendtro, Brokenleg & Vanbockern, 2007; Pittman & Richmond, 2007); and research data showing that academic and social outcomes are often improved through access to mainstream classrooms rather than segregation, alternative programming or pull-out programming (Christensen & Dorn, 1997; Kliewer & Biklen, 2000; Stainback, Stainback & Ayres, 1996).

Safe Schools policies, on the other hand, have been implemented in large part, as a response to a public outcry for action on bullying and school violence (Roher, 2007) and have often been implemented as "zero-tolerance" policies (Winton, 2012), which have served to further alienate students already marginalized in the public school system (Dufresne, Hillman, Carson & Kramer, 2010). Students most effected by behaviour policies are those who are already in subjugated or marginalized positions, thereby exasperating their negative schooling experiences, including lack of school success. In North America, racial minorities, students in the foster care system and students in poverty face higher rates of suspensions and expulsions than other students (Finlay, 2003; Rankin, Rushowy & Brown, 2013). In addition, Berger, Epp and Moller (2006) argue that the ethnocentric positioning of the school system results in a lack of understanding of students seen as different and in increased problems with attendance, discipline and under-achievement. Thus, schools in their current form have much work to do if their aim is to be inclusive of all learners.

However, despite revisions and changes to many Safe Schools legislations in recent years, in order to make policies more progressive and supportive of both "offender" and "victim" (Roher, 2007; Winton, 2012), students who exhibit (mis)behaviours in the classroom continue to be at greater risk than other students for segregation, exclusion, poor academic achievement and low graduation rates (Dufresne, Hillman, Carson & Kramer, 2010; Eber & Nelson, 2007; Gore & Parkes, 2008; Gresham, Hunter, Corwin & Fisher, 2013; Thomas & Loxley, 2007; Zwiefler & DeBeers, 2003). Indeed, Gresham, Hunter, Corwin and Fisher (2013) note that, "outcomes for

children with [behavioural] difficulties are the worst of any disability class" (p. 20). Insofar as we know that behavioural difficulties can often be effects of negative life experiences, trauma, learning disabilities and mental disorders (Gates, Wray, & Newell, 1996; Kumperscak, 2015; Rydell, 2010), and not simply markers of "bad kids", the onus is on policy-makers to ensure inclusive schools policies apply to students exhibiting (mis)behaviours as fully as other student populations. In other words, it is imperative that Safe Schools policies uphold inclusive ideologies for all children—including those who exhibit (mis)behaviours.

The purpose of this project is to conduct a critical discourse analysis of Manitoba's Ministry of Education documents supporting provincial Safe Schools legislation, in order to consider how provincial policies, guidelines and directives could better support students, especially those who are already marginalized and who disproportionately experience discipline responses by schools. By deconstructing the ways in which the discourses relating to children, (mis)behaviours, and school responses are constructed in provincial documents regarding student (mis)behavior, this project aims to make recommendations for policy-makers and educators to better support students who (mis)behave, particularly those who are most marginalized by/within the school system.

Context and Objectives

In line with provinces Canada-wide, Manitoba legislated inclusive education in 2005 through *The Public Schools Amendment Act* (Appropriate Educational Programming), which mandated inclusive education in all Manitoba schools. Manitoba Education, Citizenship and

Youth (2006) produced the document *Appropriate Educational Programming in Manitoba: Standards for Student Services*, which states the role of the school is to provide "all students with appropriate programming that supports student participation in both the academic and social life of schools" (p. 1). In 2014, a support document for teachers, *Supporting Inclusive Schools: A Handbook for Resource Teachers in Manitoba Schools* (2014) was published to further support school-based staff regarding inclusive schooling.

Manitoba's legislation regarding responses to school (mis)behaviour was introduced in 2002 with the creation of Safe Schools Manitoba (Manitoba Education and Training, 2018), which is described as "a partnership initiative of organizations committed to working together to enhance the safety of Manitoba's schools" (Safe Schools Manitoba, 2018, p. 1). In 2004, *The Public Schools Amendment Act* entitled, *The Safe Schools Charter*, became provincial law, outlining a mandate to "ensure that each pupil enrolled in a school within the jurisdiction of the school board is provided with a safe and caring school environment that fosters and maintains respectful and responsible behaviours" (Government of Manitoba, 2004b).

Provincial documents supporting safe schools initiatives. Since the *Safe Schools Charter* became provincial law in 2004 (Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, 2004), there have been a number of provincial documents concerned specifically with providing guidelines, directives and supports to school-based Safe Schools initiatives and school-based responses to children's (mis)behaviours in schools. The various documents have differing mandates and audiences; specifically:

1. Provincial Guidelines

Provincial Guidelines documents provide additional context, information and direction to schools and school leaders with regards to what is legislated in policy, such as the *Public Schools Act*. Provincial Guidelines are not mandates and are much more fluid than policy or legislation themselves, meaning that they are regularly revisited and updated. Provincial Guidelines are intended to provide up-to-date information to schools regarding "best practices" in order to support the creation of safe school environments. The following Provincial Guidelines have been developed to provide direction to schools as part of the Safe Schools initiatives in Manitoba:

- *Safe and Caring Schools: Preventing Violence and Bullying* (2005) (which has since been replaced by *Safe and Caring Schools: A Whole School Approach to Planning for Safety and Belonging* (2017)

- *Safe and Caring Schools: Taking Action Against Bullying* (2014*)*

- *Safe and Caring Schools: A Resource for Equity and Inclusion in Manitoba Schools* (2014)

- *Safe and Caring Schools: Respect for Human Diversity Policies* (2015)

2. Ministerial Directives

In 2005, the Government of Manitoba mandated that all Manitoba schools were legally required to have a code of conduct "for the purpose of strengthening school-wide approaches to preventing, intervening in, and responding to violence and bullying, cyberbullying, and

other unacceptable student behaviour (Manitoba Education and Training, 2015b, p. 3). In

2014, a Ministerial Directive, *Safe and Caring Schools: Provincial Code of Conduct* was

published. The Ministerial Directive holds the "force of law" and schools "must abide by it"

(Manitoba Education and Training, 2017b, p. 1). The Ministerial Directive is intended to

provide schools and school divisions with clear prescriptions regarding what must be

included in school-based codes of conduct, what can be utilized as sanctioned consequences,

and to "expand upon existing legislation and regulation" (Manitoba Education and Training

2017b, p. 2). The Ministerial Directive, *Safe and Caring Schools: Provincial Code of*

Conduct was recently updated and amended in 2017.

3. Support Documents

Additionally, Manitoba Education and Training publishes Support Documents to provide

classroom teachers with evidence-based practices and additional context for all curricular

areas. Accordingly, in 2011 Manitoba Education and Training published *Towards Inclusion:*

*Supporting Positive Behaviour in Manitoba School*s; a Support Document which aims to

provide strategies, research and guidance for classroom teachers with regards to building

both proactive and reactive behaviour supports into classrooms.

4. Additional Documents

In addition to the Provincial Guidelines, Ministerial Directives and Support Documents

noted above, in 2013, Healthy Child Manitoba produced *Wraparound Protocol for Children*

and Youth with Severe to Profound Emotional and Behavioural Disorders, which focused on

multi-system behaviour planning for youth with "severe to profound emotional or

behavioural disorders" (p. 1). The protocol provides parameters for multiple agencies to work

together in order to support students with more complex needs. Additionally, in 2005,

Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth developed a threat-assessment guide for school

counselors entitled, *When Words are not Enough: Precursors to Threat; an Early Warning*

System for Counselors. The guide summarizes current processes for threat assessment and

aims to walk school-based counselors through the process of determining if students pose a

threat to the school community or themselves.

Table 1 and 2 provide information on the types, purposes and audiences of these

provincial documents intended to support Inclusive Schools legislation and Safe Schools

legislation.

Table 1
Provincial Documents Intended to Support Safe Schools Legislation in Manitoba

Document:	Document Type:	Mandate of Document:	Audience:	Publication Date:
Safe and Caring Schools: Preventing Violence and Bullying	**Provincial Guidelines:** Supports existing planning and policy development in Manitoba by providing implementation guidelines to schools.	To provide school divisions and schools with guidelines for implementing policies and programming focused on preventing bullying and violence.	Divisional Leaders, School Administrators	2005 (Replaced by "*Safe and Caring Schools: A Whole-School Approach to Safety and Belonging*" (2014))
Safe and Caring Schools: A Resource for Equity and Inclusion in Manitoba Schools	**Provincial Guidelines:** Supports existing planning and policy development in Manitoba by providing implementation guidelines to schools.	To provide school divisions and schools with guidelines for implementing policies and programming focused on supporting diverse gender expression and sexual orientation in schools.	Divisional Leaders, School Administrators	2014
Safe and Caring Schools: Taking Action Against Bullying	**Provincial Guidelines:** Supports existing planning and policy development in Manitoba by providing implementation guidelines to schools.	To support existing planning and policy development in Manitoba by providing implementation guidelines for proactive and reactive responses to bullying in schools.	Teachers, School-based Leadership Teams, School Administrators, Parents and Guardians	2014

Safe and Caring Schools: Respect for Human Diversity Policies	**Provincial Guidelines:** Supports existing planning and policy development in Manitoba by providing implementation guidelines to schools.	To provide school divisions and schools with guidelines for supporting human diversity, including: gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, and gender identity.	Divisional Leaders, School Administrators	2015
Safe and Caring Schools: A Whole-School Approach to Safety and Belonging	**Provincial Guidelines:** Supports existing planning and policy development in Manitoba by providing implementation guidelines to schools.	To provide school divisions and schools with guidelines for implementing policies and programming focused on school systems that support belonging, mental health and school safety.	School-Based Leadership Teams, Divisional Leaders, School Administrators	2017
Safe and Caring Schools: Code of Conduct	**Ministerial Directive:** Directs/mandates school divisions and individual schools in regards to developing divisional and school based policies.	To direct school divisions and individual schools as to details required in developing codes of conduct.	Divisional Leaders, School Administrators and School-Based Leadership Teams	2017
Towards Inclusion: Supporting Positive Behaviours in Manitoba Schools	**Support Document:** Provides research-based strategies and recommendations for teachers.	To provide research-based strategies and recommendations for classroom management for school teams and teachers.	Classroom Teachers, School Leaders	2011
Wraparound Protocol for Children and Youth with Severe Emotional Behavioural Disorders)	**Protocol:** Describes how two or more departments or agencies will work together to achieve a common goal.	To set a protocol for how multiple agencies with different mandates can work together to support individual students.	Child Welfare, Education, Medical and Community Groups and Systems.	2013
When Words are not Enough: Precursors to Threat; an Early Warning System for Counselors	**Information Document:** based on the threat assessment protocols developed by Kevin Cameron (2004).	To guide schools and school divisions in implementing protocols to create an early warning system to facilitate early interventions to student threats to self or community.	School-based Counsellors	2005

Table 2				
Provincial Documents Intended to Support Inclusive Schools Legislation in Manitoba				
Document:	**Document Type and Purpose:**	**Mandate**	**Audience:**	**Publication Date**
Supporting Inclusive Schools: A Handbook for Resource Teachers in Manitoba Schools	**Support Document:** Provides research-based strategies and recommendations for teachers.	To provide research-based strategies and recommendations for supporting inclusive schools for resource teachers.	School-based Resource Teachers	2014
Appropriate Educational	**Provincial Standards:** Outlines mandated standards to	To ensure that school-based programming	School and Divisional	2006

Programming in Manitoba: Standards for Student Services	ensure schools comply with *The Canadian Charter or Rights and Freedoms*, *The Human Rights Code of Manitoba*, *The Public Schools Act* and *The Education Administration Act*.	complies with relevant legislation.	Leaders, Resource Teachers	

Within the context of supporting Inclusive Schools and Safe Schools legislation, this study is focused on examining current provincial documents that outline responses to children's (mis)behaviour in Manitoba schools. The inclusion criteria for the critical discourse analysis of this study are documents that:

a) are published by Manitoba's ministry of education and intended to support Inclusive Schools legislation and Safe Schools legislation in Manitoba;

b) have a legislated mandate to direct, guide or make recommendations in schools;

c) are created for an audience of divisional or school-based educators and policy-makers who are required to enact the policies;

d) have been written in the last ten years and remain current; and

e) are intended to guide school-based responses to children's (mis)behaviours.

From the list of Provincial Documents Intended to Support Inclusive Schools Legislation and Safe Schools Legislation in Manitoba (Table 1), the documents that meet the inclusion criteria for this study are:

- *Safe and Caring Schools: Taking Action Against Bullying* (2014);

- *Safe and Caring Schools: A Whole School Approach to Safety and Belonging* (2017a);

- *Safe and Caring Schools: Code of Conduct* (2017b); and

- *Towards Inclusion: Supporting Positive Behaviours in Manitoba Schools* (2011).

The mandates of these documents are outlined in Table 3.

Table 3 *Provincial Documents Examined in this Study*		
Document:	**Mandate of Document:**	**Publication Date:**
Safe and Caring Schools: Taking Action Against Bullying	To support existing planning and policy development in Manitoba by providing implementation guidelines for proactive and reactive responses to bullying in schools.	2014
Safe and Caring Schools: A Whole-School Approach to Safety and Belonging	To provide school divisions and schools with guidelines for implementing policies and programming focused on school systems that support belonging, mental health and school safety.	2017
Safe and Caring Schools: Code of Conduct	To direct school divisions and individual schools as to what they must abide by in developing codes of conduct.	2017
Towards Inclusion: Supporting Positive Behaviours in Manitoba Schools	To provide research-based strategies and recommendations for classroom management for school teams and teachers.	2011

These four documents: (1) have a mandate to direct, guide or make recommendations in regards to enacting legislation in schools; (2) are created for school-based educators and divisional policy-makers who will enact policies and directives in schools with students; (3) have been written in the last ten years and remain current; and (4) are focused on school-based responses of to children's (mis)behaviours. Therefore, a critical discourse analysis will be conducted on each of these documents to: scrutinize themes, trends and differences of the discourses within the documents; analyze the discourses in order to reveal assumptions and provide insights on the (implicit) assumptions being made; and then, to make recommendations regarding the ways in which provincial documentation might better support a diverse student population in Manitoba.

Problem, Purpose and Research Questions

In Manitoba, school divisions—and correlatively, individual schools within them—base their policies, practices, operations, and systems on the provincial legislation and guidelines identified above: *Safe and Caring Schools: Taking Action Against Bullying* (Manitoba Education and Training, 2014) (hereafter referred to as *Taking Action Against Bullying*), *Safe and Caring Schools: A Whole School Approach to Safety and Belonging* (Manitoba Education and Training, 2017a) (hereafter referred to as *A Whole School Approach*), *Safe and Caring Schools: Code of Conduct* (Manitoba Education and Training, 2017b) (hereafter referred to as *Code of Conduct*) and *Towards Inclusion: Supporting Positive Behaviours in Manitoba Schools* (Manitoba Education and Training, 2011) (hereafter referred to as *Towards Inclusion*). These documents have tremendous impact on the experience of students insofar as they outline how school division administrators and trustees, school principals, teachers and school-support personnel ought to respond to student (mis)behaviour. Given the large body of research demonstrating that students who exhibit (mis)behaviours are often segregated and excluded from school-based programming, and therefore experience a lack of school success, it is pertinent to critically examine Manitoba's policies to consider the ways in which the language employed in the documents reflects the intentions of inclusion as mandated through the Appropriate Educational Programming legislation.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine *Taking Action Against Bullying*, *A Whole School Approach*, *Code of Conduct* and *Towards Inclusion* in order to critically examine

the discourses used in regards to student (mis)behaviour and the ways in which these influence

and/or perpetuate particular understandings of children, their (mis)behaviours, and programming;

and to make recommendations for next steps with regards to policy, policy language, and

implicit meanings entailed within policy. In doing so, this project will explore the following

research questions:

(1) In what ways do current Manitoba documents regarding student behaviour construct

understandings of students, of their (mis)behaviours, and of school-based responses to students

and (mis)behaviours?

(2) What assumptions of students, (mis)behaviours, and programming are being made within

these documents?

(3) In drawing attention to these assumptions, how might we envision these documents

differently?

The overall aim of this project is to consider how the education system can better support

and include a diverse student population in Manitoba's public schools. The objectives of this

research project are to: (1) engage in a critical discourse analysis of Manitoba's policy documents

related to student (mis)behaviours in order consider the ways in which children, their behaviours,

and programmatic school responses are constructed and to illustrate the various assumptions

being made within these constructions; (2) explore similarities and differences in the language

that is employed provincially across the various documents; and (3) make recommendations for

policy-makers and educators based on the findings in order to better support students, particularly

those who are most marginalized by/within the school system.

Significance

This research is important for a number of reasons. First, given that the documents, *Taking Action Against Bullying, A Whole School Approach, Code of Conduct* and *Towards Inclusion* guide divisional policies and school-based practices which are enacted *on* and *with* students, a review of the discourses used within the documents is paramount. A critical analysis of the discourses used will illustrate the implicit assumptions being made about children, their (mis)behaviours and the schools responses to them. In addition, in 2017, there were substantial revisions to *A Whole School Approach* and *Code of Conduct*, and therefore, a review is timely. Second, insofar as post-structuralist discourse analyses aim to shine a light on injustices, power relationships, and prejudice, a post-structuralist reading of *Taking Action Against Bullying, A Whole School Approach, Code of Conduct* and *Towards Inclusion* will serve to provide insight into the discursive power within these documents. Finally, in Canada, there has been considerable media coverage and research in recent years around the topic of "crossover kids"— youth who transfer directly from the child welfare system to the justice system (Finlay, 2003; Scully & Finlay, 2015). There are increasing data to suggest that students in the foster care system who have been disadvantaged by poverty, racism and injustice are often further marginalized by behaviour policies employed by schools (Noguera, 2003; Winnipeg Free Press Editorial Board, 2018). Safe Schools policy documents in their current form might risk further marginalizing disadvantaged children by not supporting students exhibiting (mis)behaviours in

both school and in larger society (Callan, 2011; Noguera, 2003). It is therefore fundamental that researchers seek to understand how ministry directives and other documents attend to students' (mis)behaviour in schools, whose needs the documents are serving, and how the documents might be impacting marginalized and disadvantaged students in particular.

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

(Mis)behaviour in the classroom is universally hailed as one of teachers' greatest barriers to effective teaching (Barmby, 2006). The discourses used in provincial documents regarding student (mis)behaviors frame schools' responses to (mis)behaviour by directing the school staff(s) to respond in particular ways. That is, teachers are guided by legislation and policies, therefore they may see decisions having been made for them (far away in decentralized policy-making bodies) and so may act in line with these policies without deconstructing the power relationships and discourses inherent in the policies (Ball, 2006).

Canella (1999) notes that in a poststructuralist understanding, discourse is not merely "groups of signs referring to content or representation", but rather, "discourse reflects and generates power, serving as a mirror of particular ideologies and socially constructed norms" (p. 38). In this way, "language and discourse are not transparent or neutral means for describing or analysing the social and biological world. Rather they effectively construct, regulate and control knowledge, social relations and institutions" (Luke, 1997, p. 2). It is this idea of discourse as both reflective and generative that my project will take up in exploring the discourses utilized in provincial documents.

Post-structuralist thinkers have argued that in a diverse, post-modern era, grand narratives supplied by regulatory bodies and policy-makers need to be broken down to explore the "little narratives" of students' lives. Indeed, multiple critical theorists (e.g., Baker, 2002; Heydon & Iannacci, 2008; Laws & Davies, 2000; Thomas & Loxley, 2007) have examined the ways in

which the modernist, normative language employed by the contemporary school system has

further marginalized students who exhibit (mis)behaviours. Normative understandings of

children and childhood have historically emphasized universal expectations and pre-determined

outcomes, rather than singularities or a focus on the perspectival realities of students (Thomas &

Loxley, 2007). Given education's modernist underpinnings and normative discourses of children

and of difference, it is useful to engage in a post-structuralist examination of modern

understandings of: children, (mis)behaviours, and proposed programming, so that we can re-

imagine supporting students in ways that do not continue to marginalize them.

Post-structuralist Understandings of Children and Childhood

The ways in which student difference is treated in the school system is a reflection of

understandings of childhood[1]. It has been argued that the Western world's embrace of Social

Darwinism led to an understanding of child development as a mirror of human evolution. Lesko

(1996a) notes, "youth… are encapsulated in an age-structuring system that keeps them liminal…

always 'becoming'" (p. 456). She documents the ways that modern ideals have framed aging as a

mirror of human evolution, with youths moving from a primitive state, to that of adult (western,

male) dominance. Adolescents, in this understanding, have been seen as residing in a liminal

state and needing their individual knowledges to be "legitimized" by those older and wiser

(Cannella, 1999, p. 36). In line with this, Cannella and Viruru (2003) argue that the

enlightenment's "belief that universal truths could be found if only the correct methods were

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[1] As per the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, all humans below the age of eighteen are considered children.

used" (p. 65) contributed to the idea of a universal idea of childhood as distinct from

adulthood—a dichotomy that was consistent with the Cartesian thinking of the time. With the

rise of social sciences and developmental psychology, certain milestones of childhood and

adolescence were determined and documented, which resulted in a model whereby norms, rather

than the uniqueness of individuals, often guided practice. Dahlberg, Moss and Pence (2007)

point out that ascribed norms run the risk of acting as "abstract maps", producing a system where

rather than gathering "descriptions and reflections on children's doings and thinking, we simply

describe them in relation to a developmental norm" (p. 37). The result has been an understanding

of children and adolescent characteristics as "universal and immutable" (Lesko, 1996b, p. 142),

allowing for very little diversity between individuals.

Similarly, Cannella and Viruru (2003) have examined the ways in which colonization,

rooted in scientific ideals of modernity and enlightenment, has informed our current

understandings of childhood. An understanding of a universal childhood, they argue, has been

influenced by the colonial mindset in the form of a will to dominate and subjugate the "other." As

colonialists sought to claim the globe for themselves, they also moved to control and define

childhood. Modernity's pre-occupation with universal truths and scientific explanations led to a

paternalistic model of "taming" and "teaching" children while placing them in subjugated

positions.

Discourses around students within this paradigm of universal expectations and pre-

determined outcomes, have not reflected understandings of singularities or perspectival realities

of students (Thomas & Loxley, 2007). Swadener and Lubeck (1995) note that all too often, schools are concerned with "getting the child ready for school, rather than getting the school ready to serve increasingly diverse children" (p. 18). The focus is often on fitting students into a mass model, rather than finding a system that addresses difference from the outset. Indeed, Baker (2002) notes, if we separate our expectations from the normalized benchmarks of developmental psychology, "the person perceived as defective and the person perceived as competent are both social constructions" (p. 694). Our understanding of "normal" is socially constructed and therefore, as educators, we can alter that understanding to allow all students to belong.

Processes that allow teachers to understand a student's "perspectival realities" or individual circumstances (Thomas & Loxley, 2007), including discussions of student knowledge and discourse around meaning-making would allow for understanding of the "small" context of a particular student to inform the forum model of the "large" context of the classroom (Swadener & Lubeck, 1995). That is, rather than asking how the classroom curriculum will be possible for the "at-risk" learners, the teacher would instead ask, how do we facilitate meaning-making for all learners. In this way, "education can be an act of hope that expands rather than limits what is possible for children, society and the world" *(*Swadener & Lubeck, 1995*,* p. 6).

Understandings of (Mis)Behaviour

Difference as deficit. The difficulty with a normative understanding of children and childhood, as discussed above, is that in such a model, difference is often understood as deficiency (Heydon & Iannacci, 2008). Deficiency, in a normative model, naturally lends itself

to being pathologized—"the process by which a particular group are seen by a more powerful

group as abnormal" (Heydon & Iannacci, 2008, p. 3)—since time and energy are devoted to

diagnosing and finding methods to respond to difference. Normative approaches either

purposefully or ignorantly exclude "alternative ways of understanding and interpreting the world"

(Thomas & Loxley, 2007 p. 31) because any difference is articulated in comparison to the

"norm." As a result, theories and structures about children who do not fit into the normative

model of the education system have "contributed to the manufacture and maintenance of

segregation" (Thomas & Loxley, 2007, p. 6), particularly in the context of the idea of special

education in the school system.

In our current education system, students deemed "at-risk" are often pathologized—

through the labeling of disorders and access to learning supports—in a medicalized "find-out-

what's-wrong-and-cure-it paradigm" (Thomas & Loxley, 2007, p. 25). This medicalized model

has brought about a system where there is now institutional convenience (Baker, 2002) in the

labeling of disability. With the rise of diagnostic approaches to education, educators can too

easily diagnose or report behaviour without asking questions about the root of it (Thomas and

Loxley, 2007), and there are systematic frameworks with which to seek out and respond to

difference in school policies. Lesko (1996a) notes that in a capitalist model where the focus is on

output, "deviant youths… threaten the leap to conscious humanity" (Lesko, 1996a, p. 460) and

developmental stages of adolescence have been developed to monitor universal development,

with any deviation from the norm seen as an "aberration" (p. 466) and a threat to productivity.

Baker (2002) notes that the understandings of difference are rooted in the history of

eugenics-as-constructing-privilege. Indeed, to be called "special is to be given a new identity

within the school system" (Thomas & Loxley, 2007, p. 77). By employing a system whereby we

separate, segregate or extract students based on criteria for them being "at-risk", "different" or

"deficient", the focus is immediately on trying to "perfect the defective" (Baker, 2002, p. 673).

This pathologization of difference becomes a "grand narrative" which paints all students with a

broad brush of pre-determined responses. Given Davis, Sumara and Luce-Kapler's (2015) claim

that the education system is "replicating itself" and vulnerable populations are remaining

vulnerable, we can see the ways in which the system reproduces marginalization and therefore,

alternate discourses need to be explored.

Davies and Ellwood (2010) note that school-based responses to violence are generally

based on a psychosocial model whereby both offenders and victims are understood as "deficient

in social and personal skills and in need of explicit instruction in the collective ethos of the

school" (p. 88). That is, rather than operating in a discourse that assumes students with behaviour

are "at-risk" and "don't fit" and thus aims to separate and "fix" them, a post-structuralist view

would position all students as "at-promise" and seek to find ways to support students in their

agency (Swadener & Lubeck, 1995).

(Mis)behaviour as choice. The modernist discourse of measuring children and

adolescents against prescriptive norms ignores the power relationships inherent in the education

system. Lesko's (1996a) reading of Foucault's discussion of discourses is helpful here. Foucault

argued that with modernity came a shift from control-through-oppression to control-through-normalization (Lesko, 1996a). This control is enacted through a discourse of ruler-versus-ruled whereby certain members of society are ascribed agency, and others are without agency, acting merely as subjects (Foucault, 1975). Through a Foucaltian lens, we can see the ways in which the education system is built on this control-through-normalization discourse, with teachers as rulers and students as subjects, expected to participate in learning in a system which often denies them any agency (Millei & Petersen, 2014).

Because adult conceptualizations of childhood influence what adults ask of children, educational policies and practices are underpinned by hegemonic discourses of the ruled obeying the ruler, which serve to vilify students' whose behaviour does not fit this mold. The difficulty here is that in a discourse where (mis)behaviour is seen only as a *choice* by a student to not participate fully in the ruler-versus-ruled paradigm, discussions about a child's behaviour quickly become discussions about the child herself. The choice discourse dangerously locates (mis)behaviour within a willful child, switching the conversation from what a school can do to support a child, to what the child must choose to do, in order to stay in school.

Indeed, once a child's behaviour is labeled as, "inappropriate", "bad", "violent", "oppositional", or "attention-seeking", there is a danger that the student becomes labeled in these ways as well. This understanding shifts conversations from what the school will do to support the student, to what the student needs to do in order to access those supports. Behaviourist discourses of ruler-versus-ruled ignores perspectival realities and subjugates students (Thomas &

Loxley, 2007). Students' socio-economic position, support-system, mental health, culture, and personal contexts are not considered or supported in a discourse in which they are asked to act without any agency. Students who are not behaviourally successful—as determined by those in power positions—are often met with an intervention in the form of "treatment", in line with the medicalized model of response (Laws & Davies, 2000). Treatments that revolve only around additional plans to assist the student in making better "choices" and failing to do so risks additional consequences. The danger is that the determination of risk "lies not in the behavior but in the social position of those exhibiting it" (Swadener & Lubeck, 1995, p. 28). If the aim of the educational system is to support all students, language that blames and vilifies the student is unproductive and any behaviouristic responses reduce the student to a sum of her (mis)behaviours, void of the student's experiences or greater context.

The ruler-versus-ruled paradigm does not seek out alternate discourses beyond what is already "sedimented" in our socio-cultural context so as to transform existing power relationships for the sake of those not currently supported by the status quo (Davies, 2008, p. 174). Since evidence indicates that minority students are more likely to be suspended, expelled and disciplined within the school system, we can posit that the behaviouristic discourse is not supporting these students' perspectival realities or their abilities to act as agents of their own success. Indeed, many students who are labeled as being behaviourally unsuccessful are deemed so because of their unwillingness to participate in the power-knowledge that operates around punishment (Laws, 2012). Punishing students who are unwilling to participate in the ruler-versus-

ruled discourse in a subjective role does not increase the students' ability for success. Without the willingness to consider other discourses, Millei and Petersen (2014) ask, "should schools just admit openly at the point of enrollment that only some of the children will be 'suited' to what goes on in them?" (p. 695).

Laws and Davies (2000) note that discourses at work in education form students' understandings of themselves. If we include discourses that position students beyond simply actors outside of a subject in a teacher's management model, we can hope to break through assumptions entrenched in the choice-consequence paradigms. If the only act of agency a student has in a classroom is one of acting out against the teacher, we have painted this student into a corner with regards to the ways in which they can experiment with how they interact with the world. If, by not following the normalizing structure of the classroom, a child is perpetually on the receiving end of a choice-consequence paradigm, that student quickly develops an understanding of himself as the "bad kid" the "kid that gets in trouble", "the kid that gets sent to the principal's office." In other words, the discourses become constitutive; they work to construct the identity of the subject.

(Mis)behaviour as learning. In this conception, behaving is not separate from learning, but part of the learning process. Davies (2008) argues that, "there are modes of action that teachers can adopt that enable them to greet rebellious moments not necessarily as a threat, but as a possible line of flight to new knowledge, new insights, new modes of being" (p. 184). A

post-structuralist embracing of little narratives would remove children's or youths[2] actions from the good/bad behaviour discourse and instead view behaviour as a means of communicating or a means of learning. Millei and Petersen (2014) note that children are "formed precisely through the constitutive work they are subject to" (p. 24). If a student is required to learn how to interact with the world around them in a normalizing system, without agency, we can interpret their behaviours as the ways in which they are learning to operate in a dominant discourse. By reframing the discourse, we allow for the student to build a sense of self more broadly, rather than one based solely on behaviourism and their behaviour compliance. In this way, we can engage with the student as a child, an individual, a learner, and not an impediment.

Furthermore, by enacting a classroom built on control, teachers engage in a Foucaultian discourse of ruler and ruled which may be uncomfortable both for the teacher who wishes to build less- hierarchical relationships with students and for the student attempting to express her own agency. Indeed, it is difficult for those in marginalized positions to "refuse a dominant discourse" because of the implicit power relationships at play (Davies, 2008, p. 174). Swadener and Lubeck (1995) offer that a positivistic stance of measuring the achievements children are "at-promise" would be more helpful for programming than determining the ways that they are "at-risk" of failure. This language shift is a powerful way to consider student agency and to reframe opportunities for vulnerable children.

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[2] The term "children" can be understood to mean "children and youth" throughout this thesis. Insofar as the term "students" positions the child solely as a learner, and subsequently the school's focus on teaching the student. Although I acknowledge that schools have an educative purpose, this inquiry is interested in exploring multiple conceptions of the child: as child, student, adolescent, human being, etc.

School Responses to (Mis)Behaviour

Efficiency, quality and institutional convenience. Much scholarly research has examined the ways in which institutional convenience has trumped pedagogy in the contemporary school system. Heydon and Iannacci (2008) have argued that efficiency in education has become an end goal, rather than a means, at the expense of pedagogical creativity. Dalhberg, Moss and Pence (2007) have discussed the ways in which the idea of measurable, concrete iterations of quality in the school system have been employed as measurements of success rather than actual learning and meaning making of children. Gore and Parkes (2008), have articulated the ways in which the language of "management" is at the forefront of many educational practices. In the pursuit of institutional convenience, efficiency and management, students with differences—and particularly behaviour differences—are often seen as being an "impediment" to the efficiency of the system. Children who are not able to slide easily into learning within Tyler's (1949) backwards-model of having large groups of children work systematically towards pre-determined, non-individualized outcomes, need to have alternative programming. This additional or alternative programming requires a whole host of interventions being put into place to try to have children bend to the needs of efficiency, which are not always congruent with the needs of the student.

Thomas and Glenny (as cited in Baker, 2002) note that there are assumptions in the language of children needing "help" and in teachers needing support to "meet the needs" of children. They note, "these needs have been silently transmuted with the assistance of the

constructs of academic and professional psychology from the school's needs for order, calm, routine and predictability to the child's stability, nurture, security [or] one-to-one help" (Baker, 2002, p. 682). That is, response to difference in a system that seeks normalization endeavours to support the efficiency of the system, rather than supporting the needs and interests of the student. Callan (2011) notes that children are often silenced or removed as a means to maintaining order, particularly when those children are presenting either overt or subtle attacks against democratic norms. Callan (2011) suggests that silencing is not our only possible response to incivility. He notes that, "if we are in the business of education, then surely we should expect that our children have shown up in good faith to learn…" (p. 18) and therefore our responses ought to be pedagogical ones, rather than simply punitive ones. In plain terms: our role as educators is to do what is best for the individual student, not what is best for the dominant systems of management.

Indeed, Gore and Parkes (2008) note multiple studies, which show that children who (mis)behave often receive teaching with a focus on control rather than pedagogy or curriculum. Alternately, high-achieving students tend to be exposed to teachers who have more preparation time, more enthusiasm, and greater motivation to actively engage student learning and meaning making. The result is that the achievement gap for children who have been determined as "behaviour concerns" tend to widen over time, rather than narrow. Responding to student (mis)behaviour with consequences such as suspensions and expulsions has the same negative effect because by removing the student from the environment, the school removes the student from the subsequent learning opportunities.

Gore and Parkes (2008) claim that in this way, teaching is often employed as a "system of differentiations that permit one to exercise power" (p. 4) and that when classroom management is seen as a necessity (either in-addition-to, or superior-to pedagogy), there is a risk of teachers aiming to tame or manage children—in an us-versus-them kind of mentality—rather than to teach them. These behaviour supports are put into place in order to facilitate the school's need for calm, orderly environments (Baker, 2002), rather than to meet student need. In response to this tendency, to place control as an end goal of education, rather than as a means, Gore and Parkes (2008) advocate a shift from "classroom management" to "productive relationships." This language differentiation is important here because language in provincial guidelines and policies serves in part to guide and grant permission for ways of operating in the school system. If proactive behaviour responses are implemented solely as a means of gaining control, schools have legitimized control and the ruler-versus-ruled discourse as a primary goal of the education system. Instead, focusing on fostering productive relationships in the education system to facilitate student meaning-making would act as a service to pedagogy, rather than simply to control.

Similarly, Thomas and Loxley (2007) argue that more often than not, "need" for school response to children' (mis)behaviours actually refers to the need of the school—the need for order and routine—more than the needs of the student. Rather than pathologizing the child and the child's (mis)behaviour by implementing "therapeutic practices" (Thomas & Loxley, 2007, p. 49) to change the student, the emphasis ought to be placed on changing the school structure so as

to minimize the likelihood of behavioural issues from the outset. Baker (2002) notes that, "A preferred style or way of learning only becomes a learning disability… in light of the impatience and structure of an institution that presents things in a limited number of ways with rigid expectations for what counts as timely performance" (p. 685). Insofar as clinical responses and interventions at the student level take focus away from the school structures and strategies, schools inadvertently strengthen the idea of children with behavioural concerns as "other" and as beyond the scope of the "regular" classroom. By labeling the student as having behavioural "needs", the teacher's role shifts from someone who is pathologizing a student, to someone who is a "helper", in what the authors call a "feat of alchemy" (Thomas & Loxley, 2007, p. 53).

Literature Review: Potential Theoretical and Practical Significance

It is vital to examine how policies, guidelines and directives which are informed by provincial legislation, "can damage people unnecessarily, but also how they can be changed" (Fairclough, 2018, p. 35). In other words, by identifying implicit effects and shortcomings of policies, we open up an avenue to do better. In the case of education policy and directives, there is ample research demonstrating how current policies may not be best supporting children exhibiting (mis)behaviours, especially those already marginalized in/by the school system. A review of current research on school-based responses to student (mis)behaviour is therefore pertinent.

A Discipline Gap Versus an Achievement Gap

Dahlberg, Moss and Pence (2007) note that, "learning is not an individual cognitive act undertaken almost in isolation within the head if the child. Learning is a cooperative and communicative activity, in which children construct meaning" (Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 2007, p. 59). There is ample research to suggest that we cannot hope to have children engage in any learning—academic, social-emotional or behavioural—without first taking stock of children' own experiences, understandings, and positionings (Davies, 2008). However, in an education system oriented in behaviourism, responses to (mis)behaviour that divorce the understandings of behavior from pedagogical positionings are problematic. Noguera, Gregory and Skiba (2010) have argued, for example, that the suspension and expulsion of minority children has received far less attention than has the achievement gap between ethnic minorities and white children.

However, insofar as academic success affects behaviour, research that considers either behaviour or academic success in isolation cannot possibly support children holistically.

Similarly, Christenson (2012) argues that the school-to-prison pipeline—" a process of criminalizing youth that is carried out by disciplinary policies and practices within schools that put children into contact with law enforcement"(Cole, 2018, p.1)—which is often discussed in the media, is not simply related to behaviour interventions, zero-tolerance policies and security measures. Rather, it is borne out of school systems and classrooms which do not allow for children to feel a sense of belonging, or to see themselves reflected in curriculum. Christenson (2012) argues that children need to be engaged in meaningful curriculum and to be supported by positive relationships with teachers and peers in the classroom, so that defiance is not seen as their only means of protest or agency. In particular, she notes that the curriculum employed by teachers, both in content and in delivery method, needs to "acknowledge that [children'] lives are important and worth studying" (p. 2). By studying learning and behaving separately, policies can miss the larger picture: creating "productive relationships" (Gore & Parkes, 2008) between schools and children.

Noguera, Gregory and Skiba (2010) argue that in general, school discipline—such as suspensions and expulsions—is used in order to maintain the school's need for order, and subsequently works to make an example of misbehaving children, in order to deter other children from making similar "mistakes." However, they suggest that the negative implications of these purely behaviouristic interventions on individual children far outweigh any positive role they

play for the school system itself. Not only do suspensions exacerbate existing academic deficits, but they also damage relationships with the school personnel and increase anti-social behaviour. Christenson (2012) argues that learning environments can be enacted in such a way that allows defiance to be met in a classroom as an opportunity to listen what a student is attempting to communicate, without sending children, one by one, to "the disciplinarian (which moves them one step closer to the streets)" (p. 1).

In line with this, Parekh (2017) notes that a historical reliance on the concept of "ability" in defining children is problematic insofar as it is used among educators as a predictor of student potential and limitations, and it tends to be reflective of dominant ideologies, without taking into account non-hegemonic ways of interacting with the world. Indeed, Parekh (2017) notes that school systems' tendencies to group children by ability-level tend to (either purposefully or inadvertently) group children by socio-economic status. That is, our idea of ability is really a set of normative, socio-cultural value judgments that we tend to place on children, which are often internalized by the children themselves. Therefore, becoming conscious of the socially-constructed nature of our understandings of, and expectations for children is a vital step in embracing discourses to support all children—particularly those marginalized in the current system. The idea that we can focus on discipline in schools as unrelated to learning in schools sets the stage both for purely reactive models and for behaviouristic models which consider (mis)behaviour as divorced from other social and academic factors. Rather, the idea of a discipline gap and an achievement gap need to be co-considered when constructing documents

that aim to support individual children.

A "Violence-Prevention" Approach

Since the shootings at Columbine in 1999, there has been an increase in discussions about

student threats in and to schools. An effect of this discourse has been the introduction of threat

assessments, which is a system designed "as an early warning system that may increase early

intervention to prevent, delay, or de-escalate impending (mis)behaviour that is threatening

(Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth, 2005, p. 2). In her article, *Connecting the Dots:*

Threat Assessment, Depression and the Troubled Student, Harwood (2011) argues, "we are

witness to a configuration of the troubled student that positions depression and dangerousness

together" (p. 590). In line with this, Davies and Ellwood (2010) argue that in the wake of

increasing school violence, including bullying and more frequent incidents of school shootings,

schools unwittingly portray "violence as unavoidable in the normal everyday life" (p. 89) by

focusing excessively on the deficits of children in the psychosocial model. Noguera (2003a) notes

that one of the issues with education policies focused on student (mis)behaviour, is that they have

historically started from a standpoint of finding someone to blame. Rather, he suggests, we need

to start from a broader standpoint of simply wanting children to succeed. A new (and some would

argue necessary, given the political climate) focus on idea of "safety" has resulted in a system

whereby teachers, parents and community members are trained to look for "risk factors" which

might pre-warn the system of dangerous children (Miller, 2008). Many of these risk factors are

characteristics of mental illness or languishing mental health. Much recent literature on assessing

student threats (Miller, 2008; Callahan, 2008) focuses on user-friendly checklists with which to measure student risk.

While the hope would be that the identification of risk factors would lead to an increase in student-specific support, connection and wellness, Davies and Ellwood (2010) argue that all too often, teachers who see (mis)behaviour as unavoidable and necessary to the school experience, are less likely to follow through with time-heavy responses to identified risk factors, such as restorative justice, and are more likely to refer children on to less time-intensive behaviouristic responses. Indeed, Callahan (2008) confirms, "the proven fundamentals of violence prevention include strategies that are child focused and support learning" (p. 59). That is, violence prevention or the idea of Safe Schools, must be housed in a system where supporting children based on their situatedness in a broader learning environment is a pre-cursor to any diagnostic measures of risk. Callahan (2008) suggests that caution needs to be taken when looking at checklist kinds of risk indicators (two of which, she includes in her own article). She notes that too often educational practitioners jump to a diagnostic approach, without what McLaughlin and Miller (2008) call, a "violence prevention approach that focuses on building climates and cultures that emphasize respect, safety and emotional support" (p. 432). Callahan argues that in our current context, support for school wide health may need to include details on how to profile and label potentially dangerous children, but it must be couched in a position that supports school health for a culture of learning, belonging and safety.

An "Ideology of Risk"

Given that we know there is a "strong connection between victimization and violence" (McLaughlin & Miller, 2008, p. 431) school systems seeing themselves predominantly as managers of safety run the risk of labelling children simply as dangerous and therefore not providing them the broader supports they require. Often, in our current system, the supports we offer children automatically label them in a particular level of threat. In the case of positive behavioural interventions and supports, for example, primary, secondary, and tertiary interventions are implemented based on perceived student need (Horner, Sugai, & Anderson, 2010). However, an inadvertent effect has been that rather than the interventions themselves being tiered, schools have begun labelling *students* as universal, targeted and intensive (Lewis, 2014). Thomas and Loxley (2007) note that once a student is labelled as an "intensive" student, it inevitably leads to some form of segregation and paternalistic labeling, both for students and their families. The authors make the argument that children in society are treated in much the same way as people with disabilities in the way that both parties are cogs in a system that prioritizes economic output over all other outcomes.

Swadener and Lubeck (1995) argue that the emerging "ideology of risk" concerns itself with determining criteria to allow children who exhibit (mis)hebaviours to access school, rather than concerning itself with making schooling accessible to all children. The result of such a model is a system in which children are separated from learning environments. For example, insofar as there is a documented lack of academic progress for high school children diagnosed

with emotional and behavioural disorders (EBD), Mattison and Blader (2013) note that children'

academic growth was limited by intelligence quotient, rather than by traits unique to EBD. These

results indicate that remedial behaviour programming, which separate children from quality

learning in the classroom, tends to create learning gaps rather than creating opportunities for

children to catch-up. Indeed, in examining discourses in: medical and public health, child welfare,

social policy and child psychology, Swadener and Lubeck (1995) argue that given the sheer

number of children we are talking about, we cannot begin teaching with an understanding that

"at-risk" children "don't fit" and aim to separate and "fix" them. Rather, in their view, we need

to view all children "at-promise" and create environments that can support them.

Blaming the "Bully"

Beginning in the 1990s, there was a popular understanding of zero-tolerance policies as a

panacea for school safety (Bailey, 2017). These policies aimed at suspending and expelling

children who exhibited unsafe or bullying behaviours in the school system on their first offence

(or some kind of descriptor to differentiate these from other policies). The intent of the zero-

tolerance policies was to create safe learning environments for *most* children, by getting rid of

some children. While in Canada, zero-tolerance policies have begun moving towards restorative,

proactive practices (*A Whole School Approach* would be one example of this)—largely in

response to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 2006) and ample

research showing that zero-tolerance policies were detrimental to a large number of children

(Dufresne, Hillman, Carson & Kramer, 2010; Roher, 2007; Winton, 2012)—our current "policy mix still maintains punitive elements from its zero-tolerance past" (Bailey, 2017, p. 148).

One of the discourses that has continued from zero-tolerance policies is the discourse of the bully, which proliferated within the education system beginning in the 1970s, but taking hold as a dominant discourse in the 1990s (Stein, 2003). Bullying is understood to be "a type of aggressive behaviour inflicted by an individual or group to cause fear, distress or harm to the victim" (Yoneyama & Naito, 2003, p.316). However, in recent years it has been conflated with other behaviours, including physical aggression, verbal aggression and other kinds of "acting out." That is, while bullying needs to be taken seriously and can have devastating effects, "the catch-all term 'bullying' may mis-specify analysis of what are really different types of behavior" (Zhang, Osberg, & Phipps, 2015, 19). As a result, conflating bullying with many different types of behaviours risks misunderstanding the behaviour itself, as well as reducing the types of responses available to teachers and policy-makers.

This persistence of the discourse of the bully in contemporary policy, legislation and school-based initiatives has shifted "the discussion of school safety away from a larger civil rights framework to one that focuses on, pathologizes, and in some cases, demonizes individual behaviour—aka the bully" (Stein, 2003, p. 787). Insofar as "public demands for immediate results too often ignore… the need to address underlying systemic issues" (Bailey, 2017, p. 128), public pressure to deal with bullies, understood to be a threat to school safety, and perhaps even greater society, has resulted in a system whereby once a student is labelled a bully, the punitive,

reactive models associated with zero-tolerance policies are often enacted. Indeed, Stein (2003) notes, "the bullying discourse has replaced the rights discourse and this transformation to an emphasis on bullying may dilute the discourse of rights" (p. 786).

Punitive responses that do not consider both the rights of offender and victim and the education of offender and victim are problematic insofar as they provide only superficial solutions. Indeed, it is pertinent to recall Callan's (2011) argument that our responses to (mis)behaviour in a school system (rather than, say, the justice system) ought to be pedagogical in nature. This is supported by Camodeca and Goossens' (2004) study, which found that children labelled "bullies" who were showing aggression, were acting reactively as often as they were acting proactively. That is, much of the time behaviour identified as bullying was in fact a defensive act to a perceived or real social, familial or physical threat. If, given this knowledge, bullying behaviours were dismissed with purely punitive responses, a multitude of individual children would not receive the supports they required. Janzen and Schwarts (2018) have also argued that the binaried structure of bully/victim fails to take into account the complexity of student identities and of particular conflict situations. With this in mind, Stein (2003) argues that policy-makers and educators need to recognize the danger of "requiring only disciplinary measures against the bully" in order to ensure that children's rights, proactive approaches and restorative practices are being supported, even in the wake of a punitive "bully" discourse.

The Role of Culturally Responsive Schools in Student (Mis)Behaviour

Noguera (2003a) argues that if we believe that education is the "great equalizer" then we must begin from a standpoint that all children matter and all children belong, rather than beginning from a standpoint which determines criteria for acceptance or belonging. Given that children already marginalized by poverty and race are vastly over-represented in suspension and expulsion data, despite the evidence to suggest that such behaviouristic measures put children at an increased risk for poorer life outcomes (Gibson, Haight & Kayama, 2014; Zweifler & De Beers, 2003). Indeed, Davis, Sumara and Luce-Kapler (2015) argue that rather than operating as a means of human liberation, the education system in its actuality serves to perpetuate social inequalities. For example, in the current Canadian context, "the best predictor of children's educational success is not their ability or aptitude, but the extent of their parents' education… [which] means that the educational system is perpetuating itself" (Davis, Sumara, & Luce-Kapler, 2015, p. 145). In Manitoba, for example, educational outcomes for Indigenous children fall significantly behind non-Indigenous counterparts: only 37% if indigenous youth have graduated from high school, 9% have not completed grade nine (Manitoba Council on Post-Secondary Education, 2007; Auditor General of Manitoba, 2016), and Indigenous children are vastly over-represented in the criminal justice system (Lambert, 2017).

In examining the socio-cultural models associated with the idea of "risk", Swadener and Lubeck (1995) note that there has been, over the last century, a tendency to locate the systematizing of risk factors in socio-economic and cultural variables. As Reed (as cited in

Swadener & Lubeck, 1995) notes, the determination of risk "lies not in the behavior but in the social position of those exhibiting it" (p. 28). Often, our current system does not consider alternate perspectives, viewpoints or cultural norms, placing minority children at a disadvantage in the classroom from the outset. Hare and Pidgeon (2011) note that this marginalization is further complicated by the fact that, "indigenous youth who suggest racism as an explanation for their challenges risk being portrayed as unreasonable, outrageous and unfriendly by educators…"(p. 96). That is, student responses to marginalization are often perceived as choices to not assimilate, and are met with further behaviouristic and alienating responses by the school system whereby "too often, indigenous children and their families are blamed for their failure to achieve in schools" (Hare & Pidgeon, 2011, p. 94).

In relation to this, Dahlberg Moss and Pence (2007) suggest that growing inequality and diversity necessitates non-hierarchical relationships in education that avoid replicating historically dominating structures as a means to measuring success. The authors suggest that re-visioning schools as *forums* in civil society where children and adults co-create knowledge in projects of "cultural, social, political and economic significance" (p.7) would result in a system whereby quality would be assessed based on the growth and meaning-making of the individual, rather than the reaching of pre-determined benchmarks. Systems of education, because they are mired in modern approaches to truth either purposefully or ignorantly excludes "alternative ways of understanding and interpreting the world" (Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 2007, p. 31).

Noguera (2003b) has explored the social contract implicit in the school system and

examined why it does not facilitate success for marginalized populations. Noguera notes that the school system operates on an understanding that children will follow the rules and relinquish personal freedoms in order to gain the benefit of an education. However, this model fails when children do not see school being of any benefit. If children do not see that school is engaging, applicable to them, or a means to life improvement, the social contract has broken down and (mis)behaviour can be interpreted as them rejecting the social contract. Davies (2008) notes how difficult it is for those in non-hegemonic positions to "refuse a dominant discourse" because of the implicit power relationships at play. If the only acts of agency a child has are acting either with or against top-down disciplinary models, other opportunities for agency and subjectivities are foreclosed. Noguera (2003b) notes that when schools use ostracism and consequences for children who are not meeting behaviour expectations, children with no impetus to follow expectations often get caught up in worsening cycles of (mis)behaviour and punishment. This cycle disproportionately affects minorities and children in poverty, whose perspectives tend to be under-represented and whose needs are often not met in the school system.

Laws and Davies (2000) suggest that the processes used to shape student behaviour are not always benign—that is, they operate from the assumption that children can "choose" to do the right thing and that punishments are a means of having children who have not chosen well to show penance. They note that these punishments would not work if children did not "take them up as their own" (Laws & Davies, 2000, p. 208) or buy into the pre-determined social contract. When children do not participate in their punishments, school systems are often at a loss of how

to deal with these children. In this framework, (mis)behaviour is understood in an over-simplified momentary "choice" to either obey or disobey, rather than as an example of student expression, a call for help, a demonstration of agency, or a means of communication, which would require a consideration of student positioning, not a simply behaviouristic response.

In a context where children are expected to suspend some civil and human rights while in school marginalized children may reject this intrusion into their lives as they do not see the long-term benefit of the school system itself. By framing (mis)behaviour not solely as deviancy, but instead: behaviour-as-protest, behaviour-as-communication, or behaviour-as-demonstrating-agency, the school could examine alternate discourses to engage in with children. Swadener and Lubeck (1995) note, "when children are excluded from the mainstream it is because someone feels that they will not fit" (p. 43). School-based responses to difference focused on normative models tend to take as assimilationist stance. Callan (2005) notes, "assimilation… occurs whenever a dominant social group appeals to the superiority of its culture as the license for its domination and seeks to entrench its power through the selective assimilation of outsiders" (p.472). That is, considerations of other perspectives and allowing for school to be a meaningful context for all learners is key. Baker (2002) asks, "How can issues of multiculturalism and pluralism be considered when operating within a framework of universal norms?" (p. 688). She argues that our learning environments must be willing to build on culturally competent social contracts that allow children to see purpose and value in the classroom, so that all children are willing to engage in the contract.

Methodology

Policy Documentation as a Social Force

Taylor, Henry, Lingard and Rizvi (1997) note that, "public policies in education exist in order to ensure that education occurs in the public interest" (p. 2). Given this context, a regular examination of policy documents and school-based outcomes is vital in order to assess whose interests are being served and whether policies, directives and guidelines are producing the intended outcomes. It is notable that these kinds of examinations take place regularly around academic policies and outcomes in Manitoba. For example, Manitoba regularly shares numeracy, literacy and science rankings, through assessment tools such as the *Pan-Canadian Assessment of Reading, Mathematics and Science* with the public. These types of assessment give stakeholders information regarding how policies are being enacted in schools and often lead to public pressure to adapt or change existing directives and guidelines. Additionally, in 2018 Manitoba held a summit, *Manitoba's Literacy and Numeracy Strategy* focused on "ensuring that all Manitobans have the literacy and numeracy foundations they need to lead full and productive lives" (Manitoba Education and Training, 2018). Stakeholders from education, social services, employment services and preschool services were invited to provide feedback and directions on numeracy and literacy policies and directives as a means to ensuring policies support all children inclusively. However, despite these rigorous assessments of numeracy and literacy strategies, and unlike other provinces (Roher, 2007; Winton, 2012), Manitoba's Safe and Caring Schools initiatives have been subject to very little academic examination or assessment, despite a long

history of implementation. While other jurisdictions (Ontario and Nova Scotia, for example) regularly document and analyze exclusionary school-based responses to (mis)behaviour – for example, by publishing annual reports on the frequency, longevity and student demographics related to suspensions and expulsions in all public schools (Queen's Printer for Ontario, 2017; Halifax Regional School Board, 2016) – Manitoba's legislated response to (mis)behaviour has been the subject of very little scholarly or public scrutiny.

In our contemporary context, policy, guidelines and directives are increasingly intended to orchestrate social action, and to make clear prescriptions about what can and cannot be implemented in individual schools (Taylor, Henry, Lingard, & Rizvi, 1997). Viennett and Pont's (2017) literature review of education policy documentation suggests that the educational impacts of policy are "challenging to assess and seldom evaluated" (p. 8). However, Taylor (2004) notes that as a result of our new knowledge-based economy, language has become more important in social life. She argues that, "policies are seen as the outcomes of struggles between competing objectives" (Taylor, 2004, p. 440). That is, the language that is used tactically in policies and guidelines directs what is valued, and whose interests are prioritized in schools. Language carries new weight in a knowledge economy because dominant and accepted discourses become replicated throughout all levels of an institution. Taylor et al.(1997) argue similarly, that policies and their guidelines are agents of change in two ways: at a macro level, as a response to broader social, cultural, economic and political change; and at a micro level, as a means to prescribing changes to be implemented in school (p. vii). Discourse analysis of these types of documents is

therefore important, as it explicates both the ideologies being represented in particular policies,

directives or guidelines, and also the specific prescriptions, or *thou-shalts* being asked of schools.

Furthermore, the discourses are constitutive in that they construct how systems understand and

respond to children, making discourse effects both explicit and implicit.

Within this context, Ball, Maguire, Braun and Hoskins (2011) note that the *kinds* of

policy, guidelines and directives given, have the effect of being enacted differently in schools

and on children; therefore we ought to be mindful of the types of document being implemented.

In particular, they argue that there are two different kinds of education policies that are

implemented by schools, which position teachers as different kinds of policy subjects and actors:

"imperative policies" and "exhortative policies" (p. 626). Imperative (or disciplinary) policies,

they argue, require teachers to take on a primarily passive role, acting as a "technical

professional" in a do-what-you're-told kind of manner (p. 629). Imperative policies do not locate

the student "as a site of the production of meaning, but only as the receiver of fixed, determined"

directives (p. 630). For teachers working with these types of policies, acceptance or rejection

(likely with negative consequences) are the only two options. Exhortative policies, on the other

hand, enable an "active policy subject who brings judgment, originality and passion" (p. 631).

Rather than simply enacting imperative policies through "tactics, talks, meetings, plans, events

and artifacts," exhortative policies allow for a translation of policy following some interpretation.

In the context of post-structuralism, exhortative policies position teachers as actors who are

given permission to consider student singularities and contexts with a "plurality of entrances" (p.

632) rather than a one-size-fits-all declaration. Given that both types of policy exist in the current education context, any policy examination will require an understanding of the kind of policy presented, as each type will have very different implications for enactment and application. Furthermore, Grimaldi (2012) notes that regardless of the type of policy, "the institutional or power context within which discourses are embedded plays a crucial role in their construction" (p. 450). Therefore, even though *Taking Action Against Bullying, A Whole School Approach, Code of Conduct* and *Towards Inclusion* all support Safe and Caring Schools legislation and policies, it is important to also consider the positional power inherent in each document. Grimaldi (2012) notes, "discourses (and policies within them) need to be interpreted as anchored in… a given political and economic order" (p. 452). That is, not all policy documents are created equal, and the political context will inform how different policy documents are enacted.

Critical Discourse Analysis of Policy Text(s)

Jorgensen and Phillips (2002) note that critical discourse analysis allows us to examine texts as social actions, since "discourse is an important form of social practice, which both reproduces and changes… identities and social relations… in specific institutions" (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, p. 76). Furthermore, Laclau and Mouffe (1985) have noted that often, discourses limit our possibilities for action. That is, unless we are mindful of the discourses being used, we cannot move forward with alternate actions. Cassels (2011) notes, "policy text, whether written (like, say, some official policy language) or spoken (like, say, a verbal declaration of intent), is best understood as a social act, a product of the socio-political and historical context in which it

exists" (p. 271). In other words, discourses used in provincial policy documents have direct influence on the social practice of individuals within the school system. Therefore, it is fundamental to examine policy texts in order to examine whose needs are being supported by the discourses employed within them.

It is worth noting again the ways in which I am taking up notions of discourse, specifically within the theoretical frame of poststructuralism. Within poststructuralism, discourses are considered both reflective and generative; discourse has a constitutive nature; it "enable[s] and delimit[s] fields of knowledge and inquiry, and… govern[s] what can be said, thought and done within [particular] fields" (Luke, 1997, p.7). Because this understanding of discourses holds that discourse influences practices, knowledge, and identities, this project will employ a methodology of critical discourse analysis of policy documents in order to question the discourses used in Manitoba education policies and guidelines in regards to understandings and assumptions being made of children, their (mis)behaviours, and the schools' response(s) to them. The project will employ methods in line with Van Dijk's (1989) methodology, which links discourse with ideology. Van Dijk (1989) has noted that examination of discourse can serve as a consideration of ideology, insofar as the discourse is used in the practices of group members to allow for the "reproduction of…sociocultural hegemony" (p. 41). Van Dijk (1989) argues that, "it is critical to examine…what processes control the means or institutions of ideological (re)production" (p. 42). This aligns with Althusser's (as cited in Jorgenson & Phillips, 2002) understanding of interpellation, as the "process through which language constructs a social

position for the individual and thereby makes him or her an ideological subject" (p. 15). Critical

discourse analysis in this iteration begins with identifying signifiers utilized in a text or texts to

identify themes used within the documents, and to ascertain which ideologies are being upheld

by those particular discourses.

Jorgenson and Phillips (2002) note that Laclau and Mouffe have argued that the subject is

fragmented in its interpellation; that is, "positioned by several different discourses" (p. 41).

Drawing on this understanding, this study will examine the discourses in the *A Whole School

Approach* (2017), *Code of Conduct (2017)*, *Taking Action Against Bullying* (2014) and *Towards

Inclusion* (2011), as a means to uncovering the broader ideologies implicit within the documents

and the potential constitutive effects of such discourses. Post-structuralist examinations of

educational policy can be useful insofar as, "the educational researcher…serve[s] as a cultural

critic offering perspective rather than truth...[and that] edifying conversations, rather than truth-

generating epistemological efforts must be the staple of a post-structural social science" (Humes

& Bryce, 2003, p. 182). Indeed, Lather (1992) argues that in a post-structuralist perspective, data

is used "demonstrably [and] performatively… [rather than] to support the analysis" or a pre-

determined end-goal (p. 95). That is, post-structuralism is a useful tool to disseminate and

diagnose inconsistencies, gaps and hegemonic-dominant discourses in current policy, which may

not be best serving the needs of marginalized student populations.

Documents Included in this Study

As discussed above, it is pertinent to review the kinds of policy documents examined in the study prior to looking at findings. As Ball et al. (2011) have pointed out, in any document review, the kind of documents being examined needs to be weighed just as heavily as what is written within them. In the case of *A Whole School Approach*, *Code of Conduct*, *Taking Action Against Bullying* and *Towards Inclusion*, all four documents have a mandate to guide the enactment of legislation in schools, are created for educators who will enact policies in schools, and are focused on school-based responses to children's (mis)behaviours. However, they nevertheless have differences in audience, purpose, authority and context. Ball et al. (2011) understanding of imperative and exhortative documents is particularly helpful here, as we can use this framework to consider whether or not the documents are framed as imperative policies— standards, which must be followed in a verbatim protocol manner— or exhortative policies— which aim to guide teachers to make decisions situationally and within which "very different relations of power are realized", rather than simply subject-ruler power relations (p. 92).

As a Ministerial Directive, *Provincial Code of Conduct* (2017) has the most authoritative power of any of the documents examined. It is the only document examined which mandates what schools and school divisions *must* have in place as a directive. In this sense, the document takes a purely imperative stance as it prescribes particular protocols, responses and structures that schools must implement. It is exhortative only in the fact that while it outlines particular consequences for (mis)behaviour that may be used within the school system, it allows for some

independence and individual judgement by school administrators in the application of those particular consequences.

Provincial Guidelines, on the other hand, are intended to re-emphasize provincial policy and legislation and to provide context, evidence and information to school teams to effectively implement legislation. However, though *A Whole School Approach* and *Taking Action Against Bullying* are both Provincial Guidelines, they read as very different kinds of documents. *A Whole School Approach* begins by reviewing the imperative mandates of *Safe and Inclusive Schools Legislation*, *The Public Schools Act* and *Code of Conduct*, but most of its 92 pages are primarily exhortative in their substance. The document draws on current literature and research to provide frameworks for data collection, decision-making and evidence-based practices to support school teams in making responsive decisions regarding their determined priorities in order to support children. *Taking Action Against Bullying*, on the other hand, is much more imperative in its construction. It is a much shorter document (nine pages in total); only serving to reference the information either in legislation or the *Provincial Code of Conduct* (Manitoba Education and Training, 2017b) with regards to responding to bullying-involved behaviours. It does not provide information beyond that already documented in provincial legislation. Therefore, because *Taking Action Against Bullying's* aim is to reinforce policy mandates, it carries more imperative and authoritative weight than does *A Whole School Approach*, which aims to summarize current research.

Finally, *Towards Inclusion* is intended to inform classroom teachers of (provincially-determined) best practices related to behaviour management. The strategies are presented as recommendations rather than mandates, but interestingly, even though these recommendations are meant to be implemented with the teacher's discretion, most of the recommendations are worded in an imperative manner, with very prescriptive language. For example, in one instance the document outlines a seven-point format for how to conduct an "informal chat" with students (Manitoba Education and Training, 2011, p. 56). These types of prescriptive recommendations frame the idea of "best practices" not as guidelines, but as assertions that there is only one way of doing things. It is also noteworthy that *Towards Inclusion* is the only document written with classroom teachers as a primary audience. This suggests it holds less authoritative weight, since any mandated information would be the responsibility of the school principal(s) or divisional leader(s). Table 4 outlines the documents examined, including their mandate, audience and prescriptive power.

Table 4			
Provincial Document Types, Mandates and Authority			
Document	**Type of Document**	**Mandate of Document**	**Authority of Document**
Safe and Caring Schools: Code of Conduct	Ministerial Directive	To direct school divisions and individual schools as to what they must abide by in developing codes of conduct.	School divisions and individual schools **must abide** by the **mandated** guidelines within the Ministerial Directive.
Safe and Caring Schools: Taking Action Against Bullying	Provincial Guideline	To support existing planning and policy development in Manitoba by providing implementation guidelines for proactive and reactive responses to bullying in schools.	School divisions and individual schools **must implement** the documented protocols when dealing with bullying behaviours, as per the **legislation** cited within the document.

Safe and Caring Schools: A Whole-School Approach to Safety and Belonging	Provincial Guideline	To provide school divisions and schools with guidelines for implementing policies and programming focused on school systems that support belonging, mental health and school safety.	School divisions and individual schools **are encouraged to** implement the whole school approach to safety and belonging as part of their **legislated** mandate to Safe and Caring Schools.
Towards Inclusion: Supporting Positive Behaviours in Manitoba Schools	Curriculum Support Document	To provide research-based strategies and recommendations for classroom management for school teams and teachers.	Teachers **are encourage to consider trying** evidence-based practices to support inclusive and safe classroom environments as part of their **legislated** mandate to Safe and Caring Schools.

Locating the policy documents in the field of safe schools research. The four

documents examined aim to serve different purposes, are created for different audiences, and are

located at different points historically along the evolution of the Safe Schools discourse. As

discussed above, Bailey (2017) has noted that zero-tolerance policies were implemented widely

as a response to school violence in the 1980s and 1990s, and work has since been done to

develop more holistic, student centered approaches. Therefore, the publication date and the

references used in each document will inform the document's theoretical context.

A Whole School Approach, as the most recent document, is indicative of policy and

language shifts in recent years away from zero-tolerance policies, and towards the kinds of

culturally responsive environments that prioritize a sense of belonging, *A Whole School

Approach* seems to advocate for initiatives valuing proactive, child-focused learning rather than

solely reactive violence prevention initiatives (Callahan, 2008). Its sources are broad—the

bibliography contains over five pages of references, most published within the last six years,

making it the most current document both in publication date and in its reference list. References

include literature documenting: restorative practices, social-emotional learning, suicide

prevention, bully prevention, inclusion, Positive Behavioural Interventions and Supports (PBIS)

and international Safe Schools initiatives. Even the fact that "belonging" is included in the title, alongside "safety" is indicative of a shift away from zero-tolerance understandings.

Code of Conduct, also updated in 2017, though contemporaneous with *A Whole School Approach*, does not include a review of recent literature, and its reference list includes only current legislation, including: *The Public Schools Act*, *The Educational Administration Act*, *Appropriate Disciplinary Consequences in Schools Regulation*, and *The Administrative Handbook for Schools*. Notably, it does not reference *A Whole School Approach*, though it does reference the now retired 2004 document, *A Whole School Approach: Preventing Violence and Bullying*. It seems, then, that though *Code of Conduct* was revised in 2017, it has not drawn on recent literature with regards to its revisions.

Taking Action Against Bullying is a different sort of document than the others in this study, in that the primary audience members for the publication are parents, largely in response to the community's pressure on schools to respond to bullying. *Taking Action Against Bullying* reads like a list of affirmations to parents that schools are taking bullying seriously and is in this sense, indicative of what Bailey (2017) recognizes as "public demands for immediate results [which] often ignore… the need to address underlying systemic issues" (Bailey, 2017, p. 128). The purpose of the document seems to be to reiterate existing policy mandates, rather than providing additional context or research. The document cites provincial legislation ranging from 1987 to 2013 along with two bullying information documents for parents and two websites on

restitution and respect in schools. However, these outside resources seem to be for additional information resources for parents, rather than as documents informing the guidelines.

Towards Inclusion's aims to provide teachers (the documents primary audience) with current information regarding classroom inclusion, with specific strategies for students exhibiting (mis)behaviours. Notably, the references informing this document are the oldest of all the documents examined. Some are as old as 1978 and most were published between 1992 and 2001, in the heart of zero-tolerance responses to (mis)behaviour. It is telling that the citation list includes 16 sources which refer to "management" as an end goal. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that the document's title, "*Towards Inclusion: Supporting Positive Behaviours in Manitoba Classrooms*" invokes Positive Behavioural Interventions and Supports (PBIS). PBIS is a framework for schools to "build systems capacity for implementing a multi-tiered approach to social, emotional and behaviour support" (US Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs, 2018). However, the reference list has only two actual citations to PBIS researchers' work (Colvin & Sugai, 1989; Colvin, Kameenui, & Sugai, 1993), and these documents pre-date the bulk of research and implementation in the PBIS field. Ample peer-reviewed PBIS research has taken place since the early 1990s, and the early works focusing on management cited in the *Towards Inclusion* document (Colvin & Sugai, 1989; Colvin, Kameenui, & Sugai, 1993) do not represent current PBIS research. Although the *Towards Inclusion* document's title appears to link it to a PBIS approach, it seems to be a document based on older understandings of "classroom management" and not current PBIS research.

Methods and Procedures

I conducted a critical discourse analysis of *A Whole School Approach*, *Code of Conduct*, *Taking Action Against Bullying* and *Towards Inclusion*. I conducted my analysis using open coding to look for signifiers related to: (a) children; (b) children's (mis)behaviours; and (c) the response of the school to (mis)behaviour. Following a collection of signifiers, I then coded and sorted the signifiers related to children, children's (mis)behaviours and school-based responses to (mis)behaviour to look for themes and assumptions being made within the documents and subsequently, examined the ideologies that seem to be underpinned by the discourses employed in order to uncover dominant themes in the discourses at work. I read each document three times looking for signifiers. Each time I read a document I used highlighters to code the various signifiers. Following these initial readings, I arranged the signifiers into categories using a spreadsheet. Once I found and documented signifiers using open coding, I used the Microsoft Word "find" function to search all of the documents for other uses of those signifiers to ensure none were missed. I then examined themes in the categories to consider dominant ideologies upheld in the documents.

It is important to recognize that my positionality as a researcher influenced the themes that I used to categorize the signifiers into and also influenced the conclusions I reached. As a researcher, looking at documents from a post-structuralist perspective, my readings of the documents identified management models which tend to normalize, manage or tame behaviours as problematic, and themes were organized partly in response to those normative themes. A

different researcher who might prefer managing or normalizing responses to student behavior might have observed different themes and come to different conclusions about the documents. In this sense, a replication of this study might reach very different conclusions, depending on the positionality of the researcher.

Findings and Analysis

I will begin by documenting the signifiers that were used to describe children, their

(mis)behaviours and school-based responses to mis-behaviour in *A Whole School Approach*,

Code of Conduct, Taking Action Against Bullying and *Towards Inclusion* in order to present a

landscape of the discourses used. Following this broad presentation of the research data

uncovered, each of the documents will be examined individually in order to provide an analysis

of how signifiers are used within each document. For the purposes of this analysis, I will first

look at the signifiers related to children in all four documents, followed by the signifiers related

to (mis)behaivours and then the signifiers related to school-based responses to (mis)behavior.

These signifiers were arranged thematically and analysis will follow a discussion of those themes.

Signifiers Related to Children

I read all four documents looking for nouns used to describe children. For each document,

I collected, coded and sorted the nouns as signifiers. I found that there were four categories of

signifiers positioning of children in the documents (Table 5):

Table 5 *Nouns used in all four examined documents to describe children.*	
Terms used to describe children as subordinates to the school system:	student students learners
Terms used to describe children as children, youth or adolescents	children and youth child young people children
Terms used to describe children as citizens.	member of the school community Global citizen Person
Terms used to describe children as individuals	Individuals Individuals within the school community

Signifiers Related to Children's (Mis)behaviours

Following this first analysis of the signifiers related to children, I read for signifiers related to (mis)behaviour in all four documents. Signifiers were collected, coded and sorted into categories. I then sorted these signifiers into seven distinct discursive themes (Table 6).

Table 6	
Terms used to describe children's (mis)behaviours	
Theme	**Specific signifiers used**
Behaviour as (Mis)behaviour	Discussions of behaviour framed from a deficit perspective, including: - challenging behaviour - negative behaviour - unacceptable behaviour - inappropriate behaviour - behaviour challenges
Behaviour as Bullying	Discussions of behaviours as related to bullying, including: - bullying - bullying-involved behaviours
Behaviour as Safety Concerns/Risks	Discussions of behaviours as posing a safety risk, including: - safety - risk - threats - violence
Behaviour as Conduct/Discipline Issues	Discussions of behaviours referencing established codes of conduct, including: - disciplinary issues - offenses - student conduct - misconduct
Behaviour as Student Deficit	Discussions of behaviours framed around student need, including: - development of student skills - failure to meet behavioural expectations - failure to respond to universal or targeted interventions - student need - needs assessment
Behaviour as Choice	Discussions framing student actions as a choice, including: -choices and actions towards each other -challenging classroom expectations

Signifiers Related to School-based Responses to (Mis)Behaviour

In a third reading of *A Whole School Approach*, *Code of Conduct*, *Taking Action Against Bullying* and *Towards Inclusion*, I looked for signifiers and phrases referencing school-based responses to student (mis)behaviour. Signifiers were collected, coded and sorted into categories. I sorted the signifiers into five discursive themes as shown in Table 7:

Table 7
Discursive Themes Related to Responses to Children's (Mis)behaviour

Management Responses	Responses that make reference to either: (a) mandated process, documentation or legislation, including: reporting behaviour, collecting data, referring to particular mandates, reviewing policy, etc. (b) specified particular mechanical processes intended for teachers to follow verbatim, for example: "give students at least 10 seconds to respond before repeating request" (Manitoba Education and Training, 2015a, p. 10), "make more start requests than stop requests" (Manitoba Education and Training, 2015a, p. 11), or, "ignoring students who engage in attention seeking behaviour" (Manitoba Education and Training, 2015a, p. 54).
Restorative Responses	Responses that seek to work together with students to "restore a sense of safety and belonging" (Manitoba Education and Training, 2017a, p. 26), including collaborative problem solving and opportunities to work towards restitution following their actions;
Intervention Responses	Responses that follow a medicalized model of diagnosis and prescription, whereby teachers refer or put in place behavioural, social emotional, academic or organizational interventions for students with the aim to have students "learn" acceptable behaviours or make "better" choices;
Disciplinary Responses	Responses that follow a behaviour-punishment paradigm whereby students deemed as offenders are dealt with via disciplinary consequences or withdrawal
Future Planning Responses	Responses in which current behaviour data is collected not for immediate planning, but for long term school wide planning and initiatives with the goal of producing a safe school environment

Following this analysis of signifiers and phrases discussing school responses to (mis)behaviour, I

further examined, collected, coded and sorted: (a) The specific verbs used to describe school

responses to (mis)behaviour as signifiers of the actions taken on/for/with students. These verbs

were sorted into the five categories of school-based responses to (mis)behaviour. (See Table 8);

Table 8
Verbs Used to Describe School-based Responses to(Mis)behaviour in Examined Documents

Verbs used in Management Responses	Verbs used in Intervention Responses	Verbs used in Restorative Responses	Verbs used in Future Planning Responses	Verbs used in Disciplinary Responses
Address	Adapt	Adjust	Adjust	Consider
Apply	Ask	Encourage	Ask	Deal
Collect	Assist	Hold	Create	Detain
Confirm	Build	Reach	Develop	Expel
Consider	Communicate	Respond	Explore	Ignore
Contact	Create	Restore	Generate	Identify
Define	De-escalate	Support	Identify	Pause
Emphasize	Defuse		Look	Modify
Engage	Demonstrate		Organize	Move
Ensure	Describe		Plan	Owe
Establish	Discuss		Try	Protect

Find	Facilitate		Work	Redirect
Follow	Give		Understand	Remove
Identify	Help			Require
Include	Move			Respond
Introduce	Remain			Suspend
Notify	Make			Use
Offer	Reinforce			Wait
Organize	Teach			Withhold
Outline	Provide			Withdraw
Prescribe				
Provide				
Receive				
Recognize				
Reduce				
Report				
Require				
Respond				
Restate				
Understand				

and (b) The prepositions used to describe students in reference to (mis)behaviour responses as an indicator of the positioning of students with regards to school-based (mis)behaviour responses (see Table 9).

Table 9
Prepositions used to Describe Students' Positioning in School-Based Behaviour Responses

About	For
Affecting	In each
Among	Let's
As	Of
At	To
Between	Towards
	With

The prepositions used in conjunction with students were collected, sorted and examined to determine if the discourses around school-based responses acted *on*, *for* or *with* students, in order to ascertain the positioning of students within the documents.

Examination of Themes and Assumptions within the Documents

Following the collection, coding and sorting of signifiers in the documents, I examined the signifiers and discursive themes used to describe students, (mis)behaviour, and school-based responses to (mis)behaviour in *A Whole School Approach*, *Code of Conduct*, *Taking Action Against Bullying* and *Towards Inclusion*. I first examined each document individually, considering the purpose and audience of each document, and the prevalent signifiers and discursive themes used within each document, reading both with and against the individual texts. A critical examinations of the signifiers and discursive themes provided insight into the ideologies or dominant social discourses that were being invoked in each document.

After individual examinations of the discourses in each document, I compared the documents to see what discursive themes were being employed across the documents. Comparing the discourses used in various provincial documents allowed me to consider the similarity, differences overlaps, and absences of discourses used in the various provincial documents. Finally, given the examinations of discourses used, I have offered some recommendations.

Analysis of Discourses: Children, (Mis)Behaviours and School-Based Responses to (Mis)Behaviours

In reviewing the discourses used to describe children, (mis)behaviours and school-based responses to (mis)behaviour, I examined the documents from newest to oldest. Therefore, they will be examined in the following order:

- *A Whole School Approach* (2017)

- *Code of Conduct* (2017)

- *Taking Action Against Bullying* (2014)

- *Towards Inclusion* (2011)

Discourses of children

***Discourses of children in* A Whole School Approach**. The primary descriptor used to describe children in *A Whole School Approach* is as a "student" (used 220 times) and as a "learner." Notably, of all the documents examined, *A Whole School Approach* uses the largest number of different signifiers positioning children outside the school system; including positioning as a "child"—including: "children", "young people" and "children and youth"; and as "individuals"—including: "members of the school community" and "global citizens." Though children are primarily identified based on their role in the school system—as students—the authors have clearly made a considerable effort to consider children's positioning outside the school system; as children and as citizens.

In further examining the positioning of children in *A Whole School Approach*, the prepositions "for" and "of" are used most frequently to describe how children are positioned in the documents, suggesting that in general, the whole school planning for safety and belonging is a protocol *for* children, and used *on* children, rather than *with* children. Indeed, the preposition "with" is only used a single time in the document in relation to children. Protocols "between" students and "affecting" students are also mentioned. This is noteworthy, given that despite the

authors' attempt to use signifiers for children granting them individual agency, as "citizens" of the school community, it has nonetheless placed them in an entirely subjugated position being acted upon, but very rarely being granted the opportunity in the document to act *with*. This individualized construction of the child, is also therefore, the child without a context; without recognition of the role/importance/influence of family, school peers, the teacher, etc.. In sum, though *A Whole School Approach* attempts to position the child as somewhat multi-faceted—as an individual, a citizen, a youth, and a student—the overarching role of the child in the school system is still a subjectified one.

   ***Discourses of children in* Code of Conduct.** In *Code of Conduct*, the set of signifiers used to describe children were relatively monolithic. Specifically, the term "student" is used with very few exceptions. There are eight instances in which the word "child" is used, however, it is only used when discussing children in relation to their parents, not the school system. There are also nine instances in which the word, "pupil" is used. Janzen and Schwartz (2018) have argued that the term pupil in this context has "an essentializing effect on how the writers and readers of the document might conceptualize the child, as the terms risk reducing the identity of the child simply to that of a subordinate within the institution." (p. 112). Interestingly, the term "pupil" is only used with regards to discussions around highly punitive responses: suspensions and expulsions. The term "pupil"—as an outdated and clinical term—seems to distance or dehumanize the child, which may allow for a rationalization of punitive responses. This

document's discussion of children places them in a highly subjugated position and does not seem to account for them as individual actors with agency.

Code of Conduct also uses the term, "state of development" to discuss how children should be considered by the school system, which seems to be based in a Piagetian developmental framework whereby the assumption is that all children can be considered in comparison with universal norms of development (Lesko, 1996). Indeed, Walkerdine (1993) has argued that this kind of developmentalism necessarily upholds those in hegemonic positions, and "peripheral subjects are rendered pathological and abnormal" (p. 451). Suggesting that responses to (mis)behaviour need to be based on a student's "state of development" is dangerous, as it could be read to assume that the child who is (mis)behaving is not meeting developmental norms— and is thus, *ab*normal. In a developmental view, there is no accounting for the perspectival realities of each student when working with them or responding to them (Thomas and Loxley, 2007). Insofar as responding to students as part of a normal/abnormal dualism tends to result in a system that prioritizes normalization and institutional convenience (Baker, 2002), *Code of Conduct* does not seem to support considerations of individual student realities.

The primary prepositions used in *Code of Conduct* with regards to children are "for," "of," and "to," suggesting that this document, like *A Whole School Approach*, is framed as acting *on* children, rather than with, alongside, or on behalf of children. Though the preposition "with" is used four times, it is used in reference to pre-determined interventions—for example, a student conference —where the student is required to participate in a school-mandated process with a

teacher or principal. Notably, the term "with" is, however, used to describe planning "with" both school personnel and parents or families, which is unique to this particular document; the other documents examined do not discuss planning with families. This is noteworthy, since *Code of Conduct* is positioned primarily as a reactive document for responding to student (mis)behaviour, which seems to indicate that disciplinary decisions are shared with parents and families after a determination of disciplinary action, rather than beginning with a framework where children and families are involved proactively in making decisions regarding a student's education.

Discourses of children in **Taking Action Against Bullying**. In *Taking Action Against Bullying,* "student" is the primary noun used to describe children. Notably, the word "child" is used only to describe children who are "victims" of (mis)behaviours, as is the word "people." This seems to reflect Stein's (2003) discussion of rights within the bullying discourse. If "bullies" are positioned only as students, subordinated within the school system, but "victims" are positioned as "people" with rights, there is a risk that responses to the "offender" are solely behaviouristic in scope. This is problematic, insofar as Camodeca and Goosen's (2004) research indicates that often offenders are as much in need of support as victims. Prepositions used to discuss students in *Taking Action Against Bullying* include: "to," "for." "between," "about," and "of." There are no instances of responses to behaviour being discussed or implemented "with" students. In this sense, *Taking Action Against Bullying*, like the previous documents examined, seems to uphold the tendency to subjugate students.

***Discourses of children in* Towards Inclusion.** In the *Towards Inclusion* document, the

word "student" is used 555 times in 69 pages. Though it is sometimes used with descriptors, for

example: "individual students" or "students who have behaviour challenges," the only exceptions

to the word "student" are two instances when "young people" is used (as a descriptor in an

outside checklist), and three instances where "individuals" is used in a mechanical sense to

distinguish an individual from a group of students. This sole use of the term "student" in a

document authored for teachers reflects a teacher-student/ruler-subject paradigm whereby a

dichotomous positioning of power-holder (teacher) and subordinate (student) permeates the

document. In using only the term, "student", teachers are arguably not encouraged to consider

their students as children, as individuals with needs or hopes, as citizens with rights, or as

members of families with unique life experiences. Rather, children are positioned primarily as

being the object to schooling; subject to a management model of education whereby children are

placed in contradistinction to the teacher, whose aim it is to manage and tame.

It is noteworthy that of all the documents, *Towards Inclusion* utilizes the broadest list of

prepositions with regards to children. "For," "of," "to," "at," and "towards" are used (placing

students in a subjugated position), but, "with", "among", "between", "in each", "as" are also

used. Therefore, despite the fact that this document is the oldest of the four, and that the

reference list draws primarily on documents located in and reflective of the "zero-tolerance" era,

Towards Inclusion has the most instances of suggesting that teachers act "with" and "among"

students. This is perhaps due to the fact that the document is aimed at teachers, who are expected

and instructed (by way of curriculum documents and assessment guides, for example, which direct teachers to engage pedagogically in dialogues with students) to be teaching with, between, and in the midst of children. The other documents examined, seem to assume that school leaders and policy makers are not working directly with children and thus are expected—by virtue of their supervisory roles— to apply policy on them or to students.

    Summary of discourses of children in safe schools documentation. In all four documents examined, children are predominantly placed in the subjugated position of "student." Indeed, as Noguera (2003) points out, the school system is built on children participating in the school system as subordinates because they have been directed to enter into a social contract, understanding that a lack of agency is traded for an education, which is meant to "pay off" for them in the end. However, as Millei and Petersen (2014) have noted, if children are only ever "acted on" and do not have opportunities to develop their own agency, this can limit children, who see no benefit to schooling. In this case, a student's only opportunity for agency may be acting out against the social contract that has been placed upon them. Certainly, *Toward Inclusion's* mandate as a document for teachers positions children "with" teachers more often than in the other documents, allowing for more opportunities for teachers to understand children and consider their perspectival realities (Thomas & Loxley, 2007) and to inform their decision making and collaboration. However, as an imperatively worded framework, *Toward Inclusion* does not seem to allow for significant student agency in acting with teachers.

The usage of the term "children" is inconsistent across the documents: it is not used at all in *Towards Inclusion,* i*n Taking Action Against Bullying,* the term child is only used in reference to victims, in *Code of Conduct* it is only used in relation to parents and in *A Whole School Approach,* it is used as part of the term "children and youth" and in reference to social programming for children who are identified as lacking in skills. That is, in all three documents, children are positioned as weak, needing support, or requiring help, rather than as holding strength, unique perspectives, valuable insights, or being "at-promise" (Swadener & Lubeck, 1995). It is noteworthy that the most recent of the documents, *A Whole School Approach,* drawing on references that feature qualities of restitution, social emotional learning and student voice, has *attempted* to define the child outside of the "student-teacher" discourse. However, insofar as the document only references planning "with" children a single time, it remains (like the other three documents examined) limited in the ways in which it views the participation of children in planning and decision-making.

Discourses of (mis)behaviour

***Discourses of (mis)behaviour in* A Whole School Approach.** The signifiers used to describe (mis)behaviour in *A Whole School Approach* were sorted into two predominant discursive themes; those related to bullying and those related to safety and/or risk. The term "bullying" is used 168 times in the document and includes reference to: "bullying behaviours," "bullying-involved behaviours," "bullying/concerning behaviours," and "behaviours that have an impact on student safety and well-being." Signifiers used to discuss safety included: "identified

safety concerns," "severe safety issues," "incidents and issues affecting student safety and well-being" and "incidents that involve hurt, rejection, harassment and/or relational violence." The document cites "identified risk factors" in four instances.

Despite the fact that *A Whole School Approach* is not a document specifically responding to "bullying," at times throughout the document, the term "bullying" seems to be used interchangeably to describe unsafe behaviours or (mis)behaviours; thus, conflating the discourses of "safety" and "bullying." For example, the document notes that, "the goal of secondary-tier planning is to identify children and youth experiencing or exhibiting recurring *bullying*-involved behaviours…" and then in the next sentence, notes, "planned interventions at the secondary tier interrupt the potential for incidents to escalate and further affect student and/ or school *safety* and success" (Manitoba Education and Training, 2017a, p. 22). This discourse seems to position bullying as any action that threatens school safety. This is reminiscent of Zhang, Osberg and Phipps' (2015) argument that bullying tends to be used as a catch-all term warranting immediate response, which is problematic since public pressure around bullying often leads to reactive and punitive responses to bullying that do not support individual student needs. Although the document is entitled, *A Whole School Approach for Safety and Belonging*, given the sheer number of reference to bullying and to safety, it seems that safety and risk management are being prioritized over belonging. This may be one example of what Bailey (2017) called a "policy mix…[with] punitive elements from its zero-tolerance past" (p. 148).

In *A Whole School Approach*, though the word "behaviour" is used 107 times, it does not use negative descriptors referencing "misbehaviour," "unacceptable behaviour," or "bad behaviour". There seems to be an effort in *A Whole School Approach* to supplant discourses of "bad behaviour" with discourses of student need. The document refers to, "needs of students… at the tertiary tier of planning," "severity of need," "needs of the school community," "needs…and relational problems," and "issues affecting children and youth." The discussion of needs of students includes needs related to "mental and behavioural health services" (p.19), "educational needs" (p. 21), "physical, mental health or safety needs" (p. 21), and needs for "positive school climate … to build a foundation for learning" (p. 22). That is, the discussion around "need" for students is not limited to the choice/consequence paradigm of "needing to make better choices" or "needing to learn to follow expectations" for the good of the institution, as Thomas and Loxley (2007) have cautioned. Rather, the discourses reveal an attempt to value a broad understanding of student need, aiming to focus on "perspectival realities" of the student. However, while consideration of student need is a positive step away from punitive zero-tolerance responses to behaviour, this consideration of "need" still positions the need as located solely within the student. The discourse of student need does not look at the greater societal context in which children are situated. For example, issues of mental health or physical needs could be argued to be symptomatic of society's failure to care for children. In this sense, it is society and the school that needs to ensure better supports and systems are in place so that children are not experiencing issues that affect their health, safety and well-being.

It should be noted that in addition to discourses of student need, *A Whole School Approach* also focuses on discussions of "comprehensive school health" (2017, p. 17) which advocate for identifying the needs (and therefore the deficits) of the *school*—rather than simply the students in its care. Considerations of "comprehensive school health," (p. 17) "strength-based approaches," (p. 27) "three-tiered approaches," (p. 22) and "social-ecological systems" (p. 24) are positive steps forward in considering perspectival realities of students and the contexts in which students are acting. However, over-arching use of the "student need" discourse still anchors these discussions as growing out of student deficit.

Furthermore, in considering comprehensive school health, *A Whole School Approach* tends to frame difference not only as deficit, but also as a monolithic entity. This homogenous understanding of difference is exacerbated by the document's emphasis on planning for students, rather than planning with students, as identified above. For example, the document cites the need to organize re-entry meetings for children with "school absences/disciplinary/ mental health/ sexual orientation/gender identity/youth justice issues" (p. 21). Citing all these different factors as deficits in the same statement would be unfortunate in any context, but is especially so when situated in a document focused on student belonging, as it seems to haphazardly throws together a whole collection of "differences." Later, the document also places, "bullying-involved behaviours or health-related issues" (p. 29) in the same sentence. Heydon and Iannacci (2008) have noted that it can be problematic to "acknowledge particular groups in society are less privileged than others and at the same time refuse to take a deficit orientations towards the

people who make up the groups" (2008, p. 29). Lumping various "issues" together, conflates a

number of complex issues, implies that these discrete circumstances are dealt with in similar

ways and suggests that these "issues" are the causes of the problems, therefore locating the

problem within the student. The approach dismisses the greater context, including: social

circumstances, perspectival realities and the situatedness of each individual child.

Discourses of (mis)behaviour in **Code of Conduct.** As the second-shortest document of

the four examined, *Code of Conduct* engages in the largest number of deficit-based discourses

related to (mis)behavior. The signifiers are categorized into five discursive themes as illustrated

in Table 10:

Table 10 *Signifiers used to describe (mis)behavior in* Code of Conduct	
Theme	**Signifiers in *Code of Conduct***
(Mis)Behaviour/ Behaviour	• unacceptable behavior • challenging behaviours • problem behavior • committing a behaviour • specific unacceptable behavior • disruptive behavior • behaviour under school policy or the school code of conduct
(Mis)behavior as a Conduct/Discipline Issue	• inappropriate student conduct • specific student conduct • behaviour under school policy or the school code of conduct • unacceptable conduct • disciplinary matters • disciplinary violation • negative impact on the classroom learning environment • negative impact on the school environment
(Mis)behaviour as lack of Safety or Increased Risk	• intentional or negligent act of a child • guilty of conduct injurious to the school environment • threats to self or others • serious incidents • specific behaviours (including: abusing another student, discriminating, using, possessing, being under the influence of alcohol or illicit drugs, gang involvement, possessing a weapon, trespassing)

(Mis)behavior as Bullying:	• bullying • cyberbullying
(Mis)Behaviour as a Lack of Response to Intervention	• discussions of consequences • discussions of strategies based on children "failing to meet expectations"

Concern with unacceptable conduct and determinations of risk are especially dominant in this document, which is framed in an "if… then" model whereby infractions deemed unacceptable are placed in relation to likely punishments. This framework is indicative of what Miller (2008) has outlined as, identification and documentation of "risk" behaviours permeating school cultures in response to an increase in threats in school environments. However, even Callahan (2008), who is a strong proponent of current threat assessment models has noted that in any identification system for risk behaviours, "schools must balance building security with efforts that foster student resiliency, connectedness, and social competency" (p. 59). *Code of Conduct* cites: inclusive practices, opportunities for restitution, and progressive discipline (as a means to considering resilience, connectedness and social competency) in the introduction. However by situating (mis)behaviours only as poor choices, conduct infractions, safety risks, lack of response to school interventions and bullying-involved actions, *Code of Conduct* relies primarily on deficit-based perspectives of children and their (mis)behaviours and does not tend to uphold understandings of resiliency or restitution. Progressive discipline seems to be implemented only as an over-simplified list of consequences that increase in severity as you move up the list.

   ***Discourses of (mis)behaviour in* Taking Action Against Bullying**. The *Taking Action Against Bullying* document had signifiers that fell into two main discursive themes: (1) bullying:

the term "bullying" is used 65 times in only nine pages, including: "cyberbullying," "conflict and

tensions as a result of bullying," and "harm as a result of bullying"; and (2) conduct/discipline:

including, "unacceptable student conduct," and reference to specific violations including:

"possession of weapons," "abuse" and "gang activity." Given that this document is meant to be

an information document (primarily for parents and guardians) in order to demonstrate how

Manitoba schools are taking bullying seriously, this pervasive bullying discourse is unsurprising.

However, utilization of the bully discourse in this document reflects Stein's (2003) argument that

incidents labeled as "bullying" generally garner reactive, disciplinary responses, rather than

restorative, problem solving or needs-based responses.

Notably, *Taking Action Against Bullying* defines bullying as "behaviour that is intended

to cause fear, intimidation, humiliation, distress, or other forms of harm to another person's

feelings, self-esteem, body, or reputation or is intended to create a negative school environment

for another person" (Manitoba Education and Training, 2014, p. 3). This definition is much

broader than Yoneyama and Naito's (2003) which they define as "a type of aggressive behaviour

inflicted by an individual or group to cause fear, distress or harm to the victim" (p. 316). The

dictionary (Oxford English Dictionary, 2018) describes bulling as "us[ing] superior strength or

influence to intimidate (someone), typically to force him or her to do what one wants" (p. 4).

Taking Action Against Bullying uses a definition of bullying which includes any purposeful act

of defiance, rebellion or exasperation in the school system, which has an effect on another

student, staff or the environment. This broad use of the term bully is dangerous (Zhang, Osberg

& Phipps, 2015), insofar that as soon as a (mis)behaviour is labeled bullying, because of public

pressure, responses tend to focus on punishments, rather than on rights or other social factors

pertaining to the behaviours (Stein, 2013). Simply responding to such (mis)behaviours from a

disciplinary perspective does not lead to sustainable change for the "offender" in particular

(Camodeca & Goosen, 2003). Furthermore, given that punitive responses operate within a

normalizing framework, such responses cannot possibly address the situational realities of

individual students. By responding punitively, the implication seems to be that the problem lays

within the child herself and thus these types of threats can be "dealt with" by punishing the child.

Discourses of (mis)behaviour in **Towards Inclusion**. In *Towards Inclusion*, the

signifiers related to (mis)behaviour were categorized into five discursive themes (Table 10).

Table 10	
Signifiers Related to (Mis)behavior in Towards Inclusion	
Themes	**Signifiers in *Towards Inclusion***
Behaviour /(Mis)behaviour	• negative behavior • behaviour challenges • severe behavioural challenges • behavioural issues • disruptive behaviours • attention-seeking behaviours • inappropriate behavior • behaviours you would like to change • behaviours that need to decrease • not meeting [behavioural] expectations
(Mis)behaviour as Need or Lack of Skills	• have not learned the skills they need • at risk of developing difficulties • limited skills for getting what they want or handling frustration • generate anger easily • uncertain about social expectations • unable to deal with power struggles
(Mis)behavior as Non-response to Intervention	• not responding to universal and/or targeted interventions • continuing to contribute to problems that arise in the classroom
(Mis)behavior as Discipline	• offenses

Infraction	• conduct issues
(Mis)behavior as Choice	• students who choose to challenge classroom expectations

While other documents examined utilized a discourse of "student need," in the context of *Towards Inclusion*, "need" seems to align more with Baker's (2002) assessment that too often we conflate the school's need for calm and control with the student's individual needs. For example, *Towards Inclusion* includes discussions about children needing to develop skills around (mis)behaviours that "push your buttons," "disrupt your day," "shift control to the student," "act in their own interest," "manipulate others," or, "distract the person in power by raising irrelevant side issues or by asking why". These examples position (mis)behaviours as a burden on the school/teacher because they upset the teacher-student hierarchy and disrupt the hegemony of schooling; the "need" is actually the school's need/want for order. (Mis)behaviours that are a burden to the teacher, may also be related to the needs of the student, but if the (mis)behaviours are positioned as infringing on the school's need for control (Thomas & Loxley, 2007) rather than a consideration of the student's "little narratives", there is a risk of problematizing (mis)behaviours instead of working with children in "productive relationships" (Gore & Parkes, 2008).

Alongside this understanding of "need" in *Towards Inclusion,* is the one-dimensional understanding of behaviour-as-something-to-be-learned. Insofar as this is a document for

teachers, it is unsurprising that responses to (mis)behaviour seem to be framed as teaching/ learning opportunities (Laws & Davies, 2000). However, Laws and Davies (2000) note that by framing (mis)behaviour only as a choice or a developmental abnormality that needs to be rectified through instruction, the educational system thus "position[s] children as objects of a developmental/ categorizing psychological inquiry [that leads to].… victim blaming, and the behaviour becomes that which is responsible for many of the social problems in the world" (Laws & Davies, 2000, p. 211). That is, there may be a multitude of factors influencing a student's (mis)behaviours in the school system, including: hunger, trauma, abuse, disability or social relationships. Surely not all of these circumstances can be "fixed" by teaching; therefore individual considerations must be allowed for. A cause and effect response (whereby (mis)behaviour met with teaching results in learning and changed behaviour) does not allow for a consideration of what it is that the child is communicating. This type of simplistic response thereby minimizes the complexity of student actions and student contexts.

Furthermore, by positioning (mis)behaviour as indicative of either a skill deficit or a need of re-teaching, *Towards Inclusion* suggests that, when teaching responses are ineffective, (mis)behaviours which are more serious should be sent to the administrator in a very black and white manner. The document notes, "all offences above the bottom line are handled by the classroom/ subject-area teacher, while all those below the bottom line are dealt with by

administration due to the severity of the offense" (Manitoba Education and Training, 2011, p. 51). The assumption seems to be that if the (mis)behaviour is not responsive to the behaviour-in-need-of-teaching paradigm (i.e., "fixed"), then the student must be referred to an administrator to enact a behaviour-in-need-of-discipline paradigm. The implicit message is that teachers' roles are to teach and work with children until children are not successful with this arrangement, in which case administration is called in (as the disciplinarian) in order to enact punitive measures and maintaining the school's hierarchical power structures.

This calling-for-backup approach to (mis)behaviour is problematic for a few reasons. First, it positions the classroom teacher primarily as a teacher/manager and the administrator as the behaviour-response personnel. The effect is that if a student is not able to be taught or managed, the student is sent away (up the hierarchical ladder) to someone else with greater authority and disciplinary responses in his arsenal. This framework does not allow for other paradigms, such as positioning multiple caring adults around a student to support the student socially, academically or emotionally. If, as Thomas and Loxley (2007) have suggested, teachers should be working to develop "productive relationships" with children, surely sending children away when they are not experiencing success will undermine such relationships. Furthermore, if teachers are encouraged to consider children's (mis)behaviour as a learning gap (as it is in *Towards Inclusion)*, removing children undermines teachers' ability to support learning.

Christenson (2012) has argued that there are ways to support children that does not send them to the disciplinarian (in this case, the principal). Removing a child from the classroom and sending them to the principal has the effect of constructing/reifying the principal as disciplinarian; reinforcing traditional hierarchical relationships rather that creating flexible relationships to support student need.

        Summary of discourses of (mis)behaviour in safe schools documentation. It is notable that the audiences and mandates of all four documents have an effect on how the discourse themes are constituted. For example, in *A Whole School Approach*, the themes of (mis)behaviour as bullying/ safety risks and student need permeate the document. Written for school leadership teams, though *A Whole School Approach* has moved past purely punitive assessments of student behaviour, it still supports a framework whereby school leaders assess student "need" in order to inform the needs of the school. That is, it begins with identifying behaviour as a student deficit and threat to safety. In *Towards Inclusion*, which is written primarily for teachers, discursive themes of risk/threat/safety and discipline emerge sparingly and the focus is on (mis)behaviour as something in need of teaching. If teaching is not successful, *Towards Inclusion* refers students on to administrators, framing (mis)behaviour as a disciplinary infraction. In line with this, *Code of Conduct*—which is written chiefly for school-based administrators—and *Taking Action Against Bullying*—written as an information document for parents—enlist discourses of

behaviour as conduct/discipline infractions, as chosen behaviours/(mis)behaviours and as threats/ risks. As higher power structures are invoked—that is, moving from teachers *(Towards Inclusion)* to leadership teams *(A Whole School Approach)* to school administrators and divisional administrators *(Code of Conduct)* to community stakeholders *(Taking Action Against Bullying)*—discourses of (mis)behaviour gradually become more deficit based.

Discourses of school-based responses to (mis)behaviour.

As discussed above in Table 7, the review of signifiers for school-based responses to (mis)behaviours found that there were five distinct themes involving signifiers with regards to responses to (mis)behaviour in the documents examined:

1) Management Responses: including protocols and specific mechanical strategies;

2) Restorative Responses: including restitution and problem solving;

3) Intervention Responses: including behavioral interventions, choice/change discourses, medicalized treatment discourses, social-emotional learning interventions and treatment of behaviour as learning;

4) Disciplinary Responses: including consequences, withdrawals and threat assessment responses; and

5) Future Planning Responses: including discussions of needs assessments and developing future proactive and reactive plans.

   ***Discourses of school-based responses to (mis)behaviour in* A Whole School Approach.**

A Whole School Approach engaged most prominently with themes around responding to

(mis)behaviour by way of planning for the future. The document's primary purpose is to assist

school leadership teams in planning for (future) school safety and belonging, rather than to

respond to immediate risks or incidents. The document discusses: "identifying priorities and

focusing resources to implement practices that have an impact on school safety" (p. 17),

"planning for a continuum of proactive and responsive strategies" (p. 23), and "collaborative

planning [where] focused, solutions are found, and roles and responsibilities are defined within

the identified systems…. to address identified risk factors include developing positive

relationships, facilitating connections and a sense of community, building strengths and

supporting resiliency" (p. 27). Utilizing the verbs, "develop," "plan," "create," "explore," and

"work," the document is primarily focused on using current data to make changes to the school

environment with the goal of supporting students. If, as Gore and Parkes (2008) have suggested,

school-student relationships should not be considered management scenarios and rather

constituted as "productive relationships," it would be necessary to ensure that any consideration

of priorities involves input from all stakeholders—including, and especially children. As Hare

and Pidgeon (2011) note, often non-hegemonic voices are not considered in the education system,

resulting in what Callan (2005) has noted as assimilationist tendencies when working with

children.

The second most prominent discursive theme prevalent in *A Whole School Approach* is that of restorative responses. Of all the documents examined, *A Whole School Approach* spends the most time discussing what restorative responses—that is, responses to (mis)behaviour which consider needs of both the "offender" and the "victim"—can look like. Restorative responses are not included at all in *Towards Inclusion*. In *Taking Action Against Bullying* and *Code of Conduct*, there is only a single (identical) sentence noting, "many schools have successfully introduced responsive/ restorative practices that aim to develop community and manage conflict and tensions by repairing harm and building relationships" (Manitoba Education, 2017b, p. 4; Manitoba Education and Training, 2014, p. 6). This statement, while noting that restorative approaches exist, does not indicate how educators could be using them. *A Whole School Approach*, however, includes statements such as, "responding to incidents with practices that restore a sense of safety and belonging" (2017a, p. 26), "responding through restorative practices [to] engage children, families, educators, schools and the communities in meaningful, solution-focused, disciplinary and responsive practices" (p. 30), "restorative practices that use solution-focused problem solving, hold people responsible for their choices and actions toward others and restore a sense of safety and belonging" (p. 31) and "responding with restorative disciplinary practices" (p. 27).

While restorative responses focus on solution-focused planning *with* students, rather than punitive responses placed *on* students, it is nonetheless problematic that restorative justice originated in the criminal justice system (used with adult, convicted criminals) and is being

transposed onto children who (mis)behave, as a managerial solution to complex problems. That is, though restorative justice may provide frameworks for school systems to work with students who display (mis)behaviours, *A Whole School Approach* maintains deficit models of working with students.

Notably, in contradistinction from the other three documents examined, *A Whole School Approach* outlines very few managerial responses to (mis)behaviour. The document discusses when to "report" or "de-escalate" situations, but there are very few prescriptions made for step-by-step "how-tos" when responding to student (mis)behaviour. As discussed earlier, *A Whole School Approach* is written primarily in an exhortative manner, therefore there is a lack of imperatively worded management-based text. *A Whole School Approach* does, however, cite multiple intervention responses for "support and necessary intervention" (p. 3), and notes that interventions are:

> "complex and multi-layered or short-term and intensive with goals of student safety, well-being, independence and responsibility. Interventions are collaboratively planned to shorten the duration, lessen the impact or sustain stabilization through coordinated programming and follow-up. Planned interventions at the secondary tier interrupt the potential for incidents to escalate and further affect student and school safety and success (p. 22)."

That is, *A Whole School Approach* advocates for the utilization of a "continuum of identified needs and interventions" (p. 30) and notes that at upper tiers, programming "may include continued work toward increasing children self-awareness, strengthening support networks, and

increasing protective factors to decrease the potential for further crisis and/or to attend to chronic needs" (p. 29). In this way, *A Whole School Approach* employs a continuum of responses that attempt to consider student need or student situatedness, rather than institutional convenience or a checklist response to (mis)behaviour. However, without more focus on student voice and context (doing things *with* instead of *for* or *to* children), there is a persisting concern that the school may not have a clear idea what the particular "student needs" are. The idea of "productive relationships" (Gore & Parkes, 2008) would add valuable context to the continuum-of-interventions response model by working with students to implement not just "interventions" but also, pre-emptive changes to the social, physical, emotional and behavioural contexts that children reside within in the school system.

>   ***Discussions of school- based responses to (mis)behaviour in* Code of Conduct.** *Code of Conduct* is written as a quick-read, point-form management-response to (mis)behaviour. It prescribes a continuum of "appropriate interventions and disciplinary consequences" (p. 1) for (mis)behaviour. These interventions and consequences are presented in a 14-page booklet which outlines acceptable responses to student (mis)behaviour, including: parental involvement, meeting with a school counselor or resource teacher, conducting a formal interview, withdrawing a student from the classroom setting, removing student privileges, detention, implementing a behavioural contract, conducting a threat assessment, notifying the police, suspension and expulsion (p. 6). The document frames consequences and responses to (mis)behaviour as a sequential list of low-intensity to high-intensity responses, which seems to infer that if a student

chooses to continue with (mis)behaviour, more and more severe consequences ought to be

administered, amping-up the school-based response. Laws and Davies (2000) note that children

who are not behaviourally successful—as determined by those in power positions—are often met

with "treatment" modality in which an amplified dualism of choices and consequences—based

on a behaviourist model—is enforced. This dualism is often to the detriment of a student who

has already not been successful with the behaviourist model implemented universally in the

school system, creating, "an appearance for self and others that the choices made are a feature of

each person rather than of educational discourses" (Laws & Davies, 2000, p. 211). That is, this

discourse assumes that the (mis)behaviour of the child is internally situated inside the will

(willfulness) of the child, obscuring the ways in which these (mis)behaviours may be about or

influenced by social circumstances.

Like *A Whole School Approach*, *Code of Conduct* utilizes an intervention response

discourse. For example, it suggests that school teams, "discuss the student's specific behaviour

and the steps that must be undertaken to change it," "meet with the student with the specific goal

of developing a plan for changing attitudes," or, "develop a plan to change the student's

behaviour" (p.6). In some cases the intervention seems to be phrased as discipline: "student is

required to meet specific behavioural standards in order to avoid more severe consequences" (p.

6). In other cases, it appears as a medical intervention: "a referral may be made to school

division student services personnel who can assist school personnel in the remediation of

inappropriate behaviour" (p. 7). The word "remediation" is an interesting one here, since

remediation, "the giving of remedial teaching or therapy" (Oxford English Dictionary, 2018)

draws on the idea of a cure for (mis)behaviour, which does not allow for any understanding of

(mis)behaviour outside that of a "malady" that can be cured with appropriate "treatment".

This idea of (mis)behaviour as something simply to be remedied is reflective of the

multitude of disciplinary responses in *Code of Conduct*, attempting to, "hold students

accountable for unacceptable behaviour" (p. 1). The document begins with some more

progressive ideas of consequences, less-aligned with the zero-tolerance policies of the past,

noting that, "negative consequences may be necessary when other approaches to problem

behaviour are unsuccessful, *however they are not effective when over-used*" (p. 7, emphasis

added); that "reasonable accommodation is required for students with exceptional learning needs

that affect their behaviour, taking into account the student's ability to comply with disciplinary

measures;" and that "consequences… emphasize positive and proactive strategies that foster

student learning, as opposed to punitive and reactive strategies (p. 5). However, given this

apparent attempt to allow for consideration of individual circumstances and to consider non-

punitive behaviour responses, the document goes on to specify that, "student[s] [are] required to

meet specific behavioural standards in order to avoid more severe consequences" (p. 6) and that

"police should be notified for serious incidents that happen at school" (p. 7). These more

punitive responses to (mis)behaviour seems to assume a simplified behaviouristic understanding

of (mis)behaviour—whereby the "ruler" (the school system) needs to make the "ruled" (the

student) learn a lesson. This understanding of (mis)behaviour-as-malady requiring treatment of

either: (a) a consequence or (b) re-teaching, does not allow for understandings of behaviour as communication, behaviour as protest, behaviour as information to the school team, or behaviour as a symptom of trauma, for example, as noted in Davies (2008).

It is also worth considering *Code of Conduct's* declaration that, "reasonable accommodation is required for students with exceptional learning needs that affect their behaviour" (Manitoba Education and Training, 2017b, p. 5). It seems problematic to hold only learning needs (worded as "state of development" earlier in the document) as sole considerations to inform interventions or consequences. For example, we might also focus on trauma-informed considerations, consideration of student perspectival realities, consideration of socio-economic needs, considerations of family breakdown, violence or substance abuse, and consideration of possible injustices inflicted on the student by the school itself leading to consideration of just protest. That is, rather than solely considering frequency and intensity of (mis)behaviours, we ought to also consider intent, purpose, subjugated position of the student.

Discourses of school based responses to (mis)behaviour in **Taking Action Against Bullying**. The primary discursive theme evident in *Taking Action Against Bullying* regarding responses to (mis)behaviour is a management response, where the most frequently noted response to (mis)behaviour is simply reporting it. For example, the document notes, "what to report, when to report and when to contact parents (p.1), "report unacceptable student conduct …[and]… cyberbullying" (p. 2), "unacceptable conduct is to be reported to the principal of the

school" (p. 4), "the duty to report also includes awareness that a student may have engaged in cyberbullying" (p. 4), "notify the student's parent or guardian" (p. 5) and "must report the matter to the principal." Indeed, "report" is used 14 times in the nine-page document. This idea of reporting-as-response seems to suggest that simply catching the (mis)behaviour and referring the student on to a higher power is enough. This resonates with Thomas and Loxley's (2007) claim that, with the rise of diagnostic approaches to education, educators have "seen it as their duty merely to seek out, reveal and measure [exceptionalities] rather than explicate them or problematize them" (p. 24). Indeed, reporting student (mis)behaviour has no opportunities for student support, undermines productive relationships, and bears sentiments more similar to a surveillance state than post-structuralist understanding of individual student perspectival realities.

All other (mis)behaviour responses in the document reflect disciplinary discourse, including: "hav[ing]a code of conduct that protects students (p. 2), [including] appropriate interventions and disciplinary consequences [in their code of conduct] (p. 3), and reference to "disciplining students" and "disciplinary measures" (p. 7). As noted earlier, this solely managerial and disciplinary response to (mis)behaviours deemed bullying reflects a dangerous discourse of zero-tolerance responses that result in exclusion of students who exhibit (mis)behaviors in the school system; especially students already affected by social marginalization.

Discourses of school based responses to (mis)behaviour in **Towards Inclusion.**

Towards Inclusion is dominated by discourses of management, providing specific "how-to"

guidelines for teachers to follow in the classroom (See Table 11):

Table 11 *Signifiers for responses to (mis)behavior in* **Towards Inclusion**	
Themes	**Signifiers**
Staff protocols intended to provide instruction on how school systems triage behaviour	• quickly deal with problems • follow through on agreed-upon office referral protocols so that individual problem behaviour is dealt with fairly, consistently and in a timely manner • develop consensus among the whole school staff to determine when it is appropriate to send a student to the office
Systematic advice regarding response to student (mis)behaviour	• move close to students when giving directions • give students at least ten seconds to respond before repeating request • ask only twice, then follow-through with a correction • remain calm and unemotional • make more start requests than stop requests
Clear definitions of cause-and-effect behaviour responses	• establish consequences to inappropriate behaviours ahead of time. For example, owing time at recess… withholding a privilege, re-organizing a seating plan • some students who misbehave need a time out–a short break from class activities before rejoining the group

Towards Inclusion lists endeavors such as relationship building, listening and getting to

know students, not as a means to learn about, support, or engage in a productive relationship

with students, but rather as a means to foster control of the student. Indeed, the management

focus of *Towards Inclusion* is problematically prescriptive in some places and seems, in some

cases, to offer conflicting advice for teachers aiming to implement their recommendations. For

example, the document suggests that "some students may need additional supports, such as a

specific verbal response," but then notes that "tone of voice can escalate… a situation." Later, it

suggests that, "both verbal and nonverbal feedback are effective responses to problem behaviour,"

but in general, "when possible, use actions rather than words." It also states that "touch," "eye contact," "ignoring," "using the student's name" and "providing feedback without use of names" are all methods of responding to (mis)behaviour. Given the sheer number of directions and the tendency for these directions to conflict, the document itself demonstrates the downsides to imperative policies, specifically that this forecloses possibilities for interpretation, individual judgement of a situation, or creative pedagogy. The document seems to place the end goal as control or management and the tidy list of prescriptive steps risks seeing student interactions as a simplistic or managerial response. It does not speak to social factors of children, except peripherally, and makes no mention of the importance in the education system of opportunities for student agency, relationship, trust building or meeting social, emotional needs over learning needs.

Towards Inclusion also outlines a multitude of proactive strategies to support children, including, "learning goals [that] are flexible enough to accommodate differences between and among students;" "effort[s]… to understand each student's individual interests, strengths, needs, learning preferences and personality;" and "high (but realistic) expectations for all students… conveyed in both academics and personal responsibility" (p. 8). However, when dealing with school-based reactions or responses to student (mis)behaviour, these strength-based, student specific positionings seem to be overshadowed by systematic responses. The document notes

that, "the most effective consequences are: immediate, reasonable, well planned, practical and easy to implement" (p. 50). This purely management-based response allows for no discussion of responses such as: building relationships, allowing educators to better understand individual children, developing student agency or providing opportunities for restitution. *Towards Inclusion* offers that teachers should, "disapprove of the behaviour, not the student" (p. 51) and also encourages engagements *with* students, more than the other three documents. However, the simple understanding of behaviour-as-power-struggle, resulting in a management-based response does not begin to consider what "perspectival realities" may be pushing the student to maintain a power position.

In addition to management responses, *Towards Inclusion* utilizes discursive themes of an intervention-based response to (mis)behaviour. For example, it states that a "continuum of increasingly intense interventions and should correspond to the responsiveness of students" (p. 4), and that "some students may challenge the classroom expectations. These students require individualized approaches that include proactive and reactive strategies" (p. 34). Notably, the *Towards Inclusion's* discussion of interventionist responses include one of the few references to including parents in any response to (mis)behaviour, noting, "a behavioural change planning process helps to identify, monitor, and improve the classroom behaviour of your students, and provide a way for parents and school staff to communicate regularly" (p. 62). This again, seems

to be part of the teacher-based perspective which sees teachers acting *with* children and parents, rather than *on* children and parents.

Summary of discourses of school-based responses to (mis)behaviour in safe schools documentation. Of the four documents examined, only *A Whole School Approach* works to respond to (mis)behaviours by means of considering both student need and school need. However, in discussing "need", the problem is still seen as residing within the students, and this understanding of need is still seen as subordinate to discourses of safety and bullying. *Taking Action Against Bullying* and *Code of Conduct* take disciplinary stances in reaction to student (mis)behaviour, and *Toward Inclusion,* though positioned as a teaching document to be implemented *with* children, is so prescriptive that it becomes difficult to see how teachers could follow it. While *A Whole School Approach* seems to make a stronger attempt to: value belonging, see (mis)behaviour as need rather than defiance, and work at building relationships with students rather than employing one-dimensional teach-or-punish responses to student (mis)behaviour, the other three examined documents have not employed these same discourses. In fact, the multitude of perspectives and underlying assumptions about children, their (mis)behaviours and the schools responses to them, illustrates the numerous and often discordant theories and approaches drawn on to inform these documents. Specifically, these documents are drawing on a wide array of policies, theories, assumptions, and approaches, producing a disjointed mix of policies and guidelines.

Discussion

It is worthwhile here to re-emphasize how important it is that a poststructural, reconceptualized understanding of childhood offers ways to interact with children beyond understandings of children as: not yet developed, in need of control, or subject to the priorities determined within the education system. Given that normative understandings of children and of education have produced a situation whereby students exhibiting (mis)behaviours are often marginalized in and by the education system, it is paramount to critically re-consider these understandings. Through a critical discourse analysis of existing Manitoba policies, guidelines and supporting documents, it is apparent that the contemporary school system is at risk of further marginalizing students who exhibit (mis)behaviours. Thus, there is a need for re-consideration and re-conceptualization of the provincial documents examined.

Given the findings of the preceding analyses of *A Whole School Approach*, *Code of Conduct*, *Taking Action Against Bullying*, and *Towards Inclusion*, I argue that legislators, policy makers and educational leaders must align policies and support documents so that they are premised on shared understandings of:

(1) contemporary and reconceptualized views of children, where children's perspectives and rights are valued and central;

(2) inclusive schools that support all children, including those exhibiting (mis)behaviours, by considering a broad range of non-deficit understandings of (mis)behaviour; and

(3) ethical responses to (mis)behaviour situated within productive relationships and

cultural responsiveness rather than management responses.

One of the most apparent issues with the four documents examined is that they are poorly

aligned in regards to ideology. School teams—via *A Whole School Approach*—are asked to

prioritize safety and to value belonging (as defined by restorative justice); teachers—via

Towards Inclusion—are to be implementing a management model in responding to

(mis)behaviour; administrators—via *Code of Conduct*—are charged with enacting disciplinary

model in responding to (mis)behaviour; and parents—via *Taking Action Against Bullying*—are

being assured of schools' zero-tolerance approaches. The lack of common values and approaches

results in competing beliefs, fractured purposes, and inconsistent tactics in understanding

children and engaging with them. Importantly, those most affected by this are young people

already marginalized in the education system.

Insofar as some of the policies are worded imperatively, giving specific mechanical

direction to school staff, and some are worded exhortatively, asking school staff to creatively

implement guidelines, the documents as currently presented, lead educational staff in very

different directions. Shevalier and McKenzie (2012) note, "teachers who adopt best practices at

face value without understanding theoretical and ethical issues become mere functionaries" (p.

1088), which detracts from teachers being able to use judgment—which is an imperative of

ethical engagements. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to dealing with the complicatedness

of people's lives in the complex places of schooling. The documents show fragmented

understandings of who we believe children are, how we conceptualize children's

(mis)behaviours, and what our guiding values and beliefs are in our collective responses to these

(mis)behaviours. The result is that guiding values such as inclusion or belonging, risk sounding

like lip-service. Instead, the documents need to be aligned so that the common guiding principles

are apparent throughout. In this vein, considerations of children's dignity and children's rights,

which have not been included as guiding values, ought to be a prominent theoretical

underpinning. In order to accomplish this, reconceptualized views of children, including

consideration of children's perspectives and rights, considering non-deficit understandings of

behaviour, and engaging in ethical responses to (mis)behaviour must inform policy documents.

Reconceptualizing Children's Perspectives and Children's Rights

Lesko (1996) has argued that positioning children as residing in a liminal state on their

way towards adulthood has resulted in an understanding of children's understandings as not-yet-

developed, and as not worthy of our time and attention. This, Lesko argues, has been further

supported by our tendency to place students in large, normalizing groups of peers within the

school system, constructing a false dichotomy of us-versus-them. Similarly, Erevellus (2005)

argues that our current understanding of education as a process of perfectibility, devalues

difference and devalues alternate paradigms of understanding students-as-holding-agency. Wall

(2008), in his discussion of considerations of human rights of children—stemming from the 1989

United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child—notes, "children too can be granted, on

this perspective, a basic set of rights to be treated with dignity and respect" (p. 134).

In the case of the documents examined in this study, children are positioned as acted *on* and as having decisions made *for* them and rarely *with* them. In order to make strides towards supporting the needs of a diverse group of students, and especially those marginalized by current policies and guidelines, documents must move towards prioritizing children's rights and children's voices from the outset. Swadener, Peters and Gaches (2013) outline, for example, how ethical consideration of children's rights can be embraced as an evolution: moving away from deciding on behalf of children, to listening to children, to taking children's views into account and eventually to sharing decision-making powers with children. Manitoba Education and Training, in its role mandating, supporting and guiding policy implementation, must position schools and their personnel as working ethically alongside the children they serve. Documentation rooted in zero-tolerance, structuralist understandings of (mis)behavior which frame schools' responses as acting on and against children, must be culled to allow for schools acting with and taking cues from children.

Strength-Based Framing of Behaviour

Reconsidering simplistic discourses of bullying and safety. Walton (2005) notes that the "implication… that good kids don't bully, bad ones do; and that research-based solutions [are] in large part implicitly predicated on rooting out the bullies, like pulling noxious weeds from an otherwise aesthetically pleasing garden" (p. 59) is counter-productive to supporting students and safe schools alike. He notes, "bullying [is] a discursive invention, employed and deployed by researchers, parents, educators and youth service providers, which contains and

appears to make manageable a particular subset of violence that seems otherwise uncontainable and out of control" (Walton, 2005, p. 62). Indeed, safety and bullying are used interchangeably in the documents examined in this study and Manitoba's overly-broad definition of bullying allows for a multitude of behaviours to be dismissed as bullying-behaviours, and therefore, met with over-simplified behaviouristic and disciplinary responses. Given that "the proliferation of policies and programs purported to reduce bullying in schools are anchored by what appears to be a common, but problematic, understanding of the notion of bullying" (Walton, 2004, p. 91), it is vital to ensure that Manitoba's focus on the discourses of the bully and of bullying allows for non-deficit responses for all students. Indeed, as Callan (2005) has noted, we cannot lose sight of the fact that our role as an education system in supporting positive youth development should not be conflated with that of the justice system by simply handing out sentences in lieu of offering necessary supports. Over-reliance on the "bully" narrative must be carefully examined in all provincial literature to ensure that responses to (mis)behaviour serve to support all students.

Over-reliance on restitution and restorative responses. In moving away from zero-tolerance policies, the documents examined seem to have pinned all their hopes for progressive responses to behaviour on the idea of restorative responses. There is no explanation for why they have not considered other models of working with "at-risk" youth. Other considerations might include: (a) positive youth development models, such as the one put forward by Brendtro, Brokenleg and VanBockern (2005), who argue that schools need to move away from identifying deficits to supporting children's unique strengths to foster resiliency and restoration; (b) models

of care, stemming from Noddings' (2002) argument that caring about others is a fundamental

part of a moral society, which "occurs within ongoing face-to-face relationships, where one

focuses attention intensely, experiences the issues, sees the consequences and understands how

one's caring affects others" (Shevalier & McKenzie, 2012, p. 1089); (c) models of rights, such as

the UN's Convention on the Rights of the Child, allowing for discussions of what we owe

children rather than what children ought to make right; or (d) ethical considerations, like Todd's

(2003a), who argues that often in learning *about* the other, we are negligent in learning *from* the

other, and that any ethical interaction between an educator and a child must allow for

relationship. Manitoba Education and Training has positioned restorative responses as the

antithesis-of, or the solution-to punitive responses of earlier zero-tolerance times. While this may

be considered a progressive step forward, the documents seem to over-rely on restorative

responses. A review of other (less deficit-based) support frameworks is necessary to inform

provincial documentation.

Ethical Responses to (Mis)behaviour

   School responses situated within productive relationships. Callahan (2008) notes,

"when adults and students respect each other, when students have a positive connection to at

least one adult and when students feel free to help friends and openly share concerns about

students who are in distress, a good school climate for *safety* is created" (p. 60, *emphasis added*).

However, Callahan also claims that the goal of proactive, restorative, belonging-focused

measures is to produce a positive climate for *safety*—rather than, say, for learning, student

support or productive relationships. This is an important distinction, as it is indicative of our

current school culture's emphasis on managerial approaches which are prioritized over

productive relationships (Gore & Parkes, 2007). Indeed, the four documents examined in this

study are all concerned with developing safe learning environments and laying out school-based

responses to (mis)behaviours that might compromise safety. However, as discussed earlier, the

tendency to talk about safety as separate from student need, student success or student belonging

is problematic.

For students marginalized by or within the school system, approaching Safe Schools

initiatives from a top-down management model often serves to further alienate and marginalize

them. Erevellus and Watts (2004) note that students' marginalization is often perpetuated by the

school system, where as "colonized people [they] are forced to interact with oppressive

institutions within the colony; this necessity creates feelings of vulnerability, which when left

unattended can lead to violent reactions by the colonized people toward the institution" (p. 277).

In the North American school system, minorities and students with disabilities are punished at

disproportionately higher rates (Eber & Nelson, 1997). Using a Foucaultian lens, the school's

primary goal seems to be to "regiment, control and discipline social outcasts" (Foucault, 1977, p.

278). Insofar as students are expected to suspend some civil rights while in school, marginalized

students may reject this intrusion into their lives as they do not see the long-term benefit of the

school system itself. Schools must aim to support productive relationships with children rather

than focusing on controlling them through: positioning students as human beings with rights, and

not just subordinates of the school system) with rights and dignity; prioritizing working *with*

students rather than simply *on* students or *for* students, and; valuing different models of

responding *alongside* youth in the school system. These considerations would benefit all students,

but especially students who are already marginalized by/within the school system. Provincial

documents guiding teachers, administrators and parents need to be re-envisioned to support

schools as sites for productive relationships, rather than social contracts based in management.

Culturally responsive schools. Todd (2003a) notes, teaching responsibly also means

teaching responsively, so we must consider ways to engage with students, educators, policy

makers and other stakeholders in an ethical manner of learning. All four documents examined

here have fallen short in their recognition of the diverse student population, including diversity

related to linguistic, ethnic, racial, socio-economic, gender and sexual orientation differences.

Moreover, there is little overt recognition of the importance of and Manitoba's dedication to

supporting Indigenous children (Manitoba Education and Training, 2018b). Given Hare and

Pidgeon's (2011) assertion that, "Indigenous youth confront racism on a regular basis in their

school encounters with peers and teachers" (p. 94), and statistics showing that Indigenous

children are vastly over-represented in school-based disciplinary responses and in the criminal

justice system (Winnipeg Free Press, 1997; Schick & St. Denis, 2007), there are few references

devoted to supporting culturally competent and reflective schools, aside from general references

to the importance of "celebrated family history and culture" (Manitoba Education and Training,

2017a, p. 62). Indeed, the most culturally reflective of the four documents, *A Whole School of*

Approach, states in the preamble its support of Manitoba's philosophy of inclusion, Manitoba's

commitment to education for sustainability, Manitoba's legislation related to Safe Schools,

including *Code of Conduct* and *The Public Schools Act*, and Manitoba's commitment to anti-

bullying campaigns (p. 7-11). However, it does not overtly state the importance of schools being

culturally responsive despite recent Manitoba Education and Training mandates to "bring

together First Nations and non-First Nations people and foster a spirit of cooperation,

understanding, and action" (Manitoba Education and Training, 2018b, p. 3). Given the ethical

responsibilities of educators to uphold the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (2015) Calls

to Action that aim to support indigenous youth in the education system, Manitoba's legislated

responses to children and their behaviours need to more strongly advocate for marginalized

children in our education system.

Brendtro, Brokenleg and VanBockern (2005) note that in recent decades there have been

an overabundance of deficit approaches to working with "troubled" children, which have focused

on a medicalized model of diagnosing the problem—either in the child herself, or else in her near

environment—and then prescribing a treatment plan to help caregivers remedy that problem.

This paradigm remains salient in the four examined documents. Given that many of the

Manitoba policy documents have been recently revised, it is problematic that they do not seem to

have considered Manitoba's mandate to support Indigenous students beyond cursory discussions

of restorative practices.

Minority students who are already over-represented in the behaviour response and justice systems should be included prominently in documents by way of clearly outlining how schools ought to support these students to allow education to support all children, regardless of their context, rather than one that maintains existing social inequalities. Consideration of children's rights, of working with students ethically in productive relationships, and of working to develop schools that value children as individuals is vital to informing provincial documents that direct schools and teachers in responding to students.

Recommendations

As a result of this critical discourse analysis of *A Whole School Approach*, *Code of Conduct*, *Taking Action Against Bullying*, and *Towards Inclusion*, I have the following recommendations for Manitoba Education and Training, as well as for other provinces' policy-makers regarding provincial documentation related to children's (mis)behaviour in the school system:

1. Engage in a literature review and develop a shared vision for a view of children and for responses to children's (mis)behaviours in the school system informed by:

    a. reconceptualized views of children, children's perspectives and children's rights that move away from normative, subjective models of understanding children and consider students as co-creators in their learning, cultures and identities;

    b. understandings of inclusive schooling meant for all learners;

    c. strengths-based views of behavior-as-communication, behavior-as-advocacy or behavior-as-learning; and

    d. understandings of productive relationships and cultural responsiveness as a basis for Safe Schools approaches, rather than simply as management responses.

2. Use this reconceptualized understanding of children, children's (mis)behaviours and responses to children's (mis)behaviours to align provincial documentation so that they include:

a. underpinnings of non-deficit, strengths-based understandings of children and responses to their behaviours;

b. relationship-based approaches to engaging with all children, but particularly with marginalized children;

c. culturally relevant schooling, curriculum and pedagogy;

d. language and actions that reflect children's participation in decisions being made about them (as per the UNCRC) and thus emphasizing working and planning *with* students in productive relationships rather than *on* students; and

e. more nuanced definitions of bullying and bullying responses to consider perspectival realities of both "offender" and "victim", or perhaps a divorcing from the bully narrative completely, with an emphasis on strength-based perspectives.

Given the diversity within Manitoban schools and the statistics indicating that schools are not doing enough to support marginalized learners, it is necessary to explore not only curricula, but more importantly the underlying assumptions implicit in policies, which guide how schools respond to students exhibiting (mis)behaviours.

Conclusion

The language that is used to respond to children in the school system has the ability to position children and their (mis)behaviours in ways that blame and vilify students. Ideologies informing policies position children and their (mis)behaviours in particular ways and therefore impacts how the school system responds to these (mis)behaviours. In this sense, it is paramount to consider the ideologies inherent in provincial legislation and corresponding documents to ensure that the discourses allow for student growth, belonging, dignity and learning; for nuanced understandings of (mis)behavior; and for a school system that supports a diverse student population. In the case of Manitoba's directives to schools with regards to student (mis)behaviours, there is significant incongruity regarding how children are positioned, how (mis)behaviour is understood, and how schools are instructed to respond to (mis)behaviour. In addition, many researched and strength-based understandings of student (mis)behaviour have not yet informed provincial documentation. Given the continued marginalization of particular groups of students in Manitoba, current educational documents need to move away from zero-tolerance responses to (mis)behavior, which exacerbate marginalization of children and youth, and instead implement strength-based approaches that work with students instead of act on them.

Todd (2003b) suggests that responsibility in teaching means allowing for each teacher to engage meaningfully with student difference, rather than painting all difference with a broad brush stroke. Todd argues that we ought to:

…[see] the conditions of responsibility in teaching as lying in surprising and

unforeseeable encounters with difference,… not [as] a list of principles that then can be

codified and institutionalized through our teaching practice… [but]…a mindfulness and a

sensitivity to the ways in which we participate in attending to difference within

institutional contexts. (p. 142)

Much of the documentation in Manitoba that has been examined in this study speaks to teachers,

parents and administrators in grand narratives; elaborating on policy directives and laying ground

rules for when to "ignore", "report" or "reteach". Todd notes that we cannot escape the

institutional context and the need for road-maps within it but offers that there are still ways to

consider the needs of the other, the situatedness of an individual student without simply

identifying deficits. Similarly, Brendtro, Brokenleg and VanBockern (2005) argue for focusing

on what can be "built up" instead of solely what needs to be "overcome" (p. 132). In a current

environment where "safety" and "violence-prevention" can trump consideration of the

situatedness of students, it is important that documentation guiding school decision-makers

supports the marginalized and re-centre the people for whom these policies are supposed to

support.

Engaging in "productive relationships" with students aligns well what Levinas (1988) has

referred to as "hospitality." Ruitenberg (2011) notes that Levinas' hospitality is "all about giving

space to the guest and not about the host controlling that space—but without the host fully

surrendering the space to the guest" (p. 134). This idea of hospitality allows us to view the

classroom as an entity both where children are welcome and where the expectation is that the space is changed by and with the presence of children; not where normative understandings of school learning are imposed systematically. Indeed, Janzen and Schwartz (2018) argue that "regulating, rejecting, or attempting to 'remedy' some children's identities, (mis)behaviours, and ways of being in the world, makes attending to power within schools an ethical issue" (p. 111). Rather than focus on remedying students, it is fundamental that legislation, policy and guiding documents focus on relationship and on students' perspectival realities. In order for this to take place, provincial documentation needs to be aligned with reconceptualized understandings of children and responses to their (mis)behaviours that are not tied to zero-tolerance policies or normative understandings of children. This study has found that there is ample work to be done both in our provincial documentation regarding student (mis)behaviour and their implementation in schools.

In thinking back to my student who was given a diagnosis of "B.A.D.", the school system chose to define her by her behaviours and to respond with zero-tolerance approaches (i.e., if she does not behave, she cannot be here). If, instead, the school had responded by viewing her behaviours as her attempts at communication and/or an illustration of her own learning,, considering her perspectival realities, and working to engage in a productive relationship based on the student's strengths, the school's responses to her and her behaviours would have looked very different. Rather than outlining what she needed to do to stay in the classroom, there may have been a consideration for how teachers and staff could come along beside her, with

considerations of her own realities and contexts. This project has shown that too often our policies—and subsequent diagnoses of "B.A.D."—seem to guide schools in responding to behaviours of children that the school finds inconvenient; rather than considering the child, her context and experiences, and the school more holistically. In particular, educators and policy makers must consider the school's potential complicity in a child's (mis)behaviour, including non-responsive curriculum, poor pedagogy and rules that require conformity rather than supporting difference. In order to support students who continue to be marginalized by the school system, policy documentation must continue to shift away from diagnosing children as "B.A.D." and instead consider the context and complexity of a student's life, and the ways in which their schooling experiences (positive and negative) have formulated their resulting school-based behaviours. In doing so, the focus shifts from *if* the child can work at the school, to how the school will work with each individual child.

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