Education Reform and the Discursive Effects of Policy:

The Impacts of Bill 64 on 2SLGBTQIA+ Students and Content in Manitoba's Public Schools

by

Christopher P. Campbell

Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies of

the University of Manitoba

in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Faculty of Education

University of Manitoba

Winnipeg

Copyright © 2026 by Christopher Campbell

Abstract

In 2021, Manitoba introduced Bill 64, *The Education Modernization Act*, which proposed an expansive re-organization of educational governance in the public school system. The education reform legislation aimed to eliminate elected school trustee positions, consolidate the 37 school divisions into 15 regional catchment areas, and heighten accountability measures related to spending, parental involvement, and student outcomes. Although Bill 64 largely left 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects unaddressed, this research examines the ways in which Bill 64's organizational reform would have systemically impacted 2SLGBTQIA+ students and content through its regard for equity, specific treatments of 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects, revised governance structures, and conceptualization of education. As an instance of policy, education legislation seeks to address the "problem" of education through its provisions; by interrogating the policy problematization of education, this research investigates how 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects (i.e., students and content) and education itself are discursively positioned through the Bill 64 education reform effort to identify the ways in which systemic inequities are perpetuated in seemingly equity-neutral education reforms that focus primarily on organizational features of educational governance.

Drawing on queer theory, intersectionality, and governmentality, this research presents an analysis of Bill 64, the events surrounding its introduction and eventual withdrawal, and its potential impacts on 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects. The research presents a policyscape of Manitoba's public education system, including the story of Bill 64 and the widespread public opposition to the bill that led to its eventual withdrawal; a critical policy discourse analysis of the text of Bill 64 to track its treatment of 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects; and findings from interviews with education stakeholders and people who engaged in critical public discourse regarding the bill. Using results from these three methods, this research finds that organizational reforms related to education do have significant impacts on 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects, even when they are ostensibly "neutral" in relation to equity. Policy discourses are citational, drawing from historically aligned policy strategies and dominant interests, and they are not neutral, particularly when they are silent; they are value-laden and, when they do not explicitly counter social

normativities or seek to redress marginalization, they work to reinforce hegemonic norms related to sexuality and gender.

Keywords: education, policy, reform, 2SLGBTQIA+, discourse, systemic oppression, queer theory, governmentality

Acknowledgements

When I began my PhD program back in 2019, my world felt very different than it does now. Between the onset of the global COVID-19 pandemic, several work transitions, a handful of changes in address, and a few notable deepenings and diminishings in my personal relationships, it has felt like a long road travelled. Even my motivations for undertaking my doctoral work feel as though they've shifted in the intervening years; when I started, it felt clear why I was setting out to complete my terminal degree, and now when I look back, I think those reasons were muddier and less defined than I thought they were at the time. Over the course of my studies, however, I've relied on a few people to navigate the bends in the road and found sustaining moments in some unexpectedly familiar places. All of this to say, I want to acknowledge those who have travelled alongside me during my PhD and express my gratitude for those who have helped support me.

First, to the folks who participated in my research and/or were part of the larger public response to Bill 64: My sincerest thanks for sharing with me, in whatever form that took. Thanks for your dedication, your sustained energy during a tiring time, your belief in public action, and your commitment to public education in Manitoba. I learned much from those I got to speak with personally, both as participants in my research and as part of my extended circle of friends and acquaintances, and I've been continually inspired and encouraged by their work.

To my advisory committee: My gratitude to my advisor, Dr. Robert Mizzi, for his encouragement, support, and guidance through my doctoral studies; not only did he provide thoughtful and meticulous feedback on my scholarly work but also professional advice and support, the chance to collaborate on manuscripts and presentations, and the opportunity to work on various research projects for his Canada Research Chair in Queer, Community, and Diversity Education. I learned much from seeing him work and in how he interacted with other academics and with community. I also want to extend my heartfelt appreciation to my committee members, Dr. Joe Curnow and Dr. Tracey Peter, both of whom provided extraordinary support and encouraging words along the way; their confidence in the work I was doing and curiosity about how the research would come together (in

both practical and abstract ways), where it would take me, and what I could do with it in future continually challenged and encouraged me to think a little deeper, inquire more fully, and expect more of my scholarly research and its connection to community. Additionally—Joe, thanks for the walks and neighbourhood company; Tracey, thanks for the years of collaborations (with more to come) and the on-campus lunches when we could manage them. I am grateful to have received such steady and consistent guidance from my committee throughout the course of my PhD studies. Their guidance helped to develop my research, deepen my thinking, and prepare my thesis for final examination.

To those involved in my final oral examination: My sincerest thanks to my external examiner, Dr. Wayne Martino, who was exceptionally well-suited to the work and may well have been the most appropriate reader of my doctoral thesis; having read and admired his work for years, it was truly an honour to finally get to (virtually) meet him, discuss queer education and policy, and receive his thoughtful and encouraging feedback on my work. I also had the good fortune to have Dr. David Churchill chair my PhD oral examination; as an admired and respected colleague (and friend), I was grateful for his presence, professionalism, and support during my defence. Finally, my thanks to all who attended—and to those who planned to attend but for various reasons were unable—for making the time, showing up to support me, and being invested in my success. I appreciate each and every one of you.

I would also like to acknowledge the funding support I received through a SSHRC Doctoral Award, the University of Manitoba Graduate Students' Association Travel Grant, and the Faculty of Graduate Studies Research Completion Scholarship. Thanks also to the faculty and staff of the University of Manitoba for their ongoing support, collegial colleagueship, and capable administration.

I have had the good fortune to work with some wonderful and brilliant people over the past 15 years—and I've learned much from many along the way that I've probably forgotten I needed to learn in the first place. One, in particular, deserves my sincerest gratitude and respect: Dr. Catherine Taylor. As happenstance would have it, the one time you taught research methods in the Cultural Studies program was the year I was enrolled,

and you glimpsed enough in my Marxist/cultural materialist reading of the vampire to take a chance and offer me a research assistantship; over the next 10 years, you were a mentor, inspiration, guide, collaborator, confidante, and friend. I cherish those years and the work we did together—and I still feel that, yes, you spoiled me by starting my professional life off with some dazzling highlights. I would also like to thank Dr. Tina Chen and Dr. Jennifer Dengate in the Office of Equity Transformation for the opportunities to collaborate over the past couple years; Dr. Lucy Delgado for the friendship, scholarship, and dreammaking over years past and those to come; Larissa Wodtke for giving me a temporary desk those many years ago and our continued friendship since (even if we are a little sporadic sometimes); and the many others who are too many to name but who have invited me to work on projects or who have ended up in research rooms, at conferences, or collaborating with me in various ways over the years. I also want to thank all the students I've had the pleasure of working alongside and teaching over the past few years—whether B.Ed., postbacc, or graduate—it's been an absolute pleasure, and I thank you all for sharing with me, inspiring me, and encouraging me along the way.

When I began my PhD, I received two pieces of advice that I returned to frequently throughout my studies. First, Dr. Melanie Dennis Unrau, who was in my MA cohort, began her doctoral work some time before me and gave me the insight that a PhD, unlike the MA, is a marathon, not a sprint; when I grew tired along the way, I recalled this and gave myself permission to rest and pace myself. The second piece of advice came during my first semester in conversation with my dear friend Sarah Leeson-Klym when she shared her insight that there was a prevalent and persistent social narrative that framed suffering in grad school as an "expected" part of the process and something of a rite of passage; she reminded me at the time that I would undoubtedly have some difficult moments (which I did), but she encouraged me to remember that when those came, I should try to remember the reason I enrolled in the first place: my curiosity, my enjoyment in the work, and the satisfaction I get in doing it. Those pieces of advice helped me every step of the way. And now, as I write the final words of my PhD, I would add a third piece of advice: Lean into the joys of your community and your chosen family.

To Christopher George Sheppard, you were one of my biggest believers and greatest distractions along the way. I still think back to our late-night conversations about policy and politics and justice, and I remember feeling that you truly understood the possibilities of my research and its potential. You consistently believed in me and, incredibly, often most strongly in the moments when I least believed in myself. I am grateful we had the time we did; I remain inspired by you and will continue to be for a long time to come. We all still feel your loss—I am grateful for your presence. Good travels.

Finally, my sincerest thanks to my family, friends, and my chosen family: Mom and Dad, thanks for all your love and support over the years, for demonstrating the expansiveness of community through hospitality to my chosen family, whoever they may be. To my sister Alyssa and her partner Drew, thanks for the company at Sunday evening family dinners, for putting up with my oft-distracted headspace along the way, and for good book recommendations. To my brother Steve and sister-in-law Gillian, and to my niblings Ayvlyn and Cambree, thanks for the support and cheering me on along the way, and for giving me an out-of-town escape with the most comfortable hospitality and fun excursions; I am also extraordinarily grateful to Steve for the sustaining conversations and moral support along the way, especially when I needed them most. To Sarah, best friend love is the greatest and I've got one of the best ones—so thank you for the advice, the day-to-day encouragement, sharing Jeff with me, pizza and wine, errand dates as well as bad movies and great TV shows, sharing the emotional load of my sometimes-iffy life decisions (or, rather, the unexpected consequences of pretty reasonable life decisions), and just generally helping pick up the slack when I don't realize I'm lagging. To my dear friend and most generous supporter Jared Star, I am so grateful to have you in my life—so thank you for your generosity, our collaboration, the respect you consistently give me, our morning phone calls (pre-coffee, you're the only one who gets to do that), writing trips and pool parties, and generally knowing how to show up and celebrate my successes. I may have helped you find your first research assistant job, but you continually teach me new things and bring me joy in the work we do together now. To Sarah Dack, the president of my fan club, thanks for founding and running the club, for being my "household" during the COVID lockdowns (which were additionally

challenging because I was neck deep in writing my candidacy exams), and for those morning coffees—the most cherished moments of cancelled Christmas. To Jon Sorokowski, for friendship and for instituting a yearly camping trip to Riding Mountain, and for reminding me of the realities of being an academic and an educator. To James & Daryl and Dave & Dallas, thank you for brunches and dinners, for movie nights and backyard fires, and for the general delights of who you all are. To my curling team, Haus of F.A.T.E., we may all have only started this past year, but our mighty newbie team has been a consistent delight to me and a reminder of the joys of my queer community.

Table of Contents

Abstract 2
Acknowledgements 4
Table of Contents 9
CHAPTER 1: Introduction 11
Terms: What is policy? What are 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects? 15
What is policy? 15
What are 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects? 16
The problem and relevance of this research 19
Purpose statement and research questions 29
Research questions 30
Research paradigm and methodology 32
Outline of dissertation 38
CHAPTER 2: Literature review 40
Educational policy: Texts, discourses, and problematizations 42
Approaches to educational policy studies 43
Policy as text and policy as discourse 47
Policy problematizations: Representing the problem 50
Education reform policy discourses 53
2SLGBTQIA+-focused education research and policy 63
2SLGBTQIA+-related policy discourses and problematizations 71
Policy problematizations for 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects and content in education reform 80
CHAPTER 3: Methodology 85
Theoretical framework 88
Queer Theory 89
Intersectionality Theory 97
Governmentality 102
The uses of theory 107
Research methods 114
Policyscape: Histories of education and the story of Bill 64 114
Critical policy discourse analysis of Bill 64 118
Interviews with education stakeholders and public respondents 120
CHAPTER 4: The Policyscape of Manitoba's Public Education System: Histories of Education and the Story of Bill 64 130
Histories of education in Manitoba 134

Manitoba Schools Question 138
Inclusive tensions in public education 144
The Story of Bill 64 157
Bill 64, The Education Modernization Act, and its contents 162
Public Discourse and Collective Responses 166
The End of Bill 64 and What Followed 183
Summary discussion 194
CHAPTER 5: The Discourses of Bill 64: 2SLGBTQIA+ Subjects, the Purpose of Education, and Governance 199
2SLGBTQIA+ Subjects 204
Anti-bullying, safe schools, and respect for diversity policies 204
"Potentially sensitive content" 207
Purpose of Education 214
"WHEREAS" Education Is… 214
Education discourses constituting 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects 233
Organization and Governance 237
Governance and the re-organization of education 239
Governance subjects and accountability 246
Governance of 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects 256
CHAPTER 6: Interviews about Bill 64: Education Reform and Perspectives on 2SLGBTQIA+ Subjects 262
Data collection: Interview participants and analysis 263
Results 265
Limitations to 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion 267
Collective organizing and response efforts 283
The need for reform 302
Summary 314
CHAPTER 7: Synthesis of Findings and Conclusion 317
Answering the research questions 320
Synthesis of findings and key takeaways 338
Limitations 352
Future research 354
Conclusion 355
References 359
Appendix A: Semi-structured Interview Protocol 402
Appendix B: Interview Participant Profiles 404

CHAPTER 1: Introduction

In March 2021, the Manitoba government introduced Bill 64, *The Education Modernization Act*, which represented a large-scale education reform effort by the province to restructure the organizational and administrative features of the public school system. The Act was officially introduced in the Legislative Assembly in November 2020, but the full text of the bill was withheld until March 15, 2021. The education reform legislation had been anticipated with trepidation by educators and school system stakeholders, largely due to the policy decisions of the government at the time and their previous comments regarding education and their intentions for reform. Leading up to Bill 64, the Manitoba government had announced an education review in 2019, explaining that Manitoba's education system was long overdue for one. Throughout that year, the Commission was struck and public consultations held, preceding the promised release of its recommendations report in March 2020. However, due to the arrival of COVID-19 in the province the release was delayed, as the education system and various social institutions responded swiftly to public health's immediate directives mandating lockdowns, the cancellation of schooling for a period in spring 2020, and the introduction of online delivery. As a result, educators were under immediate pressure to adapt and respond to the public health crisis during the pandemic, and the release of the Education Review Commission's report was delayed. Educators had already been apprehensive about what the report would recommend, anticipating the consolidation of school divisions, potential reduction of school trustee positions impacting the ability of school governance to reflect local concerns in schooling, and the resulting changes to organizational and administrative structures, policies, cultures, and employment required by the reform (e.g., A. Campbell, 2020). However, when the bill was finally released in its entirety—on the same day the review commission report (Manness & MacKinnon, 2020) and the Better Education Starts Today (BEST) strategy were released—the review report was largely overshadowed by the release of the bill itself, with educators and school system stakeholders eager to see for themselves what the legislation entailed.

At the time, we were one year into the global COVID-19 pandemic, cycling through public health restrictions. Education had been at the forefront of many people's minds because of the adaptations and blended virtual/in-person deliveries required by public health measures. I had just begun working on my PhD proposal and was looking for a way to make sense of the bill and understand the proliferation of discourse regarding education that the bill had provoked. Originally, I had conceived a project to look at education policy in Manitoba's education system, focusing particularly on a clause in *The Public Schools Act* that required all school boards develop a "respect for human diversity policy" (s. 41(1.6)). This mandate had been introduced through an amendment in 2013 (Bil 18), which had introduced expanded language defining bullying and providing protections against discrimination and harassment in schools; notably, it had included language to ensure that these diversity policies should have a regard for the principles of human rights and guaranteed students the right to form "gay-straight alliance" (GSA) clubs and name them as such. The amendment had passed in 2013 and led to the development of policies across school boards in the province, as well as the development of numerous resources at the department level. As we approached almost 10 years into the existence of those policies, I wanted to investigate these policies more deeply to understand their impacts for 2SLGBTQIA+ students, educators, and content in schools, and particularly I wanted to know how different instantiations of these policies across school boards were read, interpreted, and enacted in schools—and what disparate effects those differences might have in classrooms. I was just concluding work on another research project, the Second National Climate Survey on Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia in Canadian Schools (see Peter et al., 2021; Campbell et al., 2022), and education policy and 2SLGBTQIA+ students were foremost in my mind. As I had worked on numerous projects focused on 2SLGBTQIA+-inclusive education in the decade leading up to my PhD, I had frequently encountered the recommendation for schools, divisions, boards, and education departments to develop 2SLGBTQIA+-specific policies to support 2SLGBTQIA+-inclusive education, students, educators, and content in schools; however, I kept wondering *why* that was. How did these policies work to support 2SLGBTQIA+ students? How do educators read and interpret these policies? Does it effect change for those who are resistant

to 2SLGBTQIA+ people or content, or who have misunderstandings or biases? The question I ultimately wanted an answer to was why these types of policies were important and how they worked. But before I got there, Bill 64 landed and suddenly education reform was on everyone's lips.

Public discourse about education and, specifically, in response to the bill virtually exploded. News coverage focused on reception and providing updates on the bill. Editorials proliferated and groups began organizing efforts to collectively oppose the legislation. At the time, there was little hope that the bill would be withdrawn, as the Progressive Conservative majority government virtually assured its passage—but people still felt compelled to speak out. The NDP Official Opposition swiftly designated the bill, delaying the vote and passage of the bill to the fall 2021 sitting of the Legislative Assembly, and the public made full use of the time to organize opposition. News coverage continued, editorials and letters to the editor appeared daily in newspapers throughout the province, education stakeholder groups like The Manitoba Teachers' Society and Manitoba School Boards Association launched campaigns, while grassroots resistance emerged through individual and collective efforts to spread awareness. Government messaging at the time reiterated that provincial education spending was among the highest per capita of any province in the country and that student tests scores among the lowest, reiterating that changes needed to be made. They pointed to the Commission's report as justifying the policy direction of Bill 64 and to the BEST strategy as the roadmap for making those changes. Public discourse challenged that rationale and persisted in asking for clarification. At the same time, there was a widespread feeling that Bill 64 was an attack on public education, specifically timed to hit educators when they were at their lowest after a year of pandemic-responsive education. Even the title of the education strategy—Better Education Starts Today—felt patronizing and prompted educators to ask, with reflexive irony, what type of education they had been doing till now. Opposition was widespread, unrelenting, and crossed the lines of political partisanship, with almost everyone finding something to oppose in the bill. After an almost six-month period of virulent opposition, these efforts led to the withdrawal of the bill in October 2021.

During this period, I quickly realized that something unique was happening. Not only was education on everyone's minds, but people were engaging with education policy, reading it, learning about the education system, and anticipating what changes would occur and what their impacts would be. Public discourse was dense and detailed, identifying patterns of political decision-making, forecasting implications of the bill, and thinking about what mattered in education. Figuring that the bill would pass and effectively change education in the province, I shifted my focus and began thinking about education reform and how organizational changes might affect 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects. Since I had already begun to develop my own understanding of the bill and forecasted its potentially detrimental impacts, I thought a study of this kind presented an opportunity to investigate education reform in action and offer an opportunity to map how systemic oppressions and inequity carried through organizational changes—and so I set out to track the specific impacts on equity for 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects (both students and content). As Bill 64 focused predominantly on organizational and structural changes to the education system, I anticipated an opportunity to consider how systemic oppressions played out in the process. So I began my own work in crafting a research project to investigate education reform in Manitoba. By the time I completed my proposal, Bill 64 had been withdrawn, necessitating a revisitation of my proposed research. Given the previous six months of work and the public discourse that predominated during this time, I recognized that there was a lot to be gained from persisting with my proposed research, albeit in a modified form. I reframed my research questions and began to think of the project as a postmortem of Bill 64, seeking to understand what the bill had proposed, its "wish list" of reform initiatives, and how public response had impacted the attempt; I also recognized that there was a vital opportunity to follow through with my investigation into how systemic oppressions operated through reform that focused predominantly on organizational change (and did not explicitly include any significant focus on equity). In short, I would investigate how the reform effort had developed, consider what it entailed, and track through public reception to determine what could be learned from that period. This dissertation is a record of that research.

Terms: What is policy? What are 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects?

Before I introduce my research problem, questions, and approach in more detail, there are two working definitions that related to the heart of this research—*policy* and *2SLGBTQIA+ subjects*—that are useful to clarify from the outset. I discuss these in much more detail in the course of the dissertation (in the literature review and methodology sections), but I offer a brief description of each as working definitions from the start.

What is policy?

There are varied definitions and conceptualizations of *policy* in the literature on policy studies and policy analysis. In general, I adopt a broad understanding of policy that encompasses official regulatory stances adopted by institutions that govern their values, approaches, and practices and come to be represented through policy-making processes. This definition does not limit policy to mere physical policy documents or the final policy texts that are produced—such as a specific written policy or piece of legislation—but rather encompasses policy as a larger process that involves setting policy agendas, determining the problem(s) to be dealt with in policy, the development of official policy texts, and the procedures adopted in implementing policy (e.g., Bell & Stevenson, 2006; Howlett et al., 2009; Ozga, 2000). This understanding of policy frames it as a process that conceptually engages in a problem-solving endeavour within a problem–solution framework, wherein the policy process is motivated by the identification of a problem and, vitally, the development of a solution; in this sense, policy is helpfully framed as being motivated by the goal of addressing a problem (Howlett et al., 2020; see also, Bacchi, 1999; Ozga, 2000).

Recognition of policy as *process* is commonly affirmed in public policy studies and in education policy studies particularly (Ozga, 2000), and this understanding opens policy studies to broader investigations regarding regulatory structures, processes that govern institutions, and their broader policy context. Ozga (2000) speaks of policy as a process in education that involves numerous voices, actors, and influences in a "contested terrain" that must necessarily involve input beyond the policymakers, such as community members, stakeholders, teachers, students, and researchers. While this understanding is foundational for my own conceptualization of

policy, I would further situate it in Ball's (1994) conceptualization of policy as *text* and policy as *discourse*. According to Ball, thinking about policy along both these lines—as text and as discourse, imbricated with/in one another—allows for a recognition of both constraint and agency in the policy process, the technical production of the actual text that represents the final product of the policy process, *and* the discursive boundaries that inform the process that forms that policy (Ball, 1993, 1994, 2015). Policy, in this sense, refers not merely to a static product or the final text produced by the policymaking process, but to the dynamic process through which policy is discursively produced—including, importantly, the discourses that constrain, limit, and enable the policy process. I use the term *policy* to refer flexibly to the broad context of regulatory processes, texts, and discourses regarding the organization of education. I employ *policy* to refer to public policy at the level of legislation or proposed legislation (i.e., bills), to specific policy texts, and to specific organizational policies or policy positions—recognizing that these are not static texts that are solely defined by their final product/textual articulation, but the result of processes that involve numerous voices, actors, decisions, interpretations, events, agendas, histories, etc., that result in the policy. In other words, I use policy to refer to both the larger processes and the specific products of policy contexts. In this study, my use of policy should be apparent throughout my research based on context, although it is worth noting that I will use the language of policy texts, policy discourses, and policy problems and problematizations throughout my analysis to distinguish between the different aspects of policy that I discuss.

What are 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects?

I use the acronym *2SLGBTQIA+* to refer to Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, questioning, intersex, asexual, and additional (+) non-normative identity terms related to gender and sexuality.[1] I place "2S" at the beginning of the acronym in recognition that Indigenous LGBTQ+ people were the first sexual-and-gender-diverse identities precontact in what is now referred to as Canada (e.g., Fiola, 2020; Wilson, 2008). There are

[1] I deviate from using the acronym 2SLGBTQIA+ when citing other research/studies in which authors use other acronyms and/or where context does not allow or necessitates another usage.

myriad terms and phrases that are used by community and in various situations to describe queer, trans, non-binary, Two-Spirit, and non-normative gender identities and sexualities, such as variations on the acronym (e.g., GLBTTQ2, BGLTTQ2, 2S/LGBTQIA+, 2SLGBPTTNBQQIA*, etc.), the phrases gender and sexual diversity or SOGIE (sexual orientation and gender identity and expression), or broader "umbrella" terms or phrases (e.g., "rainbow community" or queer, trans, non-binary). However, early in this research I began using 2SLGBTQIA+ to refer to the topic of my research—which was somewhat curious personally, as I often prefer to refer to the expansiveness of trans, non-binary, Two-Spirit, and queer people because I am personally (ethically, politically, epistemologically, ontologically) aligned with queer understandings of sexuality, gender, and romantic affinities that resist definitional surety and essentialized conceptions of identity. I also recognized the limitations of using an acronym, specifically its limitations regarding who comes to be represented by it.[2] As I reflected on my use of 2SLGBTQIA+, I began to see that I intuitively stumbled into a decision with stakes, particularly for research involving policy. There is something about the representational quality of using the 2SLGBTQIA+ acronym that refuses to invisibilize trans, Two-Spirit, non-binary, and queer people or obfuscate the specific terms that people use to describe themselves. In policy, this has been a key objective in advocating for 2SLGBTQIA+-specific policies that include and work to support 2SLGBTQIA+ people. Part of the risk of using an acronym is that it is subject to change as people's use of terms and understanding of selves evolves, and there is a danger of incidental or accidental exclusion based on who is represented; however, there is also a representational power in situating

[2] Briefly, as I allude to in this definition, the limitations of using an acronym are that not all identities are represented by the letters comprising the acronym, that there is an implied order of importance in the ordering of identities, that each (as de Lauretis, 1991, observed) identity carries political baggage, and that the use of the acronym seems to imply a stability to the identities themselves—a notion which queer theory explicitly challenges. I include intersex and asexual identities in this acronym throughout, despite a relative dearth of research on these identities, as visibility and representation is an important move toward inclusive research. As Guyan (2022) argues, data is a vital avenue for visibility of queer and trans people, and much of data collection works to categorize and structure realities of queer and trans people because of its use for decision-making in policy; recognizing the limitations of data intelligibility, categorization, and visibility in data, there is a persistent need for data practices that benefit queer and trans communities. Much could be said about these limitations (and my choices of acronym), but suffice for now to say that I recognize the inherent tensions involved in using an acronym but have opted to do so for the sake of visibility and in acknowledgement that claiming identities can be a deeply personal and hard-won process; I would also argue that naming identities does not *necessarily* make them stable/knowable, and I would resist the move to collapse naming with (presumed) knowability.

this work in terms of particular identities and terms. The intention is to validate people's experiences and affirm their visibility and belonging in the space of this research and, by extension, in policy and educational spaces. Including an acronym to represent the diversity of identities—including those that are frequently neglected, overlooked, misunderstood, or excluded from educational spaces and policy (e.g., intersex, bisexual, asexual, agender, non-binary)—is an affirmation of the need for explicit inclusion. It also aims to acknowledge that queer, trans, and nonbinary identities are often hard won by people in claiming and affirming personhood and selfhood, as well as find community and kinship with others. In recognition of the tendency of policy to rely on definitional categories and directed procedures, it may be regarded as an important practice (albeit one with limitations that should be interrogated, questioned, and amended periodically) to represent people in terms of their affirmed identities by using 2SLGBTQIA+ language that does not conceal or obfuscate non-normative identities (as the use of "sexual orientation" or "gender identity" language sometimes does).

This practice, I think, needs to be balanced in tension with a recognition that queer and non-normative gender and sexuality identities exceed stable, essentialized categories and labels—even when represented by an acronym or taxonomized through identity labels. They inherently pose a challenge to knowledge systems and discourses that seek to normalize, pathologize, categorize, create binarisms, essentialisms, or otherwise aim to enforce knowability that limits or denies expansive experiences and self-knowledge. As Hunt and Holmes (2015) describe, "while queer is often used as an identity category or umbrella term for non-normative sexual and gender identities, it emerged as a critique of essentialist constructs and identity politics" (p. 156). Pointedly, *queer* signals a challenge to normative sexual identities (i.e., heterosexuality) and gender identities (i.e., cisgenderism, gender as binary) that form the basis for queer theory. Queerness, then, functions as an orientation toward developing knowledge and taking seriously the practical project of challenging normative limits regarding sexuality, gender, and knowledge.

I use *2SLGBTQIA+ subjects* to refer to 2SLGBTQIA+ people and 2SLGBTQIA+ content throughout this research. When I use 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects, I am intentionally aiming to construct a signifier that is slippery, that

is not definitionally settled: it refers to educational content as a subject, as in subject-areas-in-schools or the disciplinary areas of education or subject matter; it also refers to people as subjects, as in subject-to-discourses and relatedly the constitution of subjectivities, subject positions, and subjective knowing that occurs through discursive knowledge regimes (Foucault, 1978; Loutzenheiser, 2015). My hope in this is to install in my use of *2SLGBTQIA+ subjects* a dual regard for people and content, as well as an acknowledgement of the queerness of 2SLGBTQIA+ people and content—how they are "essentialized" through labelling, only considered intelligible when subject to definition or recognition, constituted through their imbricated subjectiveness to/in/through discourses. This is meant to emphasize that 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects are not essential categories but contextual, contingent, relational, social positions—ones that are often made subject to regulation through policy. This installs in the phrase *2SLGBTQIA+ subjects* an openness to reading and seeing different positionalities and perspectives and meanings in and through *subjects*—content, people, their positions in relation to policy or knowledge or regulation, and so on. In reading the phrase, I hope to signify multiple meanings that speak to, resist, and operate in relation to policy and education.

The problem and relevance of this research

This research focuses on Manitoba's education reform efforts represented by Bill 64, and its potential implications for 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects in schools. In part, this research treats the historical moment in which Bill 64 was developed and introduced, debated, and withdrawn; however, this research also engages centrally with the discourses of Bill 64's policy text, public reception, and larger policy contexts and processes undergirding the Bill 64 reform effort as a way of understanding education reform efforts more generally. At the centre of this research is the question of how education policy works to support or undermine equity for 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects in schools, particularly when reform efforts emphasize organizational or structural changes that seemingly neglect or avoid equity, or that implement generic approaches that are rhetorically positioned as equitable. In the broadest terms, my research aims to analyze how policy attends to, shapes, and addresses 2SLGBTQIA+

subjects in education and in the context of large-scale education reform. Investigating Bill 64 and its reception in Manitoba provides an opportunity to analyze policy processes, including the role of public discourse and stakeholder reception, during an active education reform effort. Also, uniquely, the withdrawal of the bill due to widespread opposition provides an additional layer to consider how collective organizing impacts political decision-making and agenda setting. This allows for an examination of how education policy treats education itself—its constituted purpose, worth, and value—in the context of a public contestation over education. While the actual values driving Bill 64 are the subject of this research, the Progressive Conservative (PC) government's initial justifications for the bill included a concern with Manitoba students' allegedly poor performance on standardized test scores and the province's incommensurately high spending on education, which they explained necessitated a need to introduce efficiency measures to ensure responsible public spending—a similar justification used by the PC government in their first term to reduce spending in Manitoba's health sector, citing high spending and poor performance. By centering Bill 64 in this investigation, and particularly the problematization (Bacchi, 1999, 2009) of education and 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects conveyed in this education reform effort, I aim to analyze how the bill itself constitutes policy discourses related to 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects, to catalogue specific points of opposition to the bill, and to analyze how 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects are discursively addressed in the context of a large-scale organizational reform of the education system.

While I go into significantly more detail in the following pages, I want to briefly situate myself in terms of policy and education reform. I conceive of "education reform" as referring broadly to the objective of changing public education through regulatory—that is, policy-oriented, legislative, and administrative—amendments to the education system; justifications for education reform are usually articulated by policymakers as being responsive to and reflective of current social or economic needs and values. These reform efforts are usually part of the larger policy cycle process, whereby policies are created, implemented, reviewed, and then revised or changed to better address the expressly stated problem (Howlett et al., 2020); in this sense, reform is intimately connected with policy studies and the policy cycle. The broader field of public policy studies regards policy as a

form of “applied problem-solving,” in which social or institutional problems are identified and policy is developed and implemented in order to address that problem (Howlett et al., 2020, p. 2). This approach is often grounded in a positivist framework of problem–solution constructions that combines technical application (the *how* of policy) with political considerations (the *why* of policy), matching policy goals with the means of bringing about a practical solution (Howlett et al., 2020, p. 4). Education policy studies, following the broader field of public policy, often adopts this positivistic “technicist” approach to policy, which treats policy as a technical problem in need of an objective solution, relying on evidence to define problems and solutions (Bacchi, 1999; Duarte, 2020; Ozga, 2000; Vidovich, 2007). However, increasingly, education policy researchers are moving away from positivist approaches to policy studies toward approaches that take a critical, social science–oriented stance (Bell & Stevenson, 2006; Ozga, 2000, 2021). These critical policy approaches adopt critical perspectives as a way to interrogate the assumptions and processes involved in policymaking, from the construction of policy problems to the implementation of policy procedures. While the variety of critical theories employed in critical policy analysis varies, their common objective is to critically interrogate the process by which policymakers identify a problem and determine a solution, and to engage in more critical inquiries that resist an applied or instrumentalist functionality in policy work to expand the possibilities of knowledge about policy and resist normativizing policy discourses. For the purposes of my research, I aim to consider policy as a process—involving not only the final policy texts that policymakers develop but also the process through which problems are identified and articulated, the means by which a solution is created, and the goal of the policymaking process—that operates within a discourse of “policy.” As Bacchi (1999) and Ball (1994, 2013) both point out, the widely accepted notion of policy as responding to a problem relies on the discursive construction of the problem itself—either in assumed values and problematizations or as historical constructions. As Bacchi (1999) explains, “every policy proposal contains within it an explicit or implicit diagnosis of the ‘problem’, which I call its problem representation… policy analysis hence includes identification and assessment of problem representations” (p. 1). According to Bacchi, policy relies on a discursive construction of a problem, often implicit and uninterrogated in

the policy process; in order to adequately analyze a given policy, analysts must attend to the problem representation and to the "assumptions and values" of those initiating policy (p. 1; see also Hankivsky & Jordan-Zachery, 2019; Lingard & Ozga, 2007). This presents an opportunity to investigate policy problematizations through a poststructural policy analysis (Bacchi, 1999; Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016).

In terms of education reform, I argue that reform efforts constitute a shift in the *problematization* discourse—that is, what education entails, what its outcomes are, who has access to it, and so on. This offers an opportunity to reconsider problematization to understand how dominant, normative discourses regarding education play out in times of change. Centring policy problems, and particularly the problem–solution framing of policy, in analyses of education reform, we can glimpse how historical and contingent understandings of education come to define its regulatory context and exert a normativizing influence on education reform efforts. Alongside this recognition of the contingency of educational policy, it is also necessary to recognize the role of other policy actors, policy subjects, and social and political influences in education reform. In *Education Reform*, Ball (1994) sets out to theorize education reform, stating that "any decent theory of education policy must attend to the workings of the state… [but] must not be limited to a state control perspective" (p. 10). However, beyond the state control perspective, Ball argued that policy acts as both a text and a discourse—simultaneous and implicit in one another as both processes and outcomes (p. 15). Inherent in the imbricated conceptualization of policy as text and policy as discourse is the discursive subject, who is simultaneously constituted by and constituting these policy discourses, constrained by them but also empowered with agency to respond to them.

These understandings of policy and education reform provide generative perspectives through which to view Bill 64 and the reform efforts in Manitoba (i.e., as the bill attempted to dramatically change the discursive subjectivities of education stakeholders by eliminating school trustees, replacing them with school community councils composed of parents, removing principals and vice principals from the teachers' association, consolidating 37 school divisions into 15 regional catchment areas, creating a central education authority). They also provide approaches to understand public reception and the contestation of the bill—the vehement, agentic

public opposition to the bill that required people read the text of the bill and seize their agency in responding to it—that led to its eventual withdrawal. As such, I take up these conceptualizations of policy in my analysis of Manitoba's large-scale, organizational education reform effort—utilizing a discourse-oriented analysis of policy that recognizes both policy subjects (as actors and meaning makers) and the ways in which policy structures knowledge, disciplines action, regulates norms, and constitutes power. However, this also necessitates understanding some of the common discourses structuring education reform more broadly.

"Education reform" is used in various ways, as I will explain further below, but for the purposes of this research I use it to refer to the type of large-scale, organizational change that Bill 64 exemplified. Much of the literature on large-scale education reform speaks about various motivations for reform and explains how policy enacts those changes; for instance, in recent years, education reform undertakes certain types of organizational or administrative reform initiatives that include changes to governance structures, administration of education and its funding, measuring student outcomes and amending curriculum requirements, addressing the status of educators, or introducing equity or social justice-related provisions (e.g., Bell & Stevenson, 2006; Levin, 2005). Another strand of literature speaks more directly to economic motivations that have driven reform efforts in recent years, often labelling them as neoliberal policy reforms, which foreground cost saving, efforts to privatize education, emphasize student performance measures, and foreground market-based measures; these motivations often underrecognize or neglect outright social equity and the impact of social factors on students and educational outcomes (e.g., Apple, 2017; Ball, 2016; Lipman, 2006; Parker & McGray, 2015; Russell, 2006). However, social factors and social location do have an effect on educational outcomes.

Research focused on supporting 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects (students and content) in education often names policy as a key strategy in providing concrete supports for 2SLGBTQIA+ students, educators, and curriculum through systemic, regulatory reforms to education systems (e.g., Hall, 2017; Hansen, 2007; Macgillivray, 2004a; Mayberry, 2006; Peter et al., 2021; Taylor & Peter, 2011; Russell et al., 2010; Russell, 2011; Szalacha, 2003). The rationale for these recommended policy interventions identifies the need to provide explicit institutional support

for 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects in schools, particularly as 2SLGBTQIA+ content—and 2SLGBTQIA+ people more generally—has historically been excluded because it is deemed to be sensitive content in educational contexts or inappropriate for students (Goldstein et al., 2007a; Griffin & Ouellett, 2003; Herriot et al., 2017; Szalacha, 2003; Taylor, 2008; Taylor et al., 2015; Taylor et al., 2016). In recent years, significant progress has been made in creating and implementing 2SLGBTQIA+-specific policy in Canadian education systems (e.g., Iskander & Shabtay, 2018; Short, 2013; Short et al., 2021; Taylor, 2012), although these policy inclusions have been uneven and inconsistent across the different provincial/territorial ministries or departments of education across the country—and even across the individual boards of education and school districts/divisions that make up each of these provincial/territorial departments (Anderson, 2014; Campbell & Taylor, 2017; Grace & Wells, 2016; Shewchuk & Cooper, 2018). Further, the manifest differences between schools in urban and rural settings further complicate the ways in which 2SLGBTQIA+-specific policies are created and implemented (e.g., Cummings, 2021; McConaghy, 2004; Taylor et al., 2015). As education falls under the legislative jurisdiction of provinces and territories, legislation governing education systems and public schooling is maintained through provincial/territorial education legislation, and specific provisions mentioning 2SLGBTQIA+ topics or students are included in only four provinces (Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, and Alberta)—all referring either to anti-discrimination/anti-harassment and/or allowing GSA[3] clubs. However, importantly, even where legislation and policy exist that support 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects, the implementation of those policies and related practices are not necessarily consistent and often follow the "letter of the law" (e.g., Payne & Smith, 2018), leaving substantive and comprehensive supports to educators who are dedicated to going over and above in creating safer school

[3] Gay–Straight Alliance (GSA) is the term that appears in Manitoba's *The Public Schools Act*, and it was the language from the original Bill 18 amendment introduced this provision. There has been some critique of this term, specifically its potentially exclusionary nature in using "gay" and neglecting other marginalized sexual identities and gender identities; other common names for these types of clubs are Queer–Straight Alliance and Gender and Sexuality Alliance. I recognize that Gay–Straight Alliance is something of an outdated term, although I will use it throughout in reference to the language of the current legislation in Manitoba, with the proviso that it is outdated; this instance also provides an example of the importance of language in policy development.

environments for 2SLGBTQIA+ students. As a result, policy contexts regarding 2SLGBTQIA+ content, students, educators, and communities vary greatly across Canada and, despite the frequent calls for 2SLGBTQIA+-specific policy, comparatively little work has been done on Canadian legislative policy contexts regarding 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion (e.g., Anderson, 2014; Martino et al., 2019). There are opportunities for education policy to provide proactive support for 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects through sustained efforts to make space for queerness in schools (Glazzard & Stones, 2021; Iskander & Shabtay, 2018; Ouellett, 1996; Martino & Cumming-Potvin, 2018; Martino et al., 2019; Mayberry, 2006).

The tensions within education reform between these areas highlight an urgent need to attend to what education's purpose entails. Along neoliberal lines, diversity and social factors related to students and educational equity are often flattened or co-opted for the purposes of prioritizing economic concerns, resulting in efforts to "streamline" education, emphasize austerity measures to reduce or reallocate funding, undermine equity initiatives, or displace specific provisions in favour of generic ones. Invoking inclusion and diversity, these reform efforts attempt to impose homogenous identities that are only nominally diverse, without providing any specific mention of what makes students different, how education neglects those students' needs, or what is needed to provide substantive supports—such as directed funding resources, EA support workers, disability programs, language learning and EAL programs, food programs, Indigenous education initiatives, or supports for 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects. Rather, the emphasis is placed on student outcomes as a single measure of educational success, measured performance through standardized tests, as evidence of the return on investment for public spending. In tension with those understandings, equity-related education reforms emphasize the need to invest in more robust supports for diversity that name difference, seek to understand its differential impacts, and adequately fund initiatives to support more equitable outcomes. In the case of Bill 64, the virtual silence about 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects implicitly suggested that 2SLGBTQIA+ persons, and social marginalization in general, were an irrelevant concern in education, "inappropriate" content for students, or beyond the scope of education's primary concern with academics. The risk involved in ignoring or actively excluding measures to address social

marginalization is high for 2SLGBTQIA+ students—affecting their health, their social and emotional wellbeing, their ability to learn, and their likelihood of being welcomed and celebrated for who they are; this is particularly important for multiply marginalized 2SLGBTQIA+ students who face multiple forms of social oppression based on their sexuality, gender identity, and gender expression as well as interlocking forms of discrimination based on race, Indigeneity, disability, and socioeconomic status (e.g., Brockenbrough, 2013; Duke, 2011; McCready, 2004b; Peter et al., 2021; Robinson, 2014).

In looking to the research literature to see what work had been done on education reform and its impacts on 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects, I found little to satisfy my academic interest. While instances of education reform are not uncommon among the public school systems in Canada, there is limited academic literature on the impact of large-scale reforms for 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects. Often, literature focused on specific policy initiatives or retroactively considered how organizational reforms impacted 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects (e.g., Goldstein et al., 2007a; Iskander & Shabtay, 2018; Martino et al., 2019; Parker & McGray, 2015; Russell, 2006). There were also instances of education reform that had received relatively little attention in research literature, such as Ontario's 2015 sexual health education curriculum[4], or that are so recent that there has been little chance to research and publish about them. For instance, in October 2023 Saskatchewan passed Bill 137 to amend the *Education Act* (commonly referred to as the *Parents' Bill of Rights*) by invoking Section 33 of the Charter to pass the legislation

[4] The sexual health education curriculum had been updated and released, but then it was rescinded by the incoming Conservative government under Doug Ford, as one of his first acts after being elected. The curriculum reverted to one from 1998 under the justification that more consultations were needed. Despite being largely supported by teachers, a vocal minority had opposed the updated curriculum, largely those opposed on the basis of religious or "traditional" values being threatened by a curriculum that included consent and sexual decision-making and 2SLGBTQIA+ identities. It is worth noting that often values that are expressly colonial, white, and Christian are labeled as "traditional," prioritizing normative values as "neutral" and therefore valid.

At the time of repeal, Ford also introduced a "snitch line" to ensure teachers adhered to the proper 1998 curriculum, leading to uncertainty among teachers and a general avoidance of discussions regarding sexual and gender diversity (Bialystok, 2019). After the completion of this "consultation," Ford introduced a new curriculum, which largely conformed to the material of the 2015 curriculum, except for any content addressing gender identity; this notable change effectively excludes conversations about trans identities and gender non-conformity from the curriculum, hampering educators' access to curricular resources that would prepare them to discuss gender identity, address the health and wellbeing of trans identities and gender more expansively, and signal that this type of content is not supported in schools.

and shield it from legal challenges based on human rights violation (Hunter, 2023). This effectively restricted the ability of educators to honour trans and non-binary students' affirmed gender identities, chosen names, and pronouns without parents being informed and consenting.[5] Earlier in May 2023, New Brunswick had similarly changed Policy 713 on sexual orientation and gender identity, restricting students' ability to have name and pronoun changes respected in schools; however, this ended up being a temporary change as extensive public outcry and political upheaval endured through the next election, resulting in a reversal of the gender identity policy by the end of 2024 (McMackon, 2024). 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects have long been the topic of contestation in Alberta's policy landscape (e.g., Brackett & Janovicek, 2019; Stirling, 2019), but the situation recently reached a new level in 2024 when Alberta introduced multiple bills that threatened the ability of trans youth to access affirming health care and education, restricting access to equitable care, limiting students' pronoun use and change options, tightening restrictions on access to sex education in schools, and restricting the ability to participate in sports (Bellefontaine, 2024; Dryden, 2024; Jeffrey, 2024).

These types of policy reforms and socially regressive movements have been on the rise in recent years. In the US, anti-2SLGBTQIA+ education legislation has been increasing, particularly targeting gender diversity, trans, and non-binary people but also reinforcing "don't say gay" style legislation (e.g., Carlisle, 2022; Herron, 2022; Nation.lk, 2022; Rayside, 2008; Ring, 2022; Sosin, 2022). A recent executive order was signed that opposed "gender ideology" and attempted to enforce the recognition of only two biologically determinant genders (Northwestern Now, 2025), although subsequent legal challenges found it to be unconstitutional. In the UK,

[5] This reliance on parental consent works to infantilize youth by reinforcing the idea that youth ought not have autonomy and, further, do not have the capacity to make decisions about themselves. For those with affirming parents and supportive home environments, the parental requirement poses a lower barrier (although not an insubstantial one, as youth may not want to involve parents or guardians from the outset of their transition process or during initial questioning/exploration of their gender identity); however, for youth from homes with unsupportive parents or from hostile home environments, the requirement to inform parents and receive consent works to further marginalize trans and gender nonconforming students. Support from parents and at home can act as a protective factor for those who have it, working to mitigate other stresses or negative experiences at school (Campbell et al., 2022); youth without that protective factor—who are also thrust into conflictual relationships with parents/home life through the parental consent directive while also facing school environments that do not support them—are at heightened risk.

LGBTQ+ inclusion policies are being met with resistance (Glazzard & Stones, 2021) despite Scotland's embedding of LGBTQ+ inclusion in the curriculum (Bradley, 2021), and in April 2025 the UK's Supreme Court ruled that "sex" in UK law should be interpreted as a person's sex assigned at birth, opening the door for heightened discrimination and legal exclusion of trans, intersex, and nonbinary people (Human Rights Watch, 2025). While these trends in other jurisdictions do not directly impact Canadian educational contexts, the prevalence of the debates and amplification of socially regressive attitudes does exert influence in Canada and has the potential to embolden efforts in Canada (Ibbitson, 2022), such as the rise in "parental rights" movements and anti-trans protests (e.g., Hoye, 2023). For instance, Canada's federal stage has featured these types of regressive attitudes and policy agendas. During the 2023 Conservative Party national convention, the delegates passed several policy platform positions on the topic, including restricting youth access to gender-affirming care (passed with 69% approval of delegates), support for single-sex spaces for women ("female person," as defined in the policy; passed with 87% approval), and policy opposition to preferential hiring of minorities based on race or personal characteristics other than "merit" (95% approval) and to mandatory diversity training or "forced political, cultural or ideological training of any kind" (81% approval; see Tasker, 2023).

These events emphasize an urgent need to attend to education policy in ways that introduce and reinforce supports for 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects. As I noted above and investigate throughout this research, even when education reform ignore or neglect issues of social equity, there are impacts for equity-deserving groups. This type of research has relevance to other jurisdictions across Canada and internationally, in which we are seeing an emerging trend in education legislation and social movements opposing socially progressive educational initiatives particularly for 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects. What is largely missing from Canadian research on 2SLGBTQIA+-related educational policy contexts is a focus on large-scale education reform at the structural level to understand how those reform efforts impact 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects. My research addresses this gap in the academic literature and provides insight into the uptick in legislation seeking to restrict 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects in schools. As I described above, the public debates and trends regarding policy interventions and legal protections

for 2SLGBTQIA+ students, including whether 2SLGBTQIA+ content should be allowed in schools, reflect contested values within education and, importantly, who and what is recognized as a valid subject. My research aims to analyze how policy attends to, shapes, and addresses 2SLGBTQIA+ content and students in educational contexts and schools, specifically in the context of large-scale education reform. This research will contribute to the relatively small body of research on Bill 64 (Janzen & Heringer, 2023; Fraser, 2024; Bees, 2022) and to the broader literature on education reform, 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects in education, and education policy (as detailed in the literature review). Findings will be useful for Canadian education policymakers in developing and implementing 2SLGBTQIA+-supportive policies, provide potential insights for future reform efforts and public response to them, and in understanding how policy works to construct 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects and supports in schools.

Purpose statement and research questions

The purpose of this study is twofold and seeks to investigate how large-scale education reform efforts that ostensibly centre organizational change impact 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects. First, this research aims to conduct a postmortem of Bill 64 to understand the rationale for the bill, what it proposed, and how it aimed to reform Manitoba's education system. Vitally, this links to public response to the bill and the widespread opposition that led to its withdrawal. Particularly, I seek to identify how the "problem" of education was framed by the bill and how the reform set out to solve that problem through its proposed changes; this was the site on which public discourse operated in contesting how government rationale for the change, the specific policy intervention, and public understandings of the bill, the role and purpose of education, and reform collided. Second, this research seeks to understand how 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects were addressed by—or, perhaps more accurately, constituted, overlooked, silenced, or obfuscated through—Bill 64. The varied omissions and articulations of 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects in the bill and public discourse work to discursively position 2SLGBTQIA+ people and content in the

education system—not only in classrooms or schools but also within policy frameworks—and exert normativizing pressure to conform to homogenous locations, treatments, and (in)visibilities.

I see these two objectives as interrelated and inseparable in this research. It is necessary to identify the motivations for education reform, its specific provisions, and the discourses embedded in it, including those related to education more broadly, in order to understand how 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects are discursively treated in and by those policies. Taken together, the central purpose of this research is to investigate the ways in which 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects are addressed in the regulatory policy contexts of public education in Manitoba, and develop a deeper understanding of how education reform makes 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects intelligible in educational spaces.

Research questions

The research was guided by the following three research questions:

1) **How is education conceptualized through the texts of Bill 64 and in the education reform effort?**

   This question centres the bill and wider education reform efforts as specific constructions of policy problematizations (or the framing of policy in addressing a "problem"); it essentially asks how reform is articulated in the text of the bill itself (as well as its connections to other reform documents), what discourses it uses to structure thinking about education, who benefits from the reform, and how the policy constructs a problematization through a values-framing of policy problems. How do official policy documents articulate the purpose of education, its objectives and approach—and, more specifically, how is the "problem" of education articulated and what form does the solution take in reform? What social and political values are prioritized in education reform efforts? What is excluded?

2) **How did Bill 64's education reform shape Manitoba's education policy context?**

   This question centres the broader context of education reform and seeks to understand what articulations and contestations emerged regarding the values, priorities, and approaches to the

"problem" of education. How were the values, priorities, and approaches to Bill 64's framing of the problem of education in Manitoba articulated and what responses did they generate? How were these values and priorities discursively contested? What conflicts were represented by the public reception to Bill 64?

3) **How did Bill 64 and the broader education reform effort discursively position 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects?**

This question most directly focuses on 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects and how they were represented, constituted, and treated in Bill 64 and during the education reform effort. How are 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects (students and content) represented as policy "problems" in Bill 64? How do the silences and articulations of 2SLGBTQIA+ topics and persons in the bill discursively shape their place in Manitoba's education system? What educational interventions in support of 2SLGBTQIA+ students do these discourses make possible? What kinds do they limit?

In talking about this research, I most often frame it in terms of my third research question and consider it to be the central question guiding my research. However, I think it does a disservice to what happened to Bill 64 and the collective response to the reform effort to singularly focus on that one aspect, to only look for ways that 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects would have been impacted by the education reform. As I argue throughout this dissertation, the larger context matters and, in fact, is central to understanding how 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects were treated within the bill. No one, I would speculate, opposed the bill solely on the grounds of its treatment of 2SLGBTQIA+ people and content; many people opposed the bill on other grounds. When asked, as I did in this research, people often recognized that the bill would have been harmful for 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects—and often quickly pointed out that it would have been harmful for many others as well. As a result, and also in recognition of the logical progression represented through these research questions, I framed my inquiry from asking broadly about the reform effort, the purpose of education, and public reception to the bill in order to inform my investigation about how these efforts and conceptualizations related to, impacted, and constituted 2SLGBTQIA+

subjects. In this, there is something of a queering[6] in my investigation, centring minoritized concerns as a means for investigating the wider context. In order to answer my central research question regarding how 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects were discursively positioned in and through Bill 64 and the wider reform context, I had to understand the education reform efforts in Manitoba more broadly and the regulatory discourses that were deployed in and through them. In this way, my research adopted a queer orientation to education reform efforts in Manitoba, seeking to understand how policy discursively situated 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects, acted as a normativizing influence, and led to the production of queer knowledge about education reform and policy.

Research paradigm and methodology

To investigate these questions and develop an answer that provides deeper understanding of how 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects are affected by large-scale organizational education reform efforts, particularly in the context of Bill 64, I developed a research paradigm that set out to understand the larger policyscape (e.g., Martino et al., 2019; Mettler, 2016) of Manitoba's education reform efforts. This research paradigm is informed by my positionality as the researcher and by my ontological, epistemological, and axiological orientations; together, these provided me with the methodology that I outline in Chapter 3 (Methodology) and the specific research methods I selected.

Researcher positionality is a crucial consideration in any research endeavour, and particularly in research that takes a poststructural approach and involves marginalized populations (as mine does; see Call-Cummings &

[6] Queering, in this sense, refers to queer theory's potential to challenge, disrupt, and interrogate dominant norms, particularly those related to gender and sexuality. As my research centres 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects in its analysis of Bill 64's policy discourses, the broader policy norms embedded in the bill's discourses and provisions are subject to a queered analytic, subject to challenge regarding their normative, normativizing, and dominant understandings. Not only are the dominant norms regarding sexuality and gender interrogated in this analysis, but also the expectation of how policy analysis ought to look—the necessity that policy analysis must be applied, instrumental, and immediately relevant. Thus, queering operates as a space of possibility in considering the impacts of a piece of legislation that ultimately was withdrawn, as well as an analysis of policy discourses that continue to play out and threaten to reinforce dominant norms. I expand on this discussion further in my section on queer theory (in "Theoretical Framework") below.

Ross, 2019; Gorman-Murray et al., 2010; Parson, 2019). Researchers occupy a privileged position in the research process as they are positioned as knowledge producers who both determine what research questions are worth investigating and the methods by which they will seek answers to those questions; these are key decisions in the research process and it is important that researchers be mindful of the ways in which they "might be reproducing existing power/knowledge frameworks that marginalize underrepresented groups" (Parson, 2019, p. 16). Researchers must seek to recognize that their identity places them in a privileged position in the research process itself—including not only their role in constructing research questions and determining methods, but also in determining who will participate, how they will participate, and what kinds of analysis researchers will apply (or subject) participants to. However, a researcher's positionality extends beyond their role in the research process to include their social positionalities, including the constellation of power and privilege that results from the intersections of their identity, such as their sexuality, gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, class, educational attainments, ability, and so on (Parson, 2019, p. 17).

I am a white settler, queer/gay, cisgender man who has a high level of formal education and has been working in the field 2SLGBTQIA+-inclusive education research for over a decade. As a member of the queer community who has worked in the field of 2SLGBTQIA+-inclusive education research (see Campbell et al., 2021; Campbell et al., 2022; Campbell & Taylor, 2017; Peter et al., 2016; Peter et al., 2021; RISE Project, n.d.; Taylor et al., 2015; Taylor, Meyer et al., 2016; Taylor, Peter et al., 2016), I have a developed a certain relational ethic to and within my community related to research, one that seeks to expand knowledge about and facilitate advocacy for 2SLGBTQIA+ people. As a result, I have a familiarity with both the research process and the field of 2SLGBTQIA+ educational research. While this knowledge was helpful in conducting my research, I recognize that it also has the potential to constrain my research practice, offering the tantalizing comfort of relying on familiar methodologies, research procedures, and analytic insights (to the exclusion of theoretical and methodological approaches that I may have engaged with less extensively or have not previously encountered)—a danger that has the potential to inadvertently or unintentionally "reproduce existing power/knowledge frameworks" (Parson,

2019, p. 16). For instance, I recognize the inherent limitations embedded in my selection of a research problem that focuses on education policy, which is firmly situated within the existing regulatory, state-centred system of education. Education policy is a mechanism of the colonial state that systemically and materially reinforces white supremacy, heteronormativity, cisnormativity, ableism, and Eurocentric knowledge systems; there are notable resistances to these, but I would suggest that at the highest level of state policy these effects are historically and systemically embedded. Recognizing this is the case, I aim to provide an analysis that seeks to understand, map the territory, and critique how these systemic and material conditions are reinforced, reiterated, or resisted. My intention in this research, rather than affirm absolute validity of these practices and regulatory structures, is to develop tools and perspectives to effectively interrogate them, locate their systemic oppressions and exclusionary discourses, and identify how they are deployed through the education system and, specifically, in education reform efforts. These discourses work in various ways to support this system, oppress marginalized subjectivities, and reify normative social privilege—and questioning their systemic roots and justifications is crucial to making space for anti-oppressive practices in education.

As I described above, my research focuses on how policy discourses contribute to the constitution of 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects in education, and this reflects my own identity as a queer person and my political commitment to advocating for the 2SLGBTQIA+ community; it also represents a natural extension of my work in the field of 2SLGBTQIA+-related education research, as I grapple with how policy operates in relation to equitable educational cultures and outcomes for 2SLGBTQIA+ people. I recognize that my identity as a queer/gay, cisgender man also confers a certain degree of privilege, particularly in being cisgender and a man, and I also hold other socially privileged positions in being non-disabled, white, and a settler that may unreflexively reproduce unmarked categories of queerness that centre whiteness, ableist attitudes, and variously privileged perspectives. As such, it was incumbent on me and vital for this research to recognize my own privilege and interrogate how it may be working within this research. Crucially, a core practice during this research was to reflexively engage my queer subjectivity in looking to the margins of what is often depicted as an “unmarked

category" of the queer subject to name potential sites of homonormativity, particularly in conducting this research and in relation to my research questions, and to engage in consistent research reflexivity activities to consider what I may be overlooking, leaving out, or neglecting. While these have not entirely compensated for potential bias or privilege in the research, they have served as a consistent point of reflection and research re-consideration. It is also worth noting that even as a queer/gay person conducting research related to 2SLGBTQIA+ people, a positionality that may confer an "insider" status upon my role as researcher, there is a risk that I may presume a greater understanding of my research question and make assumptions about or impose my interpretation on my data, particularly in my conversations with interview participants (Parson, 2019). Simultaneously, while I have worked in research focusing on the education system, I have not formally worked *in* public K–12 schools, which may place me in an "outsider" position. Importantly, notions of "insider" or "outsider" status are not static or absolute, and they should not be understood as binary poles that situate a researcher monolithically; rather, they provide a conceptual schema for approaching research and data analysis.

In recognizing that researchers occupy a privileged position due to their ability to set the research agenda and in their role identifying research participants, I aimed to balance this privilege by working to develop research questions during the period of collective response to Bill 64, following news and tracking campaign messaging to identify what was consistently addressed and where silences existed. As my methodology utilized a targeted recruitment for participants, I also recognized that I had to consider how this targeted recruitment may impact my research and potentially limit what voices I invited for inclusion in the research. By virtue of the specialized nature of my research question, it was important to engage critically informed participants regarding Bill 64 and the public response, which limited the pool of potential participants; however, setting this criteria for interview participation usefully narrowed the scope of the research and helped to ensure that my interviews targeted perspectives with a certain degree of knowledge about the bill, education policy, and public discourse. Given the widespread public opposition to Bill 64, there were potentially a great many participants who had strong feelings about the bill and sought to oppose it on a variety of grounds, including the over 500 people who

signed up to speak at the public hearings regarding the bill. By employing a directed recruitment that was iterative over the data collection period, my goal was to identify potential participants from a wide range of positions in the education system, government policy and departments, and in public response. I extended invitations to cultivate as broad a sample of participants as possible according to my sampling frame, which still produced certain limitations. While this recruitment strategy may have run the risk of excluding or neglecting voices, I tried to rely on the policyscape work to compensate and ensure that unsolicited voices and perspectives were acknowledged, even if I was unable to engage them more deeply in interviews.

In many ways, these considerations provide deeper understanding of my axiological commitments in this research, for which I held myself accountable to represent as accurately as possible the voices of my participants, the wider public discourse both opposed to and in favour of Bill 64, and the bigger story about what happened during that period. As the research progressed, I felt increasingly responsible to these commitments and a deepening sense that my research needed to be responsible to the 2SLGBTQIA+ community and in representing the perspectives of those minoritized within education systems and in society. As a resident of Winnipeg, Manitoba, having worked alongside educators as both friends and colleagues, and in conducting research on this topic, which so many people invested passionately and dedicatedly, I recognized the importance of what had been accomplished in mounting such effective opposition to Bill 64—and I wanted to honour those efforts and provide as fulsome a record as possible. As a result, several imperatives emerged for this research. First, there was a need to take a broader perspective in tracking what happened between March and October during the period when Bill 64 was actively tabled in Manitoba. Crucially, this involved recording collective response efforts, including the myriad groups, individuals, and campaigns that emerged in opposition to Bill 64 and providing some record of their articulate, critical, and committed engagements in public discourse. These efforts comprised formal organizations' responses and informal grassroots organizing, and their efficacy during that period played no small part in the eventual withdrawal of the bill. It was also important to demonstrate how the larger context and policyscape surrounding Bill 64 informed public understandings and intersected with systemic

oppressions. I also needed to constantly look for 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects in conversations about Bill 64, whether in the text of the bill or related reform documents, in government actions or statements during that period, in public discourse and opposition campaigns, and in news media coverage.

As I already described, my understanding of policy is situated within a poststructuralist paradigm, particularly in its framing of policy as having discursive characteristics (e.g., Bacchi, 1999; Ball, 1994). My theoretical framework similarly reflects my poststructuralist and social constructionist orientations. The theories I used in this research included queer theory, intersectionality, and governmentality. These theories are described in much greater detail, along with their application in this research, in Chapter 3.

My research methods for this project involved three points of data collection and analysis:

(1) a policyscape description of Manitoba's educational history and the story of Bill 64, its reception and withdrawal, and what has happened since; this policyscape is further informed by a policy genealogy/archaeology lens for the historical section (Ball, 2013; Mettler, 2016; Scheurich, 1994; Walton, 2010);

(2) a critical policy discourse analysis of the Bill 64 text itself with a focus on policy problematizations (Bacchi, 1999, 2000; Diem et al., 2014); and

(3) participant interviews with policymakers, education stakeholders, and individuals who engaged in public responses to the bill, each serving as expert informants speaking about the bill and collective responses.

Recognizing the breadth of my research questions and my commitment to providing an account of what happened during Bill 64, I set out three methods to provide multiple perspectives that complemented one another to build a broader policyscape of Bill 64 and public response to it, and to build a greater contextual understanding in investigating how 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects were positioned. I specifically set out to ensure I analyzed the contributions of key actors in the policymaking process (i.e., policymakers, stakeholders, public reception; see Diem et al., 2014; Howlett et al., 2009, 2020, for explanation of the importance of attending to the

role of a range of policy actors) and investigated the specific policy texts, their discourses, and problematizations (Bacchi, 1999; Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016; Ball, 1994, 2013, 2015). Even when there were relative absences regarding 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects, there were locations in which their absence could be read discursively or their omission interpreted through language that invoked their absent presence. In these instances, recognizing the power of the status quo or "conventional wisdom" regarding their historical treatments, exclusions, or characterizations was crucial to understanding how 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects were constituted through discourse. One of the key factors in selecting these methods was to find ways to think through policy as a process, including the unique situation in which collective opposition to Bill 64 effectively contributed to its withdrawal, and to find ways of surfacing the various readings of the policy as a text, unearthing the ways policy constituted subject positions that were able to contest the policy itself, and contextualizing the voices of actors, impacts of events, and policy agendas inflecting interpretations of the bill. Bill 64 acted as a discursive node, productive of subject positions (in relation to itself and within its interventions) and of power both in the effect/imposition of the policy and in the opportunities for resistance and response. As such, these methods set out to understand the regulatory influence of policy, its construction of the problem of education, and the wider reform effort and response by mapping out the contextual terrain of the policyscape, an analysis of the bill using critical policy discourse analysis approach, and speaking with participants to understand their positions, motivations, actions, and perspectives.

Outline of dissertation

The following chapters present my research on Bill 64 and its implications for 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects. In Chapter 2, I provide a review of the research literature on education policy, including material related to education reform efforts and on 2SLGBTQIA+-inclusive education. I identify relevant trends in these two areas, as well as the relatively small number of publications that address both, and I discuss how they relate to one another through a synthesis of their relevant themes; this synthesis considers how each body of literature

contributes to the ways in which 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects are discursively framed as problematizations in policy. Chapter 3 details my research methodology, beginning with my theoretical framework—comprising queer theory, intersectionality, and governmentality—and explains how these theoretical perspectives inform my research. I then describe the research methods I employed for this project, each of which is presented in a subsequent chapter. First, Chapter 4 presents a policyscape of Bill 64 that includes the history of education in Manitoba, how equity considerations have been treated through education policy, and what specific circumstances, events, campaigns, and public discourses emerged in response to Bill 64. Chapter 5 presents a critical policy discourse analysis of the Bill 64 text itself, centering an analysis of the bill itself and drawing on related documents (e.g., BEST strategy, the review commission's report, news items) to track how the bill treats 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects. These results include an analysis of two areas in which 2SLGBTQIA+ content appeared most explicitly (i.e., the anti-bullying and respect for human diversity policy sections, and the potentially sensitive content section), as well as an analysis of the bill's "Whereas" statements to interrogate the bill's conceptualization of the purpose of education, and concluding with an analysis of the proposed changes to the organization of educational governance in the school system. Finally, Chapter 6 presents the results from interviews with 12 participants, which includes a section on the limitations Bill 64 imposed on 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects, a section on the collective organizing and its importance in opposing Bill 64, and a section on the ongoing need for education reform that meaningfully attends to students and their educational needs. The final chapter draws upon these results to answer the three research questions and consolidate findings in a brief discussion of key takeaways, as well as a description of the limitations of the research and potential avenues for future investigations.

CHAPTER 2: Literature review

As my research bridges two larger areas of research, there are two main areas I cover in my literature review: (1) education policy research and (2) 2SLGBTQIA+-inclusive education research. I relied on queer theory, intersectionality, and governmentality throughout my research, which guided my review of the literature, data collection, and analysis; while this constitutes part of the literature upon which I drew and that informed my research, I describe my theoretical framework in more detail at the beginning of my methodology chapter (Chapter 3). For the purposes of this literature review, I set out to explain broadly education policy and reform research with the specific goal of setting the stage for my approach. Alongside that goal, I describe the broader research on 2SLGBTQIA+-inclusive education to identify its development and the relevant discourses for education policy. Overall, I aim to engage with the previous research to ensure that my research dialogues with the wider field and to demonstrate my contribution to the research literature. I conclude the chapter with a synthesis to bring these two areas into conversation as they relate to my research questions.

First, I discuss education policy research, particularly treatments of education policy that fall into what Ozga (2000) describes as a critical, social science paradigm. Specifically, I situate education policy as a process that is located in a discursive context (Bacchi, 1999, 2009; Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016; Ball, 1994, 2013). In considering these treatments of policy as discursive processes, I acknowledge their indebtedness to Foucault's conceptualization of discourse as a system that produces knowledge and therein supports the power relations that structure social and political reality by regulating populations (Ball, 2013; Foucault, 1977a, 1978, 1980a, 1980b). To investigate the discursive context of policy, researchers and policy analysts engage with the ways in which discourse both constrains and enables being, speaking, and thinking—the discourse of policy, as it were, and the ways in which it is imbricated in policy texts (i.e., both the physical policy documents that are produced for education and the ways they are read, interpreted, and acted upon). Foucault's power/knowledge intertwinement works to produce knowledge, thereby constraining the limits of the knowable, and irrevocably situates power relations in certain "fields of knowledge, types of normativity and forms of subjectivity" that

come to be represented in policy texts (Foucault, 1992, cited in Ball, 2013, p. 15). As Ball (2013) states, "Discourses produce the objects about which they speak" (p. 20). Discourse, then, works to produce policy, make it intelligible, and instantiates certain ways of "doing" policy that define educational regulatory systems. Researchers working within this critical social science paradigm of policy research highlight the ways in which these discursive constructions ideologically inform policy, both in their focus on certain ways of knowing and in their construction of policy problems, and the ways in which this knowledge excludes other problems and limits policy's ability to address them (e.g., Bacchi, 1999, 2009). Given the reliance on Foucault within this strand of policy research, there are certain resonances with queer theory that emerge; specifically, discourse produces subjects within normativizing systems of knowledge that have, historically, excluded queer subjects and relegated queerness itself—that is, 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects and non-heterosexual, non-cisgender, non-binary identities—to the margins. Focusing on policy discourses inherently opens up avenues to identify these systemic marginalizations and enables the possibility of challenging these exclusions and the interrelated shifting of power/resistance regarding 2SLGBTQIA+ subjectivities in educational contexts. In identifying the theoretical commitment to queer theory within educational policy research, and particularly in relation to policy problematizations, I develop a queer orientation toward education policy studies that focuses on queer subjects and queer content in education.

The second area of research that I develop in this literature review is focused on 2SLGBTQIA+-inclusive education research, specifically in Canada; throughout, I attempt to develop a focus on the ways that this body of research addresses regulatory frameworks in education and the emergent discourses regarding 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects in schools. There is a substantial body of research focusing on 2SLGBTQIA+ students, educators, and educational contexts in Canada, although research focusing specifically on educational reform is relatively sparse and focuses predominantly on policy creation for 2SLGBTQIA+ contexts or on what could be called small-scale reforms, such as changes to curriculum or introduction of specific policies. Much of the literature focusing on 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects in Canada mentions policy as a key intervention for supporting 2SLGBTQIA+ students,

educators, and content in schools; this literature often links research findings to calls for policy as a way to provide institutional, regulatory support for 2SLGBTQIA+ students and content in schools. In reviewing this body of literature, I briefly describe (1) the broader field of 2SLGBTQIA+-focused research that exists in Canada, limiting my review to research focused on K–12 public school systems; and (2) literature that focuses specifically on policy that supports 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects. My goal is to identify the discourses regarding 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects in schools and the policy problematizations that they represent. For this second point, I draw upon research literature beyond Canada to provide a more thematically comprehensive review of the methodologies, approaches, and discourses of research focused on 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects in education.

Finally, after describing the broader fields of policy research and research focusing on 2SLGBTQIA+ educational contexts, I synthesize the literature to identify 2SLGBTQIA+ problematizations in education—that is, the common themes and discourses, what the literature suggests about my research questions, and the ways in which policy and educational regulatory contexts contribute to the construction of 2SLGBTQIA+ subjectivities and regulation of 2SLGBTQIA+ content in schools.

Educational policy: Texts, discourses, and problematizations

In the previous chapter, I offered a provisional definition of policy and situate it in the field of education. As I describe here, I explain broader conceptualizations of policy and trace a path to situate my own understanding and the related literature that comprises educational policy as text, as discourse, and as positioned within a problematization approach. One of the early articulations of policy analysis can be found in the Lasswellian tradition, a functionalist approach based in the work of theorist Harold Lasswell. Lasswell (1956, 1971) proposed much of the foundational thinking in the field of policy studies, including naming the three pillars of what he called policy science: that it should be multidisciplinary, problem-solving in a practical manner, and explicitly normative (i.e., by normative he meant that it should retain a connection between policy goals/values and means/techniques). However, policy analysts soon began to question such a functionalist

approach to policy and started adopting broader understandings of policy that pushed these tenets, introducing critical perspectives into the field of policy studies (Orsini & Smith, 2007).

Ozga (2000) describes policy as a process involving the broader contexts of conception, development, and implementation—not merely the final textual product of policymakers; this understanding of policy is fairly widespread in contemporary policy studies (Bacchi, 1999; Ball, 1993, 2015; Ball et al., 2012; Howlett et al., 2009, 2020; Vidovich, 2007). However, even with a process-oriented conceptualization of policy, defining it is not necessarily a straightforward task. While common understandings of policy consider it to primarily be a formal statement or political stance enforced through legislation, a textual policy document, or set of procedures (Bascia, 2009), a more thoroughgoing understanding of policy needs to encompass not just individual policies (i.e., the final textual product) and their effects but also "their causes and presuppositions, and processes that led to their adoption" (Howlett et al., 2009, p. 8; Ozga, 2000). In this sense, policy analysis must adopt a more contextual approach that extends beyond the closed system of a single policy document (or set of policy documents), even beyond its outcomes, to consider more broadly the process of policy—how policy problems are framed, what decisions have been made (and which were *not* made) about how to address the problem, and the contributions of various policy actors and the ideas and values involved in the process. Policy must be understood as being situated within broader institutional regulatory processes and as seeking to intentionally address specific problems through informed practice. Implicit in this provisional conceptualization of policy, of course, are a number of issues about who has a say in policy making, what ontological and epistemological assumptions are involved, and how policy may be understood in this broader context.

Approaches to educational policy studies

Discussions regarding policy have advanced along a number of different paths and policy studies have been taken up in a variety of ways in recent years, which has created what Ozga (2000) refers to as a "contested terrain" for policy studies in education (see also Bell & Stevenson, 2006). In laying out the field of policy studies in education, Ozga (2000) describes three general categories of policy studies that have defined policy studies in

education, following the work of Roger Dale. First, the *social administration* approach—which dominated education policy through the 1940s to 1970s and had the most substantial overlap with the broader social policy project of administering the welfare state—was largely concerned with administrative practices within the field of education; it was characterized by a top-down approach, wherein government or state actors introduced policy with the primary goal of improving practice at the local level (p. 39). As she considers this category to be something of a historical project, especially in its primarily administrative focus, Ozga sets it aside to focus on the other two categories as primary sites of contestation in current education policy. The second category, referred to as *policy analysis*, takes an "outcomes" focus and sees policy as falling under the purview of policy makers, the technicist "expert" problem-solvers that are responsible for developing and administering policy; this approach is dominant in educational policy studies and has much in common with the broader field of social policy analysis and policy studies (pp. 39–40). Finally, a *social science* approach takes a more critical, theoretical approach to understanding how policy works; a social science approach has a more explicit "value-orientation" in seeking to understand how policy is created and implemented, and as such it more explicitly discusses the role of values in policy making, and contests who should have a say and what the regulatory structure of policy involves (p. 40). It is worth noting that a technical approach does not disregard values; rather, it assumes or presumes values based on normative social values, understood as a given within the discursive policy system. The broad division between the *technical* policy analysis approach—with its uninterrogated focus on objective facts and problem-solving—and the *critical social science* orientation—with its focus on changing social conditions and a preoccupation with structural inequality—is not necessarily an absolute one; rather, the distinction provides a useful way of referring to fundamental differences in approaches to policy and situates the basic orientation of policy makers toward policy projects. Since a policy analysis approach takes a more technical approach, it sees problems as "given" based on factual evidence that is objectively measurable (i.e., within a positivist paradigm).

Rather than being a value-free approach, technical approaches assume values, ones that are adopted without critical inquiry or that left uninterrogated. For instance, Biesta (2007) argued that too often educational

research focuses on the technical aspects of "evidence-based practice" in its pursuit of the most effective practice, neglecting the all-important question of value and, specifically, what are the desirable ends of education; Hammersley (2015) claimed that evidence-based practice too often misconstrues what research is able to produce, what policymakers need, and what practice entails leading to the production of research that does not meaningfully address policy or practice; and Hankivsky and Jordan-Zachery (2019) argued that critical policy studies have provided the most significant advances to the field of policy analysis due to their rejection of the so-called "neutrality" of objectivist approaches and their explicit attention to the role of values. In sum, a critical social science approach recognizes that policymaking inherently involves value judgements and engages with a reality that is recognized as being socially constructed (i.e., a social constructionist paradigm or critical theory paradigm); accordingly, policy studies must necessarily involve a focus on the political value implicated in policy decision-making. Bringing this critical lens to policymaking necessitates that policy researchers and policymakers make choices about what and who is involved in the policy process—what Seddon (1996) calls the principle of choice in policymaking.

Ozga (2000) situates her own approach in the social science policy studies category, arguing that policy studies must take up questions of value and not only allow but invite researchers and the broader community stakeholders to engage with and provide input into policy decisions. The social science paradigm signals a departure from what Ozga refers to as the policy analysis approach—that is, the more conventional characterization of policy studies that treats policy through functionalist, rational, or scientific models (see also Diem et al., 2014). The crucial difference between the two approaches tracks a shift in potentiality for educational policy studies, away from more traditional "technical" approaches that assume objectively evident problems toward approaches that take a critical standpoint in order to look at the assumptions, beliefs, and practices of policy that takes a broader social lens. Levinson et al. (2009) describes these approaches as developing a "theory of social policy." Bell and Stevenson (2006) note this shift away from traditional educational policy, arguing that educational policy has become a highly politicized, contested terrain due to the shift in

philosophical and ideological underpinnings of educational policy; in particular, educational policy has become increasingly dominated by neoliberal themes of human capitalism, citizenship and social justice, and education markets (p. 1). The emergence of critical approaches to education policy studies has enabled engagement with these discourses and allows, specifically, for critical interrogations of policy processes and their roots, the assumptions made in policy constructions (and throughout the policy process), and analyses addressing power and voice, including who has decision-making power regarding policy and who benefits (Diem et al., 2014).

The distinction between a technical approach and a social science approach provides a useful framing to understand fundamentally different paradigm orientations toward policy. While Ozga does not overtly address the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of the policy analysis/technical approach or a critical social science approach, it is worth noting their fundamentally different paradigmatic orientations. Conventional approaches to educational policy have adopted positivist understandings of research as representing an "objective reality," a notion that aligns with the policy analysis/technicist approach in assuming a positivist (or objectivist) view of reality. Vidovich (2007), taking up Ozga's broader argument for democratizing policy engagement in education, identifies the inherent conflict between these differing paradigmatic commitments in policymaking in education, describing a macro-level approach to policy (what Ozga would describe as an objectivist or technical perspective aligned with a policy analysis approach) as being predominant at the level of government/state administration with its top-down policymaking orientation; this approach is characterized by a modernist perspective. A social science approach is better understood at the micro level, in Vidovich's terms, and is oriented through a post-modernist/post-structuralist perspective that emphasizes difference, disruption of boundaries and resistance to binaries, and Foucauldian conceptualizations of power (pp. 286–287). Vidovich ultimately argues for a hybridized theoretical approach that synthesizes "both macro-level structural constraint and micro-level agency" (p. 290) and recognizes the useful complementary potential of both in policymaking. Duarte (2020) advocates similarly, emphasizing the importance of a methodology that bridges macrosocial and microsocial policy contexts to develop a critical/queer multifocal policy research (more on this below).

Policy as text and policy as discourse

Under the broad umbrella of a critical, social science orientation toward policy and situated in poststructuralism, Stephen Ball (1993, 1994) provides a useful conceptualization of policy that offers a potential bridge of these two paradigms in his description of *policy as text* and *policy as discourse*. Although Ball does not frame it precisely as such, holding these two concepts simultaneously—recognizing, that is, the complexity and scope of the policy process within this dual conceptualization, as policy is not one or the other but rather both, implicit in one another as both processes and outcomes (p. 15)—allows for investigations of policy that recognize both agency and constraint in policy (or the situated poststructuralist perspective alongside and in tension with a positivist orientation). Ball's conceptualization of policy as text and policy as discourse is regarded as a key articulation provoking a shift in educational policy studies away from the traditional technicist approach toward one that is more critically and socially oriented (Diem et al., 2014); policy as text and policy as discourse recognizes both constraint and agency in the policy process, while also allowing for the technical production of a policy text as an outcome or outworking of the discursive system that informs and structures the policy process. While policies can be understood as textual interventions into practice, working to constrain or proscribe practice (Ball, 1993, p. 12), policy as text also represents the final product of a policy decision—one that has undergone the discursive policymaking process and, as such, is situated in the relations of power within its policy context. Policy as text requires a "reader" to interpret and act in response to a textual policy document, emphasizing agency and the role of the actor in interacting with, interpreting, and enacting policy; crucially, this opens avenues for resistance through agentic policy readings. Alongside and intertwined with this understanding of policy as text, policy as discourse relies on Foucault's notion of discourse (Foucault, 1977a, 1978, 1980a, 1980b), both in creating subjects (through the constituting of subjectivity) and in structuring thought and meaning. As Ball (1993) describes,

> Discourses are about what can be said, and thought, but also about who can speak, when, where and with what authority. Discourses embody the meaning and use of propositions and words.

> Thus, certain possibilities for thought are constructed.... The effect of policy is primarily discursive; it changes the possibilities we have for thinking "otherwise". Thus, it limits our responses to change, and leads us to misunderstand what policy is by misunderstanding what it does. (pp. 14–15)

Policy as discourse describes policy as part of a discursive system that constrains thought and action by working "as 'regimes of truth' through which people govern themselves and others" (p. 14). In other words, discourses *enable* an individual to speak, *constrain* what one is able to say, and *constitute* one as a speaking subject; they act as "rules and regularities" rather than objective, epistemological truth claims (Ball, 2013, p. 5). Ball's conceptualization of policy as both text and discourse is productive—of subjects, of power and knowledge, of normativities, of the process that defines policy, for analyzing policy—and allows for contextual engagement with policy and its inherent relations of power. Policy as text *and* as discourse provides a dual-lens through which the policy process treats agency and constraint, interpretation and regulation, action and proscription, contexts and assumptions. This opens up educational policy studies to broader social inquiries and methodologies that expand focus beyond a singular focus on facts or outcomes-focused technical policymaking (e.g., Diem et al., 2014; Fenwick, 2011; Loutzenheiser, 2015; Marquez & Brockenbrough, 2013; Martino et al., 2019; Scheurich, 1994; Seddon, 1996; Walton, 2010).

Understanding the policy process as discursive in nature allows, importantly, for a way to interrogate the assumptions and normativities implicit in the policymaking process (Bacchi, 1999; Ball, 1994, 2013). Ball takes up this challenge directly in *Foucault, Power, and Education* (Ball, 2013), in which Ball seeks to analyze educational policy by applying Foucault's methodologies and, more specifically Foucault's theorization of governmentality, in looking at how policy acts as a discourse of normativization through policy's regulatory character and its histories of exclusion in education. He points out, "the operation of discursive practices is to make it virtually impossible to think outside them; to be outside of them is, by definition, to be mad, to be beyond comprehension and reason," and their totality both produces and defines reason and characterizes the exercise of power (2013, pp.

20–21). Importantly, the distinction between the regulatory and the disciplinary aspects of policy can be situated in their respective regard for the regulation of populations (i.e., the biopolitical) and through the discipline of the individual; in other words, policy acts as a regulatory system through discourse to manage populations, and its effects are disciplinary in nature through the subjectification of the individual within that system (Ball, 2013, p. 60). Policy is a function of this regulatory level and, by virtue of its focus on managing populations, it exerts a normativizing influence on both the population and on the individual, akin to the way a bell curve statistically constructs a "normal curve" to represent pupils' performance through test scores; the outliers are marginalized due to their falling outside the parameters of what is deemed to be a normal performance[7], which could be called the "ideological work of the Bell-Curve" (Ball, 2013, p. 117). Linking these two levels, as Ball argues, is the norm that gets constructed and its assumption of the unity of the entire population against which the individual can be (scientifically, objectively) measured and compared. The norm, then, is constructed as a means of regulating the population and disciplining the individual within the education system—a manifestation of biopower and governmentality. Looking beyond the norm to those that are excluded from the population and, thereby, excluded from policy discourses that constitute and constrain subjects—excluded through, as Foucault argued extensively, the scientific discourses that constructed knowledge regarding madness, sexuality, deviance and abnormality, pathology, and so on—provides an opportunity to interrogate the regulatory character of policy itself. The manifestations of these regulatory discourses extend even beyond language and reason to the "materiality of discourses," including the "architectures, organizations, practices and subjects and subjectivities" in education (Ball, 2013, p. 21). In other words, policy's discourses and construction of regulatory norms permeates the entirety of the education system. This is particularly compelling for investigations that seek to analyze the ways in which policy addresses marginalized subjects and those presumed to fall outside social

[7] In his book *The Trouble with Normal*, Michael Warner (1999) argues, importantly, that "the statistical norm has no moral value" (p. 70)—even though statistics are often used to invoke "normality" as a kind of "natural law" (p. 69) to marginalize or exclude difference.

norms (e.g., heteronormativity and cisnormativity) and how policy discursively creates subjectivities for the population that impact the individual.

Policy problematizations: Representing the problem

The other important aspect of policy as discourse is that it facilitates a more robust inquiry into policy problems. As I noted earlier, policy is often conceived within a problem–solution framework (that is, policy is a means of addressing or providing a solution to a problem). However, as I noted above, policy problems are often taken as a "given" or considered to be objectively evident in dominant technical approaches. Bacchi (1999) contests this understanding and, rather, conceives of policy studies as necessarily engaging with the discursive character of policy, emphasizing the importance of discourse in considering how policies construct problems themselves. In line with Ozga's assertion that policy studies is necessarily contested terrain, Bacchi challenges the prevailing notion of a policymaker as being a technical expert or of policy problems as somehow objectively evident; instead, she advocates for the inclusion of additional voices to inform conceptualizations of policy problems, a consideration about what policies are assumed to be about, and an expansion of the discursive terrain of policy problematizations—and by extension the policy solutions that are created in the policy process. Bacchi (1999) criticizes technical approaches to policy for leaving the construction of policy problems uninterrogated or in assuming that they are objectively identifiable; rather, she emphasizes that the construction of a policy problem is not a neutral activity. She argues for an approach to policy that asks, "What's the problem represented to be?" (WPR; see also Bacchi, 2000; Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016). Bacchi (1999) posits:

> every policy proposal contains within it an explicit or implicit diagnosis of the "problem", which I call its problem representation. A necessary part of policy analysis hence includes identification and assessment of problem representations.... Those affecting and initiating policy have assumptions and values [which impact] the way the people concerned describe or *give shape to* a particular political issue. (p. 1)

Policy is not conceived simply as "a response to existing conditions and problems, but more as a discourse in which both problems and solutions are created" (Goodwin, 1996, as cited in Bacchi, 1999, p. 2). Bacchi argues that the objects of study in this approach are not simply problems, but rather *problematizations*—the interrelated and interconnected conceptualization of both problem and solution that is constructed within and by policy. The ways in which we perceive or think about something affect what we think can and should be done about it (Bacchi, 1999)—and these problematizations are entangled, intertwined, and influenced by other discourses, value systems, and political agendas. This attention to problem representation requires analysts to be "actively engaged in value conflicts" and to challenge presumptions that they "can stand back from their values and commitments" or "[define] problems in terms of the possibility of intervention" (p. 31). In other words, approaches to policy that consider problematization foreground the constructions of problems and importantly allow for a consideration of how those problems are represented by policy, enable a questioning of assumptions/presumptions of value, and expand conceptualizations of solutions that are attentive to the problems that are grounded in broader conversations about problematization (including the way solutions are conceived).

Even though Bacchi is not situated within the field of educational policy research, her feminist critical approach and focus on problematizations offer a theoretical and methodological opportunity to approach policy from political, social, and critical standpoints; specifically, for my research, there is a marked congruence with queer theory and anti-oppressive approaches in Bacchi's WPR/problematization approach. Scholars have noted the alignment between feminist theory and queer theory's political, conceptual, and activist tenets, particularly in their challenging of social norms, essentialized gender and sexual identities, and dominant heteropatriarchal ideals (e.g., Ahmed, 2006; Butler, 1993; de Lauretis, 1991; Foucault, 1978; Gedro & Mizzi, 2014; Turner, 2000). However, even beyond their theoretical sympathies and political commitments, their focus on discourse systems in constructing value-laden, social normativities offer conceptual alignments with discourse-focused approaches to policy studies, as both Ball and Bacchi employ.

In one of his Berkeley lectures, Foucault (1983) spoke about how problematization was at the heart of much of his work, retroactively framing his projects as specifically seeking to analyze the process of problematization that raised certain social issues and identities into scientific discourses as problems to be treated; his work, including *The History of Sexuality* which has served as a foundational queer text, attempted to analyze "how and why certain things (behaviour, phenomena, processes) became a problem" and understand why certain things became "the target of social regulation at a given moment" (1983, p. 66). Ball (2013), following Foucault's lead, seeks to centre a "history of problematizations of education" (p. 28) in his genealogy of education policy, in which he specifically focuses on how *exclusions* in policy have worked to form the regulatory systems of education over time. Although Foucault and Ball are using *problematization* in somewhat different ways than Bacchi, they both reinforce the idea that the ways in which problems are socially constructed matters and must be investigated.

As I describe briefly above, Ball (2013) argues that education policy discursively constructs a regulatory norm to govern populations, and this process creates policy subjects—among educators, students, parents and guardians, and educational stakeholders—both in their inclusion in policy and exclusion from it. Ball (2013) also notes that policy works discursively to construct knowledge and delineate the bounds of what is "knowable," which echoes Britzman's (1995) argument about the normativity of knowledge and the imperative possibility of queer pedagogy to look beyond (or at least challenge) the bounds of the knowable. A problematization approach to policy studies allows for an interrogation of those discursive constructions, particularly allowing for investigations into how policy privileges socially normative subjectivities and excludes others, such as 2SLGBTQIA+ people, and how it validates some knowledge as appropriate for educational spaces and others as inappropriate, such as 2SLGBTQIA+ content. In other words, a problematization approach to policy studies allows for a queer orientation (Ahmed, 2006) to education policy that considers how 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects and content are discursively constructed and positioned through policy; this approach also aligns with Lugg and Murphy's (2014) and Duarte's (2019) calls to focus on queer subjectivities in queer policy studies to find methodological

strategies to cross technicist policy discourses with critical queer discourses (more on this below in Chapter 3 on Methodology). In writing about the benefit of critical discourse analysis methodologies for policy analysis, Fairclough (2013) argues that the true value of critical discourse analysis in policy studies is that it offers the ability to problematize, and take up questions of problematization, in the policy process and to consider how the process itself is integrated with political decisions and actions.

Education reform policy discourses

Building on this conceptual approach to educational policy, I turn to research literature that focuses on education reform. As I described earlier, education reform efforts may be conceived as referring broadly to the objective of changing public education through regulatory amendments to the education system—specifically, for the purposes of this research, those focused on organizational features of policy and administration (Ball, 1994). Colloquially, *education reform* is used in a variety of ways: to describe specific changes within school district policy (e.g., Goldstein et al., 2007a), to consider curricular changes (e.g., Baker, 2019), or to look at the implications of reform for delivery of curricular content or for education programs (e.g., Parker & McGray, 2015; Russell, 2006). However, for this research, I take *education reform* to mean large-scale changes at the organizational level to the regulatory systems of education. As Fullan (2009) defines it, large-scale reform involves "deliberate policy and strategy attempt to change the *system* as a whole" (p. 102; see also, Baş, 2021; Bowe et al., 1992; Slee, 2008). These regulatory changes comprise policy-oriented, legislative, and administrative reforms to the organization of education systems. It is worth stating that education reform, in its general sense, occurs throughout the school system on an ongoing, continual basis through various (often small-scale) changes to curriculum, programming, pedagogy, assessment, and so on; however, the type of education reform efforts I am predominantly focused on in this research are large-scale structural or organizational regulatory changes.

In his theorization of education reform, Ball describes the four main message systems of education as consisting of curriculum, assessment, pedagogy, and organization—with this last constituting the primary domain of education reform; Ball notes that each of the other areas are implicated in any education reform

effort, particularly in thinking beyond a state-centred analysis to consider the "'power networks', discourses and technologies which run through the social body of education" (1994, p. 1). Bowe et al. (1992) similarly recognize the importance of taking an expanded approach in considering education reform, one which goes beyond a state-centred focus; centring the role of the state reinforces the notion that the policy process is linear, imposed in top-down approaches, and detached from implementation—a view that is very much aligned with the technical policy analysis approach to policy. However, education reform efforts have implications throughout the education system—for curriculum and programming, for pedagogy, and in shaping the roles and subjectivities of those working within schools, including school system administrators, such as school boards, superintendents, principals and vice principals, as well as teachers, students, and parents/guardians.

From an organizational (or structural) perspective in considering education reform, there are a number of approaches and themes that scholars have identified as emerging in recent years that predominate in education policy studies. For instance, Bell and Stevenson (2006), writing about education policy efforts in Britain, identify some of the common themes of education policy studies; broadly, education policy analyses often seek to explore the extensive ideological drivers of policy, such as neoliberalism, while other analyses focus on governmental policymaking processes, the legislative procedures involved in formulating and implementing policy, or the complex relationships between administrative bodies and educational institutions (p. 1). Bell and Stevenson describe policy studies in education as taking "one of three forms: (1) The development of broad analytical models through which the policy process can be understood and interpreted. (2) Analyses of a range of policy issues. (3) Critiques of specific policies." (p. 1–2). Bell and Stevenson (2006), however, see these three forms as potentially fragmentary methodological approaches, providing only a partial picture of how education policy functions; they argue, rather, that policy studies in education must focus on interconnections between themes, and the specific practices in which policy issues come to be implemented in schools—the practical import of policy—while adopting methodological approaches that blend these three forms of education policy studies and seek to find new ones. Bell and Stevenson (2006) identify three interconnected themes as emerging

in the past two decades in England that have exerted their influence on policymaking and on the education system generally: human capitalism, citizenship and social justice, and education markets and accountability. Levin (2005), writing particularly about Manitoba, describes five broad areas of recent reforms: changes focused on governance structures, financing mechanisms, testing of students, curriculum requirements, and the status of teachers (p. 65). Across these dominant areas, the goal broadly and officially is to "improve student outcomes and often to reduce disparities in outcomes across society" (p. 64). Ball (1998) identifies some of the common elements of international policy as comprising generic "problems" representing social, political, and economic contexts, and he emphasizes the impact of the global market in exerting influence on the marketization of education. In a later article, Ball (2016) broadly summarizes these influences in describing "three major, highly interrelated and interdependent components or technologies—multifaceted mechanisms of change," which he identifies as "Market, Management, and Performance" (p. 1049); these three technologies exert the regulatory force of neoliberalist policy retrenchment in education through which reform logics are formulated and justified. However, Levin also notes that reform efforts focused on organizational or structural changes to education are often grounded in the assumption "that if we change the structural arrangements around schools, improvements in learning will somehow follow" (p. 72), an observation that is particularly relevant to the current research on Bill 64. Other education policy scholars similarly echo these themes through their analyses of education policy; these scholars focus on market ideology (often linked with neoliberalism), financial administration, governance and management of schools, the relationships between central education administration authorities and local administration through management/leadership, implications for and ideological impacts on curriculum, student achievement/attainment and the instrumentalization of knowledge, employability metrics, special education needs and inclusive education, and education as a register for social change (e.g., Ball, 1994; Bowe et al., 1992; Ozga, 2000; Slee, 2008; Taylor, 2004; Wallin et al., 2021). Overall, these articulations of different domains or areas of education reform work to constitute education policy discourses, touching on different aspects of

education—from neoliberal-type interventions to those relating to equity and social justice, alongside a range of changes to governance and administration in schools.

Instances of education reform are not uncommon among the public school systems in Canada and these discourses and dynamics can be observed within them. For example, Newfoundland and Labrador went through a series of education reforms that restructured the administration of education in the province, beginning with a constitutional amendment in 1997 that allowed the province to introduce a non-denominational school system, collapsing 27 denominational boards to 11 non-denominational ones; in 2004, another reform further consolidated these boards to a total of five boards (four English and one French) and 2013 brought another reform, reducing the four regional English boards to one centralized, single English board (Green & Tucker, 2011; Sheppard et al., 2013; Tucker & Fushell, 2021). Notably, the 2004 and 2013 restructuring were both announced during the provincial budget, tying this policy mandate to an economic rationale (Tucker & Fushell, 2021). However, the question of how these structural reforms to education in Newfoundland and Labrador have impacted 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects in schools has not been investigated in the research literature. Nova Scotia underwent an extensive education reform in 2018 that, similar to Bill 64's proposed changes, removed school leaders from the teachers' union and eliminated school boards; this reform was accompanied by a relatively progressive expansion of the department's inclusive education policy that situated itself in a newly restructured education system and sought to support social equity (Awad, 2018; Whitley & Hollweck, 2020). Interestingly, both New Brunswick and PEI underwent similar reforms and abolished schools boards throughout the province temporarily, only to bring them back due to necessity and a recognition that "replacing democratically elected school boards with alternative structures does not improve student achievement [and] does not advance inclusion and equity" (McCracken & Rogers, 2021). At the time of Bill 64, these types of reforms and their impacts on students and the education system were compared to Manitoba's education reform effort, accompanied by the argument that these changes were ineffective in achieving the stated goals of Manitoba's

reform—not to mention a virtual silence about the ways these changes had impacted 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects beyond a blanket lack of advancement.

Identifying common discourses in education reform regarding 2SLGBTQIA+ topics is somewhat more challenging, as there have not been extensive treatments of 2SLGBTQIA+ concerns in the particular context of large-scale education reform. Often, treatments of education policy reform consider 2SLGBTQIA+ topics retroactively to consider the implications of reform efforts for 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects in schools. For instance, Section 28 of Britain's 1988 *Local Government Act*, part of a larger education reform in the UK (see Bowe et al., 1992; Ozga, 2000), imposed a restriction on local educational authorities regarding homosexuality; specifically, Section 28 stated that educators "must not 'promote homosexuality' or 'promote the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretend family relationship'" (section 28.–1 (2A) quoted in Adams et al., 2004). This stipulation created apprehension for educators about what constituted "promotion" of homosexuality and, as a result, most educators simply maintained silence regarding homosexuality or LGBTQ+ identities in general (Adams et al., 2004; Atkinson, 2002; Douglas et al., 1997; Ellis, 2007; Epstein, D., 1994; Nixon & Givens, 2007). Even after the repeal of Section 28 in 2000 in Scotland and in 2003 in England and Wales, this legacy of silence endured and many educators were hesitant to address topics related to gender and sexual diversity in schools. Conversations regarding the ongoing impact of Section 28 persist among educators, education policy researchers, and public commentators (e.g., Glazzard & Stones, 2021; Logan, 2020). While LGBTQ+-related education research in Britain has examined the implications of Section 28, this literature has largely treated Section 28 as distinct and separate from larger conversations about the 1988 education reform, and predominantly looked at the ongoing and legacy effects of the policy mandate once it had taken effect; similarly, those focusing on the UK's 1988 education reform at large have not discussed the implications of Section 28 in the context of the larger reform or analyzed how Section 28 functioned within the interlocking regulatory discourses that drove the education reform effort (e.g., Ball, 1994, analyses the larger reform to discuss impacts on curriculum and national identity but does not address equity or section 28). We see similar

trends in, for example, Ontario's recent sex ed curriculum controversy (e.g., Bialystok, 2019) or in Australia's neoliberal reforms and their impacts on the institutionalisation of heteronormativity and cisgenderism (e.g., Martino & Cumming-Potvin, 2019). This structural or organizational view, I argue, is a crucial and important consideration in looking at education reform for 2SLGBTQIA+ topics: how do the value-laden discourses that drive education reform—the ones reified in policy that is focused at organizational and structural levels—interlock and implicate 2SLGBTQIA+ people and topics?

As I described earlier, for the purposes of this research I use "education reform" to refer to large-scale structural or organizational changes to the regulatory systems of education, which often reflect dominant ideological, political, or social norms; however, it is worth noting again that any policy changes or changes in regulatory context, even changes in practice, could be considered reform efforts—and in this sense, there is some literature that may help to bridge the gap between research on education reform and 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion efforts. It is also worth noting that reform efforts are not always straightforward in policy; even seemingly inconsequential or unrelated changes to education systems may have impacts for 2SLGBTQIA+ topics. For instance, in the mid-1990s, Toronto District School Board introduced a special program called the Triangle Program that was intended to address the problem of 2SLGBTQIA+ student attrition; specifically, the program created a specialized school for 2SLGBTQIA+ students who were at risk of dropping out (Russell, 2006). Notably, this program was created not through a regulatory change through the school board but through an administrative process involving the equity division of the school district (Russell, 2006). There were criticisms of the Triangle Program that pointed out this program simply removed 2SLGBTQIA+ students from "regular" schools and thereby left those schools largely untransformed; this contributed to narratives that 2SLGBTQIA+ students did not belong in regular classrooms, were inherently at risk, and were rare or uncommon because they were not able to be "visible" in regular schools, including erasing students who were not openly out (see Snider, 1996; Walton, 2004). Despite these valid criticisms, the Triangle Program did succeed in lowering attrition rates among 2SLGBTQIA+ students and did provide a safer educational space. However, the program did come under threat,

as Russell (2006) discusses, later in the 1990s under the elected conservative provincial government: “The education system has felt the effects of almost a decade of a conservative government, including a decrease in power of locally elected school boards, the amalgamation of cities, and serious cuts to programs serving the needs of marginalized communities” (p. 45). Russell argues that the ongoing funding cuts and erosion of equity programs under the conservative government hit equity programming and marginalized communities most acutely (p. 51), undermining the work of the Triangle Program and other equity programs. Importantly, these impacts were not the result of direct policies or regulations limiting 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion efforts; rather, they were experienced as a result of chronic underfunding and limiting of educational resources.

Similarly, Parker and McGray (2015) analyzed the tensions created by a neoliberal policy reform in Quebec for teachers, specifically in relation to teaching the potentially “contentious” material of a sexuality education course; these reforms were not specifically directed at 2SLGBTQIA+ content but rather took aim at establishing professional competencies for beginning teachers. Briefly, the Quebec government eliminated a course in which sexuality education was specifically covered and instead promoted a “cross-curricular approach to sexuality education, in which all teachers become responsible for sexuality education” (Parker & McGray, 2015, p. 4); alongside this move, they revised the professional competencies measures by which educators were assessed on their competency as teachers and, specifically, by which beginning teachers were assessed by school administrators to decide whether their teaching contracts would be renewed or hiring would be made permanent. Parker and McGray (2015) argue that these reforms put beginning teachers in a tenuous position as the reform made competencies “individual and measurable”; the change to sexuality education delivery also placed the onus on every teacher to engage in potentially “contentious” material, while “atomiz[ing] teachers in a search for accountability” (p. 1). Parker and McGray (2015) argue that these changes reflect a neoliberal ideology and make schooling (as well as both educators and students) subject to meeting the metrics and goals of global markets:

> Neoliberalism, as it relates to schools, is the idea that schools should operate in keeping with the logic of contemporary capitalism and related econometric measures. Neoliberal educational reforms share many of the defining features of broader, non-workplace-specific reforms, for example, accumulation by dispossession (Harvey, 2005), privatization, public-private partnerships (PPPs, Taylor & Friedel, 2011), and pressures to teach for increased economic gain. Specifically, a hallmark of neoliberal educational reform is the atomization of education, with the accompanying shift from responsibility to accountability. (pp. 2–3)

In this context, the education reform efforts that sought to impose more accountability for teachers and emphasize performance-based measures had the potential to stifle the effective delivery of content and compromise the goals of education. This highlights a potential danger in education reform movements, particularly in relation to neoliberal reforms that emphasize performance metrics and student achievement; they rely on certain forms of measurement to construct the "evidence" of effective performance or adequate achievement. The problem with these assessments is that they are beholden to neoliberal ideologies which work to construct market-based measures of education; they assume an objective measure of education's efficacy and effectively instrumentalize knowledge, obfuscate the social values and systemic forms of marginalization inherent in educational practices, prioritize market logics regarding education, promote student responsiblization for their own performance on assessments, and construct an individualist conception of the student as a "neutral" or unmarked, undifferentiated receptacle for knowledge (e.g., Ball, 2016; Giroux, 2012, 2019; Hursh, 2006; Janzen & Heringer, 2023; Keddie, 2016; Ozga, 2000; Torrance, 2015; Tucker & Fushell, 2021).

Inclusive education literature is one final area of research that touches on how education reform may impact socially marginalized groups. While inclusive education historically referred to efforts to support students with particular learning needs or those with disabilities, recent conceptualizations of inclusive education increasingly encompass socially marginalized students as well (including 2SLGBTQIA+ students), taking "a broader perspective on equity as it relates to providing equal access and opportunity to all students, particularly

those who have historically been marginalized or viewed as unsuccessful in Canada's education systems" (Whitley & Hollweck, 2020, p. 298). This recent trend in expanding inclusive education for socially marginalized students emphasizes how "inclusive education embraced a commitment to dismantling exclusions that formed the foundations for the oppression of vulnerable individuals and population cohorts" (Slee, 2019, p. 910). Here, we find some treatment of the importance of inclusive education in the context of education reform. Whitley and Hollweck (2020), writing about Nova Scotia's extensive *Education Reform Act* (Bill 72, 2018), focus on the topic of inclusive education in the context of these reforms; specifically, they point out that following this education reform, Nova Scotia developed a new inclusive education policy and they consider some of the implications of this effort in light of these reforms. It is worth noting in passing that Nova Scotia's reform has many similarities to Manitoba's proposed Bill 64 reform, including an association with Avis Glaze in its education review, its focus on removing school leaders from the teachers' union, and the elimination of school boards (see Awad, 2018; McCracken & Rogers, 2021); however, the specifics of Nova Scotia's new inclusive education policy would likely have differed significantly from what would have occurred in Manitoba. Whitley and Hollweck (2020) note that while the inclusive education policy sought to support student equity, the extensive changes to the school system organization, including additional responsibilities being placed on classroom teachers to implement these changes, led to a lot of confusion and apprehension among participants in their study. As a result, teachers in their study emphasized the need for additional supports and professional development opportunities to support students through inclusive education practices as, suddenly, much of the responsibility for inclusive education was being placed on them by situating extensive inclusive education exclusively in their classrooms. This strategy reflects the principles of inclusive education, particularly in emphasizing student achievement through integrated classroom learning, while at the same time following the logic of neoliberal policy reforms in placing accountability on teachers, emphasizing student success, and seeking ways to reduce spending—which reflects observations by both Parker and McGray (2015) and Russell (2006). Slee (2008) argues that "schools were not an invention for all and subsequently the struggle with demands for broadening

participation is more profound than is widely acknowledged" (p. 99); he points out, historically, strategies to address "special educational needs" focus on setting up specialized schools or classrooms, rather than looking to expand education in "regular" schooling.[8] However, Slee (2008) observes that inclusive education is increasingly treated as having been "accomplished" because of its widespread acceptance through policy texts and in educational programming and, thereby, it has lost some of its force in influencing education reform (p. 99). Importantly, given the "newfound respectability" of inclusive education and its potential to address equity in educational contexts, I would note that there are opportunities for policy to incorporate inclusive education in and through education reform—or to consider how reforms impact inclusive education, as a site where 2SLGBTQIA+ equity provisions may reside.

While there is a relative paucity of research focused on how large-scale education reform efforts impact 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects, what does exist clearly reveals that the impacts of education reform efforts on 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects are not solely limited to literature that focuses exclusively on 2SLGBTQIA+ identities or that explicitly mentions 2SLGBTQIA+ topics. Many of the prevailing discourses and problematizations of education reform suggest that there are impacts for 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects, as well as for marginalized populations in general (even while they do not explicitly address 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects), that function by reinforcing dominant norms related to gender and sexuality, bolstering status quo understandings, and reinforcing social inequities through privileging of those with means and neglecting to proactively support marginalized persons. Briefly, these education reform discourses include neoliberal notions of education that relate to market ideology, financial administration, governance and management of schools, implications for curriculum, student achievement/attainment, professional performance and employability metrics, accountability, and inclusive education and social change.

---

[8] While Slee (2008) is largely focusing on conceptions of inclusive learning that focus exclusively on "special educational needs" in education through establishing special schools/programs attending to disability inclusion, rather than on social inclusion, the point is still valid, especially considering the Triangle Program in Toronto as a strategy for meeting the "special" needs of 2SLGBTQIA+ students.

2SLGBTQIA+-focused education research and policy

The second focus area of this literature review considers research literature on 2SLGBTQIA+-inclusive education, and there is a substantial field of Canadian research on the topic from which to draw. However, to begin, I want to consider some historical trends in the area of 2SLGBTQIA+-inclusive education. Griffin and Ouellett (2003) wrote about the historical trends in the American K–12 education system in addressing LGBT issues. As I summarize below, they describe three eras of LGBT-inclusive education and speculate about what future efforts must involve. Although writing about US education, their historical retrospective is useful in understanding Canada's progression as well. I would argue that the three eras Griffin and Ouellett describe are not as clear cut as the dates that they attach to them—although the dates do align broadly with the emerging research and advocacy trends regarding 2SLGBTQIA+ persons in schools. Rather, these era-based conceptualizations describe the overlapping attitudes, understandings, and interventions that persist in education discourses regarding 2SLGBTQIA+ people in schools.

In short, the first era Griffin and Ouellett identify is the period from 1920–1979, which was dominated by understandings of "homosexual educators as a threat to children" (2003, pp. 106–108). They point out that homosexual educators did not become visible until the early 20th century and were then swiftly pathologized and treated as a threat to youth, mainly due to the perceived threat of homosexuality itself and its pathological characterization. This period includes early gay and lesbian liberation efforts, which led to the partial decriminalization of 2SLGBTQIA+ people in Canada in 1969. The second era, from 1980–1989, began to conceptualize "lesbian and gay youth as a population at risk" (pp. 108–109); during this period, researchers began to document the psychological and health-related risks associated with lesbian and gay youth, focusing mostly on individual-related indicators rather than social ones. This began to shift in the third era, as researchers began to "focus on schools as a risk environment for LGB youth" beginning in 1990 (pp. 109–111; Griffin & Ouellett, writing in 2003, assign an end date of 2002 to this period, although I would suggest again that this date likely extended beyond this point). During this period, researchers and advocates began to shift away from a

focus on individual experience and inherent at-risk narratives regarding 2SLGBTQIA+ youth and their psychological, social, and health-related development; instead, they began to talk about the ways in which schools were problematic for 2SLGBTQIA+ youth, focusing on "K–12 schools as sites of harassment and violence directed toward LGB and gender non-conforming students" (Griffin & Ouellett, 2003, p. 110). This led to the emergence of "a new genre of 'prescriptive' literature calling for policy changes, describing specific interventions, and outlining legal responsibilities of schools to provide a safe environment for LGBT youth (Rofes, 2000)" (p. 110). These calls for policy changes and interventions to support 2SLGBTQIA+ youth in schools began during this period, and Griffin and Ouellett argue that they must serve as the foundation for future efforts. These future efforts must focus on "organizational or systemic change principles that address the larger interrelated nature of systems of injustice and oppression"; specifically, Griffin and Ouellett argue that "educational policy and research also [needs to] examine the intersections and complexities of race, class, and other identity categories in relationship to gender oppression and heterosexism" (p. 111). These conceptualizations, broadly, depict the discourses of 2SLGBTQIA+-focused research, identifying the slow recognition that the problem of 2SLGBTQIA+ students, as it were, lay not with pathologized, inherently at-risk 2SLGBTQIA+ identities but with the lack of social acceptance and prevalence of discrimination; ultimately, changing these social, normative attitudes and making space for 2SLGBTQIA+ people, and queerness more generally, is the objective.

In Canada, Griffin and Ouellett's second and third eras cover the period during which 2SLGBTQIA+ persons began to achieve legal protections and make progress in terms of social equality, and these recognitions began to work their way into schools. The addition of "sex" as a protected category from discrimination in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* in 1982 eventually led to "sexual orientation" being read into *Charter* rights (most notably, in the jurisprudence provided by *Egan and Nesbit v. Canada* and *Vriend v. Alberta*); "sexual orientation" was already being explicitly included in human rights codes across the provinces and territories, with the earliest being Quebec in 1977 and in Manitoba in 1987. An amendment to the *Canadian Human Rights Act* in 1995 officially instantiated "sexual orientation" as a protected class nationwide (see Knegt, 2011).

However, other legal protections recognizing the full social equality of 2SLGBTQIA+ people have been unevenly progressing. For instance, at the federal level, marriage equality was recognized in 2005, legal recognition of non-binary gender occurred in 2019, and gender identity and gender expression were finally explicitly added to the *Canadian Human Rights Act* in 2017. To some extent, these legal advances reflect the progression of social acceptance of 2SLGBTQIA+ people in Canada, although it is worth noting that socially conservative attitudes prevail, particularly in educational contexts (e.g., Taylor, 2012). These human rights legal protections have provided a necessary backing for 2SLGBTQIA+ persons and, particularly, 2SLGBTQIA+ content in schools (e.g., Airton et al., 2019; Herriot et al., 2017; Loutzenheiser, 2015; Short, 2013, 2014; Short et al., 2021; Taylor, 2008, 2014). These legal protections have contributed to the progress on 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion in schools, in no small part thanks to the ongoing efforts of researchers and advocates. In Canada, 2SLGBTQIA+-focused educational research has generally followed Griffin and Ouellett's pattern of eras.

In the following section, I briefly recount how the research literature addresses these eras, including how 2SLGBTQIA+ students were problematized as a population at risk and how schools functioned as risk environments for 2SLGBTQIA+ students. I then proceed to describe some of the current trends in 2SLGBTQIA+-related research before turning to literature that specifically treats 2SLGBTQIA+-related education policy. Much of the institutional work on 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion in schools has built on human rights protections to curtail homophobic, biphobic, and transphobic (HBTP) discrimination, bullying, and harassment. School systems have predominantly focused on interventions to counter HBTP discrimination through policy to protect students from discrimination or harassment based on sexual orientation or gender identity in order to promote 2SLGBTQIA+ student safety. Policy is regarded as a key intervention in this effort, and it has been linked to better outcomes for both 2SLGBTQIA+ and cisgender-heterosexual students (Hall, 2017; Konishi et al., 2013; Koskiw et al., 2020; Kurt & Chenault, 2017; Saewyc et al., 2014; Taylor & Peter, 2011). Both large-scale quantitative studies and smaller scale qualitative research on 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion in schools routinely emphasize the importance of, and subsequently make recommendations advocating for, developing and implementing comprehensive

2SLGBTQIA+-inclusive policies (Hall, 2017; Hansen, 2007; Kurt & Chenault, 2017; Russell, 2011; Russell et al., 2010; Szalacha, 2003). Large-scale studies have been particularly useful in advocating for policy development and implementation as they have importantly catalogued the prevalence of students' experiences of HBTP and the harmful effects of negative school climates for 2SLGBTQIA+ students (and those targeted by 2SLGBTQIA+-related harassment), demonstrating the need for policy-based interventions to protect and support students from HBTP-related harassment. It is worth noting that this type of large-scale, quantitative research provides the type of evidence that technical approaches to policymaking prize: statistical, large-scale, and seemingly reflective of an objective and scientifically rigorous reality that justifies the need for anti-HBTP policies. Internationally, in both the UK and the U.S., national surveys have been conducted iteratively to track school climate for LGBTQ students in schools, and both repeatedly highlight the necessity for policy interventions. Stonewall UK has conducted a national survey of school climate for LGBTQ students four times in the United Kingdom since 2007 (e.g., the most recent report, Bradlow et al., 2017), with each report reiterating the need for LGBTQ-inclusive policies at all levels of the school system. The U.S.-based LGBTQ education organization GLSEN has conducted biannual surveys of school climate since 2005 (e.g., the most recent report on the 2021 survey, Kosciw et al., 2022), similarly highlighting the importance of LGBTQ-inclusive policy; GLSEN also developed comparative analyses within their dataset to compare the experiences of students from schools with LGBTQ anti-harassment policies with those from schools without them, finding that students in schools with LGBTQ polices report better school climates.

In Canada, beginning in 2007, Egale Canada partnered with researchers on a national climate survey on HBTP in Canadian schools (Taylor & Peter, 2011; see Peter et al., 2015 for an aggregate analysis of this study's data with Chamberland's concurrent study in Quebec); in 2019–2020, they conducted a second follow-up study to understand how school climates had shifted in the intervening 10 years (Peter et al., 2021). Data from the first demonstrated the negative and harmful climate in schools for LGBTQ students and also showed that negative climates were mitigated when policy was present; these findings were echoed in the second climate survey, with the additional finding that 2SLGBTQIA+ students from schools that reported their schools were comprehensively

supportive of 2SLGBTQIA+ students experienced much better school climates. As Peter et al. (2021) note in introduction to the second climate survey report, findings from the first study were vitally important to education stakeholders and policymakers in providing statistically rigorous evidence recording the prevalence and impacts of homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia on students. This type of evidence has been instrumental in policymaking, and it proved to be very effective in advocating for the development of education legislation (which occurred in four provinces, i.e., Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, and Alberta) and policy in school systems (across the country). These legislation amendments and policy changes were especially helpful in providing protections based on anti-harassment measures and social supports, such as the introduction of gay–straight alliance/gender and sexuality (GSA) clubs (notably, Egale Canada used the first climate survey to launch MyGSA resources, which were developed for numerous provinces and territories, including Newfoundland & Labrador, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Ontario, Manitoba, and Yukon) —and this may provide a false sense of having adequately addressed the problem of HBTP discrimination in schools. However, many of these policy changes stopped short of mandating 2SLGBTQIA+-inclusive curriculum, resources, or comprehensive training for educators working in schools. As such, policy may even contribute to the marginalization of 2SLGBTQIA+ students by making them feel that harassment is inevitable or that they only warrant attention when they are physically or verbally harangued; it may even inadvertently communicate that their sexualities and genders are not fit content for school. Without the necessary supports and professional development to address the biased attitudes and misconceptions about 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects, anti-harassment measures may also contribute to making 2SLGBTQIA+ students feel at greater risk through increased visibility or by inadequate attempts by educators to “protect” them (Formby, 2015).

While this type of large-scale evidence provided policymakers and school administrators with a clear understanding of the *impacts* of negative school climates for 2SLGBTQIA+ students (and those targeted on these grounds), encouraging much-needed interventions to counter homophobic and transphobic harassment, bullying, and violence in schools, it also provided false confidence in identifying the *causes* of these negative

behaviours. For instance, articulating the problem as one of HBTP bullying suggests that the problem is situated at an individual level as a behavioural problem rooted in attitudinal or personal bias—not necessarily one that is supported by the interrelated workings of homophobia, heterosexism, and heteronormativity in schools (Walton, 2006; see also, Formby, 2015). The result is that anti-HBTP interventions introduced in schools often treat the symptoms of the larger unaddressed problem rather than the source of it: the heteronormative and cisnormative school cultures that give rise to HBTP bullying and marginalization (Airton, 2013; Goldstein et al., 2007a, 2007b; MacIntosh, 2007; Walton, 2004). This focus on anti-HBTP interventions has resulted in constructions of 2SLGBTQIA+ identities as being inherently at-risk of victimization in schools (e.g., Ahuja et al., 2015; Airton, 2013; Jennings, 2015). In other words, even though it is recognized that schools act as risk environments for 2SLGBTQIA+ students, the focus of interventions is predominantly on HBTP harassment, which constructs 2SLGBTQIA+ subjectivities as at risk of victimization—something of a discursive conflation of Griffin and Ouellett's (2003) second and third era conceptualizations.

Jennings (2015) describes the detrimental impact of these at-risk/victimization narratives of 2SLGBTQIA+ students, but also admits that many researchers (himself included) and educators have been guilty of perpetuating these narratives in their work, largely in response to the prevailing norms of research literature in talking about 2SLGBTQIA+ students in schools. I would extend this observation to include the norms of education policy research. Indeed, most authors focusing on 2SLGBTQIA+-inclusive education do make mention of HBTP bullying and negative school climates to justify their research problems by appealing to "narratives or images of the suffering queer" (Airton, 2013, p. 533). While it may not be wholly possible to immediately end these at-risk discourses, particularly when policymakers rely on this type of evidence as justification for policy-based interventions, it is useful to recognize the power of these discourses for education policy regarding 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects; it also allows for the recognition that meaningfully supporting 2SLGBTQIA+ students goes beyond reactive interventions that focus exclusively on HBTP bullying (see Campbell et al., 2021; Campbell et al., 2022; Peter et al., 2021). These sorts of limited interventions do not adequately address the social and emotional

needs of 2SLGBTQIA+ students.[9] Increasingly, researchers are advocating for 2SLGBTQIA+-inclusive interventions that go beyond anti-HBTP education to make space for queerness in schools. However, even making space for 2SLGBTQIA+ students and content in schools may fall short of this goal.

As mentioned above, GSAs are often linked to anti-HBTP efforts and able to be effectively supported by school policies, such as Manitoba's 2013 amendment to *The Public Schools Act* (see Bill 18, 2012). GSAs are considered to be an intervention that works to address the social marginalization of 2SLGBTQIA+ students, effectively counteracting the social exclusion of bullying behaviours and designating a location where 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects are supported. Research has demonstrated the wide-ranging positive effects of GSAs for both 2SLGBTQIA+ and cisgender-heterosexual students' wellbeing, but this research also recognizes that these effects are not guaranteed and that each GSA develops its own character and outcomes (Blackburn & McCready, 2009; Fetner et al., 2012; Konishi et al., 2013; Lapointe, 2017; McCready, 2004a; Saewyc et al., 2013; St. John et al., 2014; Taylor, Peter et al., 2016). GSAs may fall short of adequately addressing 2SLGBTQIA+ student marginalization depending on the support they receive in schools and the investment of the school community; they may simply create another excluded space in schools to which 2SLGBTQIA+ students are relegated, or to which only certain 2SLGBTQIA+ students feel comfortable occupying (e.g., McCready, 2004a, points out that GSAs may exclude students of colour and reinforce white normativity regarding queer subjects; both Elia, 2014, and Lapointe, 2017, argue that bisexuality and pansexuality are often made invisible). While GSAs are able to more effectively address the problem of social exclusion for 2SLGBTQIA+ students, GSAs still situate the locus of the problem among 2SLGBTQIA+ students, one that can be addressed by simply creating a dedicated space for them; however, these dedicated spaces may only serve to make 2SLGBTQIA+ students more visible, or they may

[9] For discussions of specific approaches, see, for example: Bellini (2012) regarding the foregrounding of emotional needs of K–12 gay and lesbian students through teacher education programs; McCready (2004a, 2004b) discusses the normalization of whiteness and its effect on racialized queer and gender non-conforming students; Rosario et al. (2011) on psychological adjustment of LGB youth; Sadowski et al. (2009) for discussion of meeting the relational needs of LGBTQ youth; Snapp et al. (2015) record the benefits of having LGBTQ-inclusive curricula for students' sense of individual and school safety.

simply contribute to a school climate where 2SLGBTQIA+ students' sexual and gender diversity are only "acceptable" or able to be discussed in the segregated space of the GSA.

As Griffin and Ouellett (2003) point out, there is a need to build on previous conceptualizations of 2SLGBTQIA+ issues in schools and look toward future efforts to support 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion in schools in order to effectively address HBTP. Recognizing that HBTP is rooted in bias, misinformation, and negative attitudes, addressing HBTP in schools requires approaches that address heteronormative and cisnormative school cultures and seek to transform them (e.g., Campbell & Taylor, 2024; Goldstein et al., 2007b). These interventions set the goal of making "queerness their beneficiary and not particular (queer) people" (Airton, 2013, p. 546). Meyer (2019) argues that queer theory's critique of sexual and gender normativity needs to become part of antibullying approaches in order to disrupt the normative binaries that regulate the status quo. For example, queer pedagogy, which has been developed by scholars working to apply queer theory in educational and learning contexts, is a particularly well-suited intervention in this regard and provides some insight into the ways normativizing discourses constitute knowledge and, in turn, form queer subjects. Conceptualizations of queer pedagogy centre questions of subjectivity and knowledge in their formulation; this goes beyond merely including 2SLGBTQIA+ content in educational practices, but to "teach against-the-grain" to challenge "normalcy" in schools (Bryson & de Castell, 1993, p. 288) and even provoke interventions that question how knowledge construction, and the limits of what is considered "knowable," work to form subjectivities (Britzman, 1995, 1998). In these ways, queer pedagogy has emancipatory potential that goes beyond merely addressing homophobia or supporting queer students through unsettling heteronormative assumptions about sexuality and gender (Luhmann, 1998). Bellini (2012) argues that these interventions and queer theory/pedagogy itself is a useful intervention in teacher education programs. In many ways, queer pedagogy mirrors the orientation of queer theory in looking toward the margins of subjectivity, knowledge, and learning—particularly in focusing on questions of how subjects are formed in relation to what they learn and how that knowledge is discursively and normatively constituted. This orientation toward queer subjects and queer knowledge offers insights for

education policy studies, particularly in terms of policy problematizations, that go beyond thinking about victimization narratives of 2SLGBTQIA+ students and relying on narratives of "suffering queers" (Airton, 2013) to justify 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusions in education policy.

2SLGBTQIA+-related policy discourses and problematizations

As I describe in the previous section, much of the research focusing on 2SLGBTQIA+-inclusive education has been situated in conceptualizations of 2SLGBTQIA+ persons as being inherently at-risk of HBTP victimization. The strength of this research has been in its usefulness in demonstrating the severity and prevalence of the problem facing 2SLGBTQIA+ students and in admonishing policymakers to make changes in the education system, which has resulted in varied successes in introducing 2SLGBTQIA+-inclusive policies within institutional education settings and, particularly, introducing protections for 2SLGBTQIA+ students regarding their safety and anti-harassment measures. However, this research has also had the unfortunate side effect of amplifying understandings of 2SLGBTQIA+ subjectivities that are defined by HBTP harassment, reifying "at-risk" subjectivities for 2SLGBTQIA+ students. The resulting emphasis on negative experiences of HBTP harassment, discrimination, and marginalization in schools foregrounds "safety" as the preeminent concern for 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion in schools, which contributes to the ways in which 2SLGBTQIA+ students are constructed as "victims" or as being inherently "at-risk" subjects in schools (e.g., Ahuja et al., 2015; Airton, 2013; Ellis, 2007; Jennings, 2015). This concern is particularly relevant in looking at how policymakers represent 2SLGBTQIA+ subjectivities in and through policy (Loutzenheiser, 2015). Policymakers' reliance on quantitative data to catalogue the negative experiences of harassment and discrimination to evidence the policy "problem" of 2SLGBTQIA+ students has resulted in policies that primarily focus on issues of safety and overt expressions and incidents of HBTP harassment; this has limited policymakers' abilities to address the "problem" of 2SLGBTQIA+ students in schools. Research focusing on 2SLGBTQIA+-specific policies can broadly be categorized as having two approaches: (1) research that focuses on the regulatory contexts for *developing and implementing* 2SLGBTQIA+-specific policies (e.g., Goldstein et al., 2007a; Herriot et al., 2017; Iskander & Shabatay, 2018; Kurt & Chenault, 2017, Macgillivray,

2004a, 2004b; Martino et al., 2019; Short, 2013; Taylor, 2008); and (2) research that focuses on the *impacts, benefits, and challenges* of such policies for 2SLGBTQIA+ subjectivities and contexts (e.g., Farley & Leonardi, 2021; Hall, 2017; Loutzenheiser, 2015; Meyer & Keenan, 2018; Snider, 1996; Walton, 2004). Both approaches yield insights into the discourses that are deployed to construct the "problem" of 2SLGBTQIA+ people and content in educational contexts.

The research literature has developed a number of different interrelated discourses regarding how education policies address the "problem" of 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects in schools (Airton et al., 2019; Martino & Cumming-Potvin, 2018; Loutzenheiser, 2015; Meyer & Keenan, 2018; Walton, 2004, 2010). The most common discourse links 2SLGBTQIA+ students with safety and protections from HBTP harassment. While focusing on 2SLGBTQIA+ student safety has been an effective strategy for creating 2SLGBTQIA+-specific policies (Macgillivray, 2004a), these policies work to construct at-risk subjectivities for 2SLGBTQIA+ students (Airton, 2013; Ellis, 2007; Jennings, 2015; Loutzenheiser, 2015; Walton, 2004) and construct the problem of bullying as being an individual, behavioural problem rather than a social one (Iskander & Shabtay, 2018; Martino et al., 2022; Taylor, 2008; Walton, 2004). This treatment of the problem constructs 2SLGBTQIA+ subjectivities as being inherently at risk of HBTP victimization and limits interventions primarily to reactive approaches to correcting individualistic, harassment-based behaviours (Iskander & Shabtay, 2018; Loutzenheiser, 2015; Walton, 2004). Importantly, these efforts *have been successful* in reducing HBTP harassment in schools and creating safer school environments for 2SLGBTQIA+ students (e.g., Hall, 2017; Peter et al., 2021; Taylor & Peter, 2011), particularly when 2SLGBTQIA+ safety is explicitly linked with human rights protections (Anderson, 2014; Goldstein et al., 2014; Short, 2013, 2014; Taylor, 2008). However, even these successful efforts are not without their shortcomings. For instance, critiques based on homonormativity—which Duggan (2003) coined as a term to describe the emergence of a neoliberal sexual politics that "does not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions, but upholds and sustains them" (p. 50)—highlight the danger of relying on liberal-reliant human rights frameworks and visibility measures for validating queer identities and providing protections for 2SLGBTQIA+ students in

schools. Homonationalism was initially articulated by Jasbir Puar (2007) as a critique of the US war on terror, the enlistment of homophobic sentiment as a strategy of nationalism, and its effect of engendering a homonormative nationalism among US queer subjects for nation-building purposes; it works particularly in producing normatively queer white subjects that approximate as closely as possible the heteronormative ideal of citizenship and necessarily align US national interests. Critiques based on homonationalism have been adapted more broadly to interrogate reliance on human rights frameworks to validate queer identities only in relation to citizenship, legal rights frameworks, perceptions of whiteness, and settler colonialism (e.g., Kokozos & Gonzalez, 2020; Lenon & Dryden, 2015; Morgensen, 2010). Similarly, scholars focusing on transgender identities and gender expression have pointed out that despite being "included" in 2SLGBTQIA+ policy research, trans identities and gender diversity is often left unaddressed or simply erased (Airton et al., 2019; Martino & Cummings, 2018; Martino et al., 2019; Loutzenheiser, 2015); when transgender identity is included, legal protections and policies themselves often rely on a codification of what a valid, intelligible trans identity encompasses in order to determine to whom the policy/protection applies (Meyer & Keenan, 2018). Another limitation is that education policies relying on legal frameworks mirror the limitations of the law upon which they are based (Meyer & Keenan, 2018). These legal limitations are more pressing in US contexts, as legal recognition of trans people is less clearly articulated and subject to public debate (e.g., the bathroom debates typify these types of conversations). However, even in Canada, where Bill C-16 amended the *Canadian Human Rights Act* to include "gender identity and gender expression" as grounds protected from discrimination and hate, these protections rely on liberal rights frameworks and conceptualizations of discrimination or at-risk identities for their recognition. This limitation leaves legal protections open to continued attack, as in Saskatchewan's 2023 passage of Bill 137 (the "Parents' Bill of Rights") to amend the *Education Act*, restricting educators' ability to use trans and non-binary students' affirmed gender, chosen names, and pronouns without parental consent; Saskatchewan invoked Section 33 of the Charter (the "notwithstanding clause") to effectively suspend human rights–based legal challenges to the legislation (Hunter, 2023). However, even apart from this legal loophole,

which effectively acknowledges the violation of human rights while neutering it, the reliance on individualistic rights and reiteration of at-risk conceptualizations of 2SLGBTQIA+ people embeds protections within nationalist intelligibility frameworks and neglects wider social attitudes and oppressions.

Focusing primarily on safety in the context of HBTP bullying and discrimination conveys an understanding of the "problem" as being individualistic behaviour; as such, policy solutions are focused on correcting individual-level HBTP behaviours and attitudes in order to protect 2SLGBTQIA+ students from these negative attitudes and thereby achieve "inclusion." These inclusion strategies focus on allowing 2SLGBTQIA+ students access to untransformed schools, segregating 2SLGBTQIA+ students and content from meaningful and transformative inclusion in schools. In other words, this discourse constructs a policy problematization that neglects the larger social and systemic problems related to heteronormative and cisnormative cultures that pervade school communities (Hall, 2017; Iskander & Shabtay, 2018; Loutzenheiser, 2015; Taylor, 2008; Walton, 2004, 2006). These inclusion strategies function as assimilationist approaches, which presuppose school cultures are not inherently problematic and are largely acceptable as they are, requiring 2SLGBTQIA+ students merely "fit in." As such, these approaches are limited in how they conceive of needed interventions, relying on strategies to merely shield 2SLGBTQIA+ students from harm and integrate them into normative school communities. MacIntosh (2007) critiques this type of approach and argues for solutions that resist "offer[ing] up tidy solutions to the inequities of sexuality and gender" through pedagogies of inclusion (p. 41); instead, she argues that queer theory and queer pedagogies need to centre experiences of marginalized individuals and question the normativities and normalizing discourses that are at the root of marginalization for 2SLGBTQIA+ people. This work cannot be accomplished merely by including 2SLGBTQIA+ students and content in schools but must take an educational stance that seeks to address oppressive school climates, including addressing systemic and institutional forms of HBTP discrimination, working against the silencing and erasure of 2SLGBTQIA+ student identities, implementing proactive measures to improve school climate through school-wide initiatives (such as GSA clubs or whole school events), providing professional development opportunities, creating appropriate

2SLGBTQIA+ curricular content in all subjects, and challenging heternormativity and cisnormativity (Adams et al., 2004; Biegel & Kuehl, 2010; Crawley, 2025; DePalma & Atkinson, 2006; Goldstein et al., 2007a; Iskander & Shabtay, 2018; Kumashiro, 2002; Martino et al., 2022; Taylor, 2008; Walton, 2004).

Research also emphasizes that 2SLGBTQIA+-specific policies do not exist in isolation but are rather part of the larger social discourses and political agendas in which they are developed. 2SLGBTQIA+ policies are part of larger *policyscape*, which represents a "historical legacy of 'political behaviour' that helps to deepen an understanding of the policy agendas and events in the present" that are part of the dynamic "networked modes of governance" comprised of policy actors (Martino et al., 2019, p. 303 & 322; see also Cumming-Potvin & Martino, 2019; Russell, 2006; Walton, 2010). Understanding the social discourses regarding 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects and the policy agendas, events, and actors provides insight into how policy problematizations are formed (e.g., Martino et al., 2019; Taylor, 2008; Walton, 2010). This highlights the importance of policy stakeholders, particularly for 2SLGBTQIA+ education policies (Airton et al., 2019; Iskander & Shabtay, 2018; Martino et al., 2019; Russell, 2006; Taylor, 2008). Advocates for 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion have been instrumental in efforts to develop interventions in support of 2SLGBTQIA+ students in schools, working alongside educators and policymakers to create policy that attends to safety, inclusion, and support for 2SLGBTQIA+ students and content in schools (Iskander & Shabtay, 2018; Martino et al., 2019; Short, 2013; Taylor, 2008). However, opponents to 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion also exert their influence on policymaking; religious and socially conservative opponents to 2SLGBTQIA+-inclusive education efforts often dominate policy agendas by objecting to 2SLGBTQIA+ protections and provisions, with the unfortunate effect of watering down more robust 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion efforts and creating educational spaces that are dominated by apprehension about delivering 2SLGBTQIA+ content in classrooms and supporting 2SLGBTQIA+ (e.g., Macgillivray, 2004a; Payne & Smith, 2018; Short, 2013; Taylor, 2008). A crucial aspect of this type of opposition is parent/guardian and school community opposition (e.g., Campbell et al., 2021; Goldstein et al., 2007a; Payne & Smith, 2018). One particularly trenchant form of this opposition takes the form of parental rights claims that object to 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion efforts on the grounds

that these efforts infringe on their own moral or religious views about 2SLGBTQIA+ issues (Herriot et al., 2017; Short, 2013; Short et al., 2021); these opponents often adopt an absolutist conception of parental rights (Herriot et al., 2017) or misconstrue what infringement of rights entails (Short, 2013; Short et al., 2021). For instance, Stirling (2019) discussed Alberta's legal requirement for schools to inform parents about their child's participation in GSA clubs, challenging the practice on the grounds that it constitutes an infringement of children's rights; in direct opposition to the political framing of children's clandestine participation in GSA clubs being an infringement of parental rights, she suggests that requiring parents be informed prioritizes parents' rights over those of the child and, as a result, ultimately violates the rights of the child. The conflation of children's rights with those of their parent or family actually undermines children's rights, particularly in thinking about 2SLGBTQIA+ children and potential conflicts with parents' unsupportive or aggressively homophobic attitudes. In response to these forms of opposition, advocates often appeal to student safety as justification for 2SLGBTQIA+-focused interventions, which can be a useful strategy to successfully advocate for 2SLGBTQIA+ policy development as it shifts the focus away from challenging socially or culturally normative conversations (see Airton, 2013; Macgillivray, 2004a; Short, 2014), although, again, this strategy risks reifying at-risk narratives for 2SLGBTQIA+ youth and the spectacle of the "suffering queer" (Airton, 2013).

Another important aspect of 2SLGBTQIA+-supportive policies is their integration throughout the regulatory contexts and implementation practices of education systems. Szalacha (2003), for instance, emphasizes that the usefulness of policy is not necessarily in its existence (although that visibility is important), but in policy's ability to scaffold other interventions, such as professional development and training opportunities, curriculum development, and dedicating resources to supporting 2SLGBTQIA+ efforts throughout schools (see also Albanese, 2012; Walton, 2004, 2006). This scaffolding allows for what Szalacha (2003) describes as the additive effect of multiple integrated intervention strategies—such as developing policy, providing training and professional development, developing curricular resources, and supporting GSA student groups—which work across school contexts and to support different demographics within the school system (e.g., teachers,

students, administrators) to mutually reinforce support for 2SLGBTQIA+ students (see also Albanese, 2012; Macgillivray, 2004b; Payne & Smith, 2018). In short, education policies have an opportunity to integrate 2SLGBTQIA+ content and provisions for 2SLGBTQIA+ students throughout their regulatory frameworks and in practical interventions, such as curricula and school activities, to provide educators with a clear mandate to include 2SLGBTQIA+ topics throughout school contexts; this allows for proactive interventions to address heteronormative and cisnormative climates in schools, rather than relying on reactive measures that merely correct problematic behaviours of harassment. However, whether reactive to incidents of bullying or proactive in teaching students about anti-discrimination, focusing solely on negative and discriminatory attitudes and behaviours toward 2SLGBTQIA+ people limits policy's transformational potential because these efforts still discursively centre 2SLGBTQIA+ identities as problematic or at-risk; policy must set its sights beyond merely seeking to integrate 2SLGBTQIA+ students into the existing normative school environments and needs to address the institutional heteronormative and cisnormative cultures that marginalize 2SLGBTQIA+ students in the social activities and curricular content of schools. Even when policies are not focused on HBTP bullying and harassment, they are still often reactive in nature, such as those policies that seek to provide accommodations for trans and gender non-conforming students (Airton et al., 2019). These purely reactive measures are insufficient and perpetuate the idea that inclusion for 2SLGBTQIA+ students is sufficient. As Short (2014) argues, "depending on how it is defined, mere 'inclusive' education is inadequate. More broad-based approaches of anti-oppressive education, which place culture itself in its sights, including the privileged and othered, are required" in order to address the multiplicity of regulatory regimes, from the normative to the formal institutional ones, that students encounter in schools (p. 340; see also, Kumashiro, 2000, 2002; Loutzenheiser, 2015). As such, there is a need to move beyond anti-HBTP interventions and introduce more expansive interventions that integrate 2SLGBTQIA+ students and topics in schools and seek to redress the social normativities that reinforce sexual and gender normativities (MacIntosh, 2007).

Research on 2SLGBTQIA+-related education policy also needs to be rooted in the lived experiences of 2SLGBTQIA+ youth. Scholars have noted the homonormative nature of many 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion efforts, picking up on the assimilationist critiques I have described already, pointing out that the problematization regarding 2SLGBTQIA+ students too often reinforces representations of 2SLGBTQIA+ students as being singular or monolithic in nature (e.g., Loutzenheiser, 2015; Peter et al., 2021). Rather, 2SLGBTQIA+-supportive policies need to pay attention to intersectionality in policy and in creating 2SLGBTQIA+-related interventions in schools (Loutzenhesier, 2015; Marquez & Brockenbrough, 2013; Snider, 1996). Policies must be clear in their conceptualization of 2SLGBTQIA+ identities as potentially occupying multiple socially marginalized positionalities (e.g., Airton et al., 2019; Loutzenheiser, 2015; Marquez & Brockenbrough, 2013; Snider, 1996), including queer intersections with race (Bartone, 2019; Marquez & Brockenbrough, 2013; McCready, 2004a, 2004b; Robinson, 2014; Wilson, 2008), disability (Duke, 2011; Miller & Smith, 2020; Morgan et al., 2011; Pyne, 2020; Wright & Manuel, 2025), and gender diversity and non-conformity (Airton, 2013; Airton et al., 2019; Loutzenhesier, 2015; Keenan, 2024; Martino & Cumming-Potvin, 2018; Martino et al., 2022; skelton, 2022). Intersectionality conceives of multiple marginalization as having distinct effects for and in social oppression (originally conceptualized for legal contexts by Crenshaw, 1991; see also, Lorde's, 1984, seminal essay identifying the interlocking normativities regarding age, race, class, and sex). The hegemonic nature of normativity is such that it pulls queerness toward the imagined ideal social norm, developing a homonormative ideal of acceptable queerness as white, wealthy, cisgender, and male (Duggan, 2003)—in this, there are echoes of Ball's (2013) observations about the Bell Curve effect of regulatory policies in establishing educational norms based on the "average" experiences of student performance and behaviour. Examining the margins of queerness in education policy for 2SLGBTQIA+ subjectivities is particularly important for creating relevant, student-centred policy; this requires a balancing of specificity, clarity, and fluidity to students' experiences (Kurt & Chenault, 2017; Leonardi & Staley, 2018). Policies must strive to provide a clear policy mandate with specific procedures but also offer fluidity and flexibility in the policy's implementation and application in order to be responsive and adaptive to the needs and experiences of

2SLGBTQIA+ students (Kurt & Chenault, 2017) and provide flexibility for educators/administrators in responding to unique challenges of varied schooling contexts (Leonardi & Staley, 2018). In short, 2SLGBTQIA+ students must have a say in their own education and educators must have the ability to meet the needs and desires of 2SLGBTQIA+ students (Iskander & Shabtay, 2018). This is particularly important for racialized and gender non-conforming queer subjectivities—particularly in contexts where 2SLGBTQIA+ concerns are conflated or held in tension with broader equity efforts, in which equity characteristics are often treated as singular, immutable, or culturally contentious (Betro, 2014; Marquez & Brockenbrough, 2013; Russell, 2006; Shewchuk & Cooper, 2018; Snider, 1996). Similarly, policy discourses often treat 2SLGBTQIA+ subjectivities as being fixed, essentialized identities that are immutable and unchanging (e.g., Airton et al., 2019; Duke, 2011; Loutzenheiser, 2015; Marquez & Brockenbrough, 2013). Importantly, policy interventions need to take into account the "intersections and complexities of race, class, and other identity categories in relationship to gender oppression and heterosexism" (Griffin & Ouellett, 2003, p. 111).

Finally, policy interventions in support of 2SLGBTQIA+ students and content must provide clear support for 2SLGBTQIA+ youth and communicate an unequivocal institutional mandate to educators to engage in 2SLGBTQIA+ supportive practices. As I mentioned earlier, Section 28 of Britain's 1988 Local Government Act mandated that local educational authorities "must not 'promote homosexuality' or 'promote the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretend family relationship'" (section 28.–1 (2A) quoted in Adams et al., 2004; see also Atkinson, 2002; Douglas et al., 1997; Ellis, 2007; Epstein, D., 1994; Nixon & Givens, 2007). This had the effect of creating uncertainty among educators about what constituted promotion of homosexuality and undermined educators' ability to address 2SLGBTQIA+ content in schools and even redress homophobic harassment in schools—even after Section 28's eventual repeal in 2003 (Adams et al., 2004; Kelleher, 2021). Silence regarding 2SLGBTQIA+ students and topics, as Griffin and Ouellett (2003) observed, is a historical strategy to erase 2SLGBTQIA+ persons from schools, treat them as inappropriate content, and further marginalize them from social acceptance (e.g., DePalma & Atkinson, 2006; Mayberry, 2006; Quinlivan & Town,

1999). Without clear institutional support for 2SLGBTQIA+ students and content, the tendency of many educators is to "play it safe" and treat 2SLGBTQIA+ content as potentially sensitive, effectively communicating that it is unspeakable and inappropriate (Campbell et al., 2021; Crawley, 2025; Taylor, 2008; Taylor et al., 2015; Taylor et al., 2016). This is a common criticism of 2SLGBTQIA+-focused education policies; often, generic anti-discrimination policies simply add sexual orientation or gender identity (and sometimes gender expression) to a "laundry list" of protected characteristics, implying it is simply, easily incorporated in this way and neglecting to address the longstanding silence regarding 2SLGBTQIA+ topics and persons in schools (Airton et al., 2019). This criticism is similarly applied to the assimilationist character of many policies, which end up attempting to erase sexuality and gender diversity through their goal of assimilating them within an untransformed, normative school environment (e.g., Iskander & Shabtay, 2018; Jennings, 2015; Loutzenheiser, 2015). Many education policies and legislation in Canadian jurisdictions may reflect these aims; for instance, Ontario's Bill 13 legislation was broadly antibullying and "reduce[d] issues of systemic violence to individual 'behavioural problems' (Winston & Tuters, 2015), and fail[ed] to address 'complex roots of harm' (Quinn & Meiners, 2013, p. 157; see also Rofes, 2004)" that gave rise to HBTP bullying in the first place (Iskander & Shabtay, 2018, p. 340; a similar critique could be brought to bear on Manitoba's Bill 18, 2012). Eliding 2SLGBTQIA+ subjectivities under a list of protected characteristics and seeking to protect them by simply assimilating them into oppressive school environments contributes to an ongoing erasure of 2SLGBTQIA+ persons and silences conversations that may disrupt oppressive heteronormative, cisnormative, and gender-binary normative social discourses.

Policy problematizations for 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects and content in education reform

Picking up on my description of policy discourses and problematizations regarding 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects above, I want to briefly describe some potential overlaps and interlocks with the education reform policy discourses I described earlier. As I recount above (in Education Reform Policy Discourses), *common policy discourses that are deployed for education reform* include those relating to neoliberalism, market ideology, and financial administration of education; governance and management of schools, including administration and

leadership; curricular impacts, student achievement/attainment and the instrumentalizing of knowledge; professional performance, accountability, and employability metrics; and special education needs, inclusive education, and social change. Policy discourses and problematizations regarding *2SLGBTQIA+ subjectivities* include representations of 2SLGBTQIA+ students as being inherently at risk of victimization through predominant narratives of safety and the imminent threat of HBTP harassment and discrimination; 2SLGBTQIA+ students as being inherently problematic/threatening through their mere existence, prompting opposition to any efforts to support them by social or religious conservatives; 2SLGBTQIA+ content as being inappropriate or potentially sensitive content, which contributes to the silencing of 2SLGBTQIA+ content and erasure of 2SLGBTQIA+ people; 2SLGBTQIA+ subjectivities being essentialized as stable and fixed identities; and normativizing influences of policy that contribute to the erasure of transgressive forms of queerness or expansive sexuality/gender subjectivities through assimilationist policy strategies, which work to reinforce cisnormative gender binaries, heteronormative ideals regarding valid sexual and gender identities, and homonormativizing ideals about valid 2SLGBTQIA+ identities, as being white, non-disabled, cisgender, male. These policy discourses have been used to support significant advances in making schools safer for 2SLGBTQIA+ students and in introducing 2SLGBTQIA+ content—and I do not intend to detract from those efforts or the achievements to date. Rather, I wish to highlight some of the oversights and unforeseen consequences of these efforts in constructing problematic 2SLGBTQIA+ subjectivities and in reifying normative discourses regarding 2SLGBTQIA+ persons and topics in educational contexts. The crucial consideration concerns the limits imposed on queerness and gender identity; there has been a great deal accomplished, but heteronormative and cisnormative conceptualizations of sexuality and gender continue to exert their influence in constructing 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects as "other," and it is necessary for future efforts to work at troubling these normative conceptualizations in order to meaningfully engage with the social misconceptions, biases, and attitudes that underwrite them. Too often these interventions impose a new homonormative standard for 2SLGBTQIA+ persons. Recent criticisms of 2SLGBTQIA+ rights movements rightly critique their tendency toward white-washing, homonormativity, assimilation, classism, colonialism, and

nationalism. There is a dearth of literature focusing on how structural education reform efforts treat 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects, and this very exclusion is emblematic of the historical silence regarding 2SLGBTQIA+ persons in education; in recent years, efforts have been made to address safety for 2SLGBTQIA+ persons, but these efforts may have provided a false sense of confidence within education systems that 2SLGBTQIA+ protections have been accomplished, the box checked, equality achieved. Rather, I would argue that considering this work as completed merely relegates it once more to silence and erasure. The almost complete silence regarding 2SLGBTQIA+ students, families, and educators in Bill 64 may be seen as evidence of this claim. Instead, picking up on the research literature and the critiques of 2SLGBTQIA+-related education policy, there are future avenues for 2SLGBTQIA+-expansive interventions in education policy.

Picking up on Russell's (2006) observation that neoliberal stances toward education impact marginalized, equity-seeking groups most acutely, it should be clear that ideologically driven education reform does not treat all students equally. Policy discourses that seek to impose financially conservative, performance-based metrics impact marginalized communities, including 2SLGBTQIA+ students, most directly. Queer approaches to policy studies offer a critical lens to be applied to the interrogation of policy that challenge norms and resist binarisms; this allows for readings of policy that look outside and beyond the established policy problematizations to identify the social and political roots, or genealogies, of the ideas that are present (Ball, 2013; Foucault, 1977b, 1983; Scheurich, 1994). In short, the discourses I discuss above regarding 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects in schools form an essential lens in considering how education reform discourses contribute to their construction. Education reform policy discourses are not neutral, particularly when they are silent; they are value-laden and, when they do not explicitly counter social normativities or seek to redress marginalization, they work to reinforce hegemonic normativities. This is essential to remember when approaching policy problematizations for 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects in education reform. Ultimately, it will allow for understandings of how reform efforts overlap with heteronormative, cisnormative social constructions regarding sexuality and gender; much like the interlocking discourses of oppression, these discourses mutually reinforce one another to regulate normativity of

the population and, through their implementation and application, exert a disciplinary influence on the individual to bring them into line with dominant social norms.

In this chapter, I presented my review of the research literature on education policy and education reform, 2SLGBTQIA+-related education research, and identified key problematizations in education policy and reform regarding 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects. Before turning to questions of methodology in my next section, I want to reiterate the importance of policy problematizations as sites of contestation and discursive formations that introduce the question of values to analyses of policy. Reform efforts generally prioritize policy-related interventions as organizational features in administering education; however, my utilization of governmentality recognizes that this does not necessarily represent a consolidated approach, as government operates through the active participation of the governed. In describing the literature on 2SLGBTQIA+ research, it should be readily apparent that despite the discourses often deployed in schools regarding sexuality, whether through formal policies or through less formal social discourses, that there are limits to their ability to constitute 2SLGBTQIA+ subjectivities. Queer theory points to these limitations and emphasizes the always-exceeding nature of queer subjectivities, their refusal to be stably or tidily contained and knowable, which extends into the realm of knowledge in pushing the boundaries of what is considered knowable or valid, challenging the normativity of knowledge. Intersectionality highlights the ways that these challenges come to be instantiated through structural and systemic features in institutions, and even operate within resistance discourses, such as queer theory. In centring the question of policy problematizations as the site of education's contestation, I seek to interrogate the discourses and interlocking systems of oppression that operate in and through policy, or perhaps more accurately, that come to be represented within policy. The discursive constructions of 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects necessarily involve other forms of oppression in the regulatory and systemically rooted policy discourses of education, and I primarily situate my research in an expansive understanding of queer subjectivity that seeks to trouble homonormativizing discourses and counter attempts to isolate 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects, or treat them as a singular concern, from the interlocking matrix of oppression. In other words, despite my focus on 2SLGBTQIA+

subjects, I recognize that these systems of oppression continue to operate even within and among 2SLGBTQIA+ communities. The methodologies I outline in the following section primarily employ discourse-related analyses—whether of the discourses represented in the final textual document of Bill 64 or in the ways that public reception and interview participants addressed 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects—as the means to investigate the questions I have proposed and engage with the literature I have discussed above to situate my analysis of Bill 64 and education reform in Manitoba.

CHAPTER 3: Methodology

In this chapter, I describe my methodology for this research, including my theoretical framework and specific methods in creating a policyscape analysis of Bill 64. My research focuses on an analysis of the educational reform effort of Bill 64, *The Education Modernization Act*, the public discourses in response to the proposed reform, and the ways in which 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects were discursively positioned in and constituted by these events. As I described in the previous chapter, my understanding of education policy studies is best situated in poststructuralist, critical analyses of policy. In my review of the literature, I traced a conceptual lineage that provides a situated critical mode of inquiry for my research that centres Bacchi's (1999, 2009) policy problematization approach and makes use of Ball's (1993, 1994, 2015) conceptualization of policy as text and policy as discourse. Taking up problematizations in this research enabled a focus on considering how policy worked to implicitly and discursively construct policy problems related to education—and their proposed solutions in Bill 64—and allowed for inquiries that considered how 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects were constituted and, consequently, how they should be treated in schools. Recognizing that the bill acted as both a text and a discourse opens pathways to consider how the text was framed by government rationale (i.e., based on the Education Commission's recommendations and descriptions of Manitoba's high spending in education and poor student outcomes) and discursively invoked common education reforms justifications related to economic interests, student performance, and purported evidence regarding the "failings" of the education system. As my research progressed, the vitally important role of public discourse and, more broadly, the landscape of social and political circumstances surrounding the bill gained prominence. Responses to Bill 64 were defined by strong resistance efforts and opposition campaigns led by formal/official efforts (e.g., by the Official Opposition NDP party, by education stakeholders such as The Manitoba Teachers' Society [MTS] and Manitoba School Boards Association [MSBA]) and by individuals and collective organizing (through editorial writing, letter writing; through the formation of groups opposing the bill and engaging in directed, coalitionary opposition campaigns). My initial intention was to conduct a thematic analysis of the public reception and widespread opposition as

represented by news media coverage, editorials, and social media campaigns. I had followed public reception closely during the roughly six-month period during which Bill 64 was tabled, and I had relied on it to inform participant recruitment for interviews and to formulate my research proposal. However, as I conducted interviews with participants, I realized the importance of attending to the larger landscape of these public discourses and the sociopolitical landscape surrounding Bill 64. One participant brought this home for me when they expressed gratitude for my pursuing this research and emphasizing the importance of it in creating a record of the substantial effort and efficacy of the collective response. As a result, I began to think about my research as developing a broader policyscape of Bill 64—a concept I had encountered during my literature review and had seen utilized for investigations of 2SLGBTQIA+-specific policies in education (e.g., Cumming-Potvin & Martino, 2019; Martino et al., 2019).

Policyscape approaches recognize the importance of broader social discourses and political agendas in the development of specific policies, both historically and contemporaneously. Policyscape approaches recognize that policies are linked to historical legacies of political decision-making and policy agendas, as well as events in the present, and engage with the dynamic "networked modes of governance" of policy actors (Martino et al., 2019, p. 322; see also Mettler, 2016; SoRelle, 2022). Understanding the historical context of policies—including the policy discourses that have developed and taken root over time to become established institutions "bearing consequences for governing operations, the policy agenda, and political behaviour" (Mettler, 2016, p. 369)—and contemporary events, circumstances, policy agendas, and actors surrounding a specific policy provides deeper insights and contextual understanding of the policy process and policy decisionmaking; a policyscape approach provides a larger perspective to understand how policies form, their problematizations, stakeholders' influence as agentic actors, and how discourses contribute to and constitute this overlay of events, agendas, and actors. While the policyscape refers more strictly to the dynamics of interrelated public policies that exert influence on the shape of future politics, policy decisions, and public interests (SoRelle, 2022), I adapt this somewhat to expand the scope of the landscape to attend not only to the influences of other policies but government

agendas, current events, the influence of stakeholder groups, public discourse, and broader social discourses—all of which exert influence on how policy is developed and introduced.

In various ways, I saw the usefulness of employing a policyscape for this research and investigating 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects, problematizations, and policy discourses in Bill 64, as it enabled me to consider, for instance, how broader discourses enforcing heteronormativity and cisnormativity were related to the bill and public discourse. Even when researchers did not directly label their research as engaging in policyscape approaches, there were often methodological similarities and alignments that facilitated broader conceptual approaches to educational policy research involving 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects (e.g., Airton et al., 2019; Iskander & Shabtay, 2018; Russell, 2006; Taylor, 2008; Walton, 2010). As a result, I began to see my broader methodological umbrella as a policyscape—with three specific methods serving as the data collection pillars, each developing a different aspect of the policyscape to understand Bill 64's problematizations, treatment of 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects, and construction of education in the province. My research methods are:

(1) a policyscape description of Manitoba's educational history and the story of Bill 64, its reception and withdrawal, and subsequent educational policy actions, informed by a policy genealogy/archaelogy lens (Ball, 2013; Scheurich, 1994; Walton, 2010);

(2) a critical policy discourse analysis of Bill 64 itself with a focus on policy problematizations and 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects (Bacchi, 1999, 2000; Diem et al., 2014); and

(3) participant interviews with policymakers, education stakeholders, and individuals who engaged in public responses to the bill, each serving as expert informants speaking about the bill and collective responses.

While I consider the first method to most directly relate to a policyscape approach (and have labelled it as such), each works to more directly delve into different aspects of the bill and the related public discourse in ways that expand the policyscape. Across these three areas of data collection, a policyscape emerges that addresses Bill 64's direct effort to reform education in Manitoba and how that reform was interpreted, understood, and responded to. Throughout, there are specific instances in which problematizations are explored that work to

answer the research questions—that is, how the purpose of education in Manitoba was conceived and contested, what role public discourse played in this, and how 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects fared in the process.

Before describing each of these three methods in turn, I will describe my theoretical framework and how it informed my research process and analysis. My theoretical framework comprises queer theory, intersectionality, and governmentality. These theories contributed to the development of my research questions, informed my approach to the literature, shaped choice of methods and how I conducted my data collection, and informed analysis. As I detail below, these theories overlap and inform one another in conceptually supportive ways and enabling methodologically sympathetic approaches, including alignments along ontological, epistemological, and axiological lines. Following this description of my theoretical framework and how it informed the research process, I describe the specific methods I used to conduct this research.

Theoretical framework

My theoretical framework for this research comprises three theories informing my analytical strategies: queer theory, intersectionality, and governmentality. In this section, I briefly outline these theories using relevant theorists and articulations of each theory to outline my theoretical orientation within them and explain how they work together to enable the methods and conceptual analyses I employ in this research. These theories were foundational in developing my conceptualization of this research and together they form my orientation towards studying the problematizations of education policy, reform, and 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects in Bill 64. Each of these theories is situated broadly within the critical theory tradition, which centres critiques of social structures, institutions, discourses, and systems of power. Each theory may be situated within poststructuralist paradigmatic understandings that recognize the social and cultural contingency of language and truth claims (Belsey, 2002; Foucault, 1978). There is also a regard for power structures and the ways that dominant, normative discourses exert their regulatory power in social and institutional settings, work to structure social formations, and constitute knowledge practices. My focus on regulatory practices in education reform, policy discourses and problematizations, and on 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects in this research aims to centre questions related to how systemic

oppressions are either perpetuated or alleviated through the provisions of Bill 64. At their core, these theories offer critical perspectives on the research questions to consider how policy discourses and regulatory contexts in education work to constitute subjects, constrain and empower them as agents, construct knowledge, and even locate sites of resistance. In the following pages, I briefly explain my understandings of each theory and identify key conceptual connections to my research.

Queer Theory

Queer theory arose out of a combination of historical factors throughout the 1980s and 1990s. While the term "queer theory" itself is attributed to Teresa de Lauretis, used in 1990 at a conference of the same name (see de Lauretis, 1991), the term *queer* was already being used in activist and political organizing in the 1980s. The reclamation of the term queer, initially having been used as a term of derision, a slur denoting deviant or abnormal sexual identities, became a form of resistance to claim non-normative sexualities and simultaneously enable coalitional building to resist oppressive, discriminatory social attitudes and political stances—notably alongside the galvanizing activism during the HIV/AIDS crisis (McCann & Monaghan, 2020). As de Lauretis (1991) initially articulated it, "the term 'Queer Theory' was arrived at in the effort to avoid all of these fine distinctions in our discursive protocols [regarding identarian politics between 'lesbian and gay' at the time], not to adhere to any one of the given terms, not to assume their ideological liabilities, but instead to transgress and transcend them—or at the very least to problematize them" (p. v). Crucially, queerness did not merely take sexuality as its focus but also gender—or rather, the focus on sexuality was inextricably tied to questions of gender, as Butler (1990, 1993) argued.

Another theoretical and activist tradition of note here, which contributed to the development of queer theory, is feminist theory. Scholars describe the theoretical imbrication of queer theory with feminism—although neither, it is worth noting, are monolithic or singular entities, and I do not intend to suggest they are—emphasizing the indebtedness of queer theory's early articulations to the work of feminist scholars (e.g., McCann & Monaghan, 2020; Sullivan, 2003). Of particular relevance here is Butler's (1990) critique of the gender

binary and her theory of gender performativity, which worked to distinguish between sex and gender, their presumed conflation, and the presumed heterosexualized alignment between them. Butler (1990) theorized that the repetition of social acts or performances of gender over time made gender appear as a natural and essential identity; rather, gender is a contingent social construction reified and naturalized over time through its repetition and referential citationality. This articulation of how sex, gender, and desire exist as separable categories lays the foundation for Butler's (1990) conceptualization of the "heterosexual matrix," wherein the alignment of (female) sex is presumed to correspond with (woman) gender, and as naturally or normatively be attracted to the "opposite" sex (men). In exposing the conflation of sex, gender, and desire (or sexuality), Butler provided a foundational conceptual tool for queer theory in thinking through the imbrication of sexuality and gender; this set the stage in many ways for queer theory to engage in questions of how sexuality interacts with gender, probing the inherent links between essentialized identities, and troubling presumptions of stable (objective) subjectivities. These questions recur throughout various iterations and instantiations of queer theorizing—alongside engagements in the fields of LGBT studies, gender studies, and transgender studies—and they have also been the subject of extensive critiques, particularly by theorists in the field of transgender studies on the grounds of discursive marginalization of (trans)gender identities within queer theory and in neglecting to address intersections of race and class in trans-focused analyses (e.g., Namaste, 2009; Prosser, 2006; Roen, 2006). These have been important critiques that highlight the power of normativity, even within queer communities that attempt to definitionally resist normative impulses. Importantly, queer theory should seek to recognize the connections between gender and sexuality; properly, queer theory's parallel concern needs to challenge heteronormativity and cissexism, and affirm the space accorded questions of gender (including non-binary and transgender identities) under queer theory's umbrella. As such, I take *queer* to refer broadly to people whose gender and sexuality is not essentially "fixed" or as somehow running counter/resistant to normative conceptions regarding sex, gender, sexuality, and the alignment between them.

As later theorists noted, this type of "negative" definition of queerness—i.e., defining queer by what it isn't and avoiding positive statements about what it is—intentionally creates a space wherein stable and essentializing identity categories are resisted, where possibilities are opened, and where expectations and norms regarding sexuality and gender specifically are challenged and subverted (e.g., Butler, 1990; Jagose, 2009; McCann & Monaghan, 2020; Sullivan, 2003). For many queer theorists, this conception of queerness as broadly referring to always-exceeding identity categories meant that queer theory necessarily pushed the boundaries of a range of identity categories and topics. As Love (2011) described it, "queer is not only also about race, class, gender, ethnicity, and nation" but *is also* about a range of topics, such as citizenship, diaspora, disability, globalization, kinship, marginality, neoliberalism, pedagogy, and so on (p. 182). In other words, it is not only queer subjectivities that exceed essentialized identity categories but also the topics or focal points of queer/queering analyses and interventions (Shlasko, 2005). As a result, queer theory has been taken up widely, largely in cultural critique and in theorizing resistance to heteronormativity and gender normativity (Warner, 1993). Its facility in critiquing normative practices, particularly those related to sexuality and gender, have made it adaptable to numerous theoretical interventions that take aim at considering both constructions of romantic, sexual, and gender identities and how social privilege accrues around those sites. The dual possibilities provided by the term "queer" in both claiming an identity and facilitating "queering" interventions became key features of queer theory, as well as sources of ongoing tension and critique among queer theorists (as I discuss below). From its earliest formulations, these two features—a focus on *being* alongside a focus on *doing*—have operated as fundamental tenets of queer theory, and theorists have mobilized queering approaches to challenge and resist normative practices (Jakobsen, 1998); in the most general terms, these are the ways that queer theory has been operationalized.

For this research, I consider it important to orient queer theory through the lens of education and for educational contexts. Specifically, I attempt to articulate how queerness and queer theory have been taken up in the field of education. In the literature review above, I have already touched on some of the ways queer theory

has been taken up in education, but it is worth reiterating that it has been used in numerous ways. Several collections focused specifically on bringing queer theory into conversation with education have been published, including Pinar's (1998) *Queer Theory in Education*, Letts and Sears's (1999) *Queering Elementary Education*, Rodriguez and Pinar's (2007) *Queering Straight Teachers*, and Rodriguez, Mizzi, Allen, and Cover's (2023) recent collection *Queer Studies and Education*. This listing is not exhaustive, but it demonstrates the persistence of the academic conversations engaging with the relevance of queer studies in educational spaces, for schools, and involving queer subjects in a variety of educational contexts. The purpose is to make space for queerness in schools and to recognize the potential, intersections, possibilities, and overlays of queer theory with pedagogy, practice, curriculum, administration, organization, and the various subject positions constituted in and through education. As the anthology titles suggest and their essays emphasize, queer theory has been brought to bear in numerous ways. Queer theory has also been used in studies focused on bringing content into teacher education (e.g., Bellini, 2012; RISE Project, n.d.; Sumara, Davis, & Iftody, 2006) and work focused on various subject areas taught in schools (e.g., Bittner, Ingrey, & Stamper, 2016; Letts & Fifield, 2019; Lundin, 2014; Ryan & Hermann-Wilmarth, 2013). Indigenizing education research has taken up queering approaches as well, recognizing the potential alignments in challenging Eurocentric, colonial knowledges through resistance to and opposition of sexual and gender norms imposed through colonization (e.g., Anderson et al., 2024, develops an Indigiqueering of Manitoba's curriculum in thinking through Two-Spirit and Indigiqueer voices in the classroom; Wilson, 2021, uses queering approaches to explain adaptation to an Indigenous land-based education program). Other work brings queer theory into analyses of policy to consider how policy works to construct 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects, relegate them to certain positionalities in schools, and thereby limit their queer (i.e., always-exceeding, non-normative) identities through the reinforcement of certain discourses and policy positions (e.g., Loutzenheiser, 2015). Queer theory has even been invoked for conversations regarding school safety, recognizing that antibullying and anti-harassment in schools necessarily needs to go beyond merely mitigating harmful individual behaviours and beyond even inclusive approaches that may simply integrate 2SLGBTQIA+ students into

untransformed school environments; addressing HBTP in schools necessitates critiquing normativities, assumptions, and biased attitudes regarding sexuality and gender to interrupt binaristic thinking and expand anti-harassment initiatives (e.g., Campbell & Taylor, 2024; Goldstein et al., 2007a, 2007b; Meyer, 2019). Generally, the uptake of queer theory in education has necessitated a thinking toward the margins in various ways—from reading queerly to giving students voice and authority over their own experiences, from interrupting silence and exclusions to working to consider how queerness can act in central ways to consider learning practices.

On this last point, there is a particular strand of engagement with queer theory for education that has centred the question of pedagogy in ways that question prescriptive practices, subject areas, the surety of knowledge, the knowledge-ignorance binary, and even the "risks" of learning (e.g., Britzman, 1998; Mayo & Rodriguez, 2019; Shlasko, 2005). The application of queer theory in queer pedagogy centres questions of subjectivity and knowledge beyond merely incorporating 2SLGBTQIA+ content, and I explain it briefly because of its facility in bringing queerness into the interrelationship of knowledge and subjectivity. Bryson and de Castell's (1993) early articulation described queer pedagogy in relation to "poststructuralist theories of subjectivity and essentialist constructions of identity" in education (p. 285). They considered queer pedagogy to be action oriented and, seeing that a queer praxis necessarily raised questions about both queer content matter and subjectivities, they conceived of queer pedagogy as "a radical form of educative praxis deliberately intended to interfere with, to intervene in, the production of 'normalcy' in schooled subjects" (p. 285). They recognized that queer pedagogy, then, could refer to education "as carried out *by* lesbian and gay educators, to curricula and environments designed *for* gay and lesbian students, to education for everyone *about* queers, to something altogether different" (p. 298). Britzman (1995) advanced a more theoretical conceptualization of queer pedagogy, relying on psychoanalytic theory to probe the inextricable link between subject formation (what Britzman refers to as the "self," employing psychoanalytic terminology) and knowledge. Britzman argues that knowledge and ignorance are not oppositional or binary but rather mutually implicate one (p. 154), and this

contributes to the way that subjects are formed and come to "know." The central question for Britzman in this is how (valid) knowledge is constructed in and by discursive systems of normalcy that set boundaries about what is knowable, what is suitable knowledge, and by extension what knowledge and ways of knowing are excluded; at core, the queering action of pedagogy focuses on "the production of knowledge, ignorance, and subjects who presume to know" and seeks to trouble the learning sites where these discursive practices occur. Importantly, learning subjects are constituted by knowledge, and by what is considered to be knowable, but also as being able to resist knowledge and simultaneously strive to know beyond the discursive borders of knowledge, to think the "unthinkable" (p. 161). The important thing to note here is that the "knowing subject" is constituted within the discursive practices of learning/reading and knowledge, but that in the process the self is also "at risk" in learning. For Britzman (1995), knowledge and subjectivity are bound together, and the knowing subject has an ethical responsibility to their own learning practices that also necessitates resisting "normal" constructions of knowledge, questioning what is knowable, in order to develop a social imaginary outside the dominant order. Britzman's contribution to queer pedagogy brings into focus the discursive character of education that implicates both the actors (i.e., the subjectivity of students and teachers) and actions (i.e., teaching and learning), but also the subject matter itself (i.e., knowledge and ignorance, thinking the unthinkable, resisting knowledge). In other words, Britzman draws attention to the discursive nature of education, one that has its own normative regimes of dominant or valid knowledge (and by extension what is excluded from knowing), and advances a notion of queer pedagogy that offers the possibility of resisting conformity and assimilation in that system.

These questions continue to feature in theoretical discussions of queer pedagogy with some important additions. For instance, Luhmann (1998) argued that queer pedagogy offers possibilities for studying the risks of normalization, its own practices, and its subversive potential to go beyond "inclusive," assimilationist strategies of merely incorporating queer content or the normalization of 2SLGBTQIA+ identities, and enable inquiries into "conditions that make learning possible or prevent learning" (1998, p. 130). As queer pedagogy seeks to queer teaching and learning processes, particularly in challenging normative assumptions embedded in educational

practice, there is a risk that queer pedagogy itself will fall into normative patterns (say, a queer normativity) that make it a static and fixed pedagogy; this extends even to the inclusive/assimilationist pressure for 2SLGBTQIA+ or queer students to conform to normative sexualities and gender identities/expressions in schools (Mayo & Rodriguez, 2019). Rather, there is a "constant need to encourage queer interruptions, even as queer interruptions themselves continue to shift and change" (Mayo & Rodriguez, 2019, p. 2).

Here again, we see the always-exceeding character of queerness being expressed as a core component of queer theory. McCann and Monaghan (2020) suggest that this indefinability takes on a definitional quality in and of itself, both in terms of queer subjectivity and for queering approaches to push beyond (static) boundaries of knowledge, disciplines, and so on. Queer theory offers adaptability through this way of thinking, as it "takes on varied shapes, risks, ambitions, and ambivalences in various contexts" (Berlant & Warner, 1995, p. 344). Cohen (1997) similarly outlines the importance of these contextual characteristics:

> Within different contexts various characteristics of our total being—for example, race, gender, class, sexuality—are highlighted or called upon to make sense of a particular situation. However, my concern is centered on those individuals who consistently activate only one characteristic of their identity… to organize their politics, rejecting any recognition of the multiple and intersecting systems of power that largely dictate our life chances. (p. 440)

Along these lines, we can see that queer theory contains the inherent potential to recognize that different characteristics of our being impact the ways that we interact with the others and understand our social contexts, and it is precisely these complex and varied contexts that call for approaches that go beyond a single perspective to recognize the intersecting systems of power—and these importantly also involve race, disability, class, and dominant policy discourses, such as neoliberalism (e.g., Mizzi & Walton, 2024). There is a clear alignment with intersectionality here, which I explore further shortly.

There is one further connection to highlight in Britzman's articulation of queer pedagogy, and in the subsequent ways queerness has been taken up in education: its connection to discourse. Foucault's (1978)

articulation of sexuality as a discourse, which has been regarded as a foundational premise for queer theory, importantly articulated problematics about how discourse functions as a regime of truth to normatively construct dominant notions of valid sexualities through institutional expertise, emphasizing the socially constructed nature of knowledge, its connection to power (and power's diffuse character), and its role in constituting subjects. It is worth noting that Foucault's understanding of "truth" suggests that truth claims are necessarily contingent, situational, historicized, and linked to subjectivity through the knowledge-power conjunction—a crucial point for Foucault that again emphasizes the link between queer pedagogy and its description of the discursive nature of knowledge and its link to subjectivity. Importantly, as Foucault describes, in the current mode of political organization, discourses come to take on something of a regulatory character, which he links to a form of population governance that he describes as *biopower* (in contrast to power's disciplinary character, which works at the level of the individual), linked to the rapid expansion of "techniques for achieving the subjugation of bodies and the control of populations" (1978, p. 140). This, I note only briefly here, serves as the foundation for Foucault's later development of governmentality (Foucault, 1980b, 2007, 2008). While I discuss this in more detail below, for now, I simply want to make explicit the connection between the ways that queerness has been deployed in education (specifically in regards to how queer theory has been articulated and practiced in queer pedagogy, and the related ways in which knowledge implicates subjects and offers opportunities to question what is "knowable") and to Foucault's concept of discourse and the regulatory character of discourse (i.e., its linkages to the construction of subjectivity and mechanisms of power, the emergence of biopower as a myriad complex of techniques for regulating populations).

Queer theory, then, in my understanding engages with both the shifting signifier of queer subjectivity and the ability to challenge normative conceptions of knowledge, how it is formed, where its boundaries lie (and how to transgress them), and the normative conventions that arise to construct "valid" knowledge. In this research, I describe myself as adopting a queer orientation to the subject of this research. That is, using Ahmed's (2006) *Queer Phenomenology*, I work to orientate a queer position in relation to policy; the emergent challenge

to queer theory articulates a tension between the always-exceeding bounds of both identity and knowledge, and the seeming incoherence of working to establish "queer identity," while also challenging the normativizing stability of knowledge constructions (e.g., McMann & Monaghan, 2020). In these ways, my understanding and application of queer theory is largely informed by how it has been taken up in educational literature (e.g., Britzman, 1995; Loutzenheiser, 2015; Mayo & Rodriguez, 2019). This allows, importantly, for a consideration of how queer identities are formed as subjectivities and how queering constructions of knowledge, seeking to push beyond the stable "knowable" conceptions we inhabit, enable a challenging of policy's problematizations. For this research, I take on this queer orientation toward education policy, reform efforts, and the discursive construction of 2SLGBTQIA+ subjectivities in and through education's regulatory contexts; queer theory provides a lens to consider how queer subjects are constituted in education and, more specifically, through the policy contexts and policy discourses that exert regulatory power on 2SLGBTQIA+ subjectivities and draws bounds around how 2SLGBTQIA+ content is recognized and treated as knowledge. Importantly, queer theory also provides a means to consider the normative character of policy discourses themselves (even when they do not name 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects), their historical patterns and developments, the contingencies that have become reified as "correct" or valid in the context of education—as well as a rationale for looking at the construction of a policy problem beyond its articulated purpose to investigate what events, actors, motivations, and effects surround the policy itself and how we make sense of policy within those intersections.

Intersectionality Theory

While I see queer theory as providing a means both of centring questions of queer subjects and to provoke queering interventions for policy, there have been important critiques regarding the ways that *queer* has been invoked and applied. For instance, the ideal of queerness as an always-exceeding signifier has not, in practice, always been successfully enacted. There have been numerous, sustained critiques of how historical treatments of queerness have constituted queer subjectivities as "unmarked categories" of difference—effectively, constructing queer subjects as white, cisgender, male, able-bodied, complicit with neoliberalism and

consumer capitalism, and tied to nationalist citizenship and Eurocentric epistemologies (Barnard, 1999; Duggan, 2003; Ferguson, 2004; Lakhani, 2020; Lenon & Dryden, 2015; Puar, 2007; Sullivan, 2003). Speaking specifically about queer racialized subjects, Barnard (1999) argued that "the construction of sexuality is usually treated separately from the construction of race, as if each figuration of subjectivity could develop independently of the other" (p. 200), and the effect of neglecting to attend to racialization is that the queer subject is "white-washed." In other words, focusing only on "queer" subjects (or taking non-normative sexualities as a single-issue focus) has resulted in scholarship that has neglected to attend to differences *within* queer communities and *among* queer subjects, inadvertently constructing a normativized queer subject that is assumed to be white, non-disabled, cisgender, man/male, and so on. While some queer theorists, as I noted above, treat queerness as necessarily being not only about *queerness* but also "about race, class, gender, ethnicity, and nation" (Love, 2011, p. 182), there has been a substantial engagement with the concept of intersectionality to acknowledge these critiques and seek to attend to differences and multiple marginalization within queer constituencies.

Intersectionality as a concept has been attributed to legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989, 1991) as a way to analyze how race, gender, and class—and later, how additional aspects of social identities—function as marginalizing, interlocking social formations; more concretely, intersectionality analyses seek to understand how the discourses of institutional structures operate in oppressive ways. While Crenshaw was the first to use the term "intersectionality," the idea that multiply marginalized persons experienced overlapping, compounding, or interlocking forms of oppressions had already been articulated by women of colour, including Pauli Murray in the mid-1960s and 1970s (as McCann & Monaghan, 2020, explain), the Combahee River Collective's statement (1977), Audre Lorde in her seminal essay "Age, Race, Class, and Sex" (1984), and bell hooks's critiques of white feminism (1984). Crenshaw's (1989, 1991) description of intersectionality was rooted in Black feminism and critical race theory, and she argued that the experiences of Black women were not adequately represented by single-issue feminist and antiracist theorizing, positing that experiences of oppression and discrimination for Black women could not be separated along lines of race or gender independent of one another. Central in her

initial formulation of the concept, Crenshaw (1989) described how institutionalized discourses of the law, particularly anti-discrimination law, marginalized Black women and their experiences of workplace discrimination by disregarding how marginalization based on race complicated discrimination based on gender, and vice versa; or, to put a finer point on it, how laws prohibiting discrimination based on sex neglected race and how laws prohibiting discrimination based on race neglected sex. In her 1991 article, Crenshaw further articulated this conceptualization of intersectionality by applying an intersectional analysis to "resistance discourses," such as feminism and anti-racism, to understand how these discourses worked to produce and legitimize marginalization within their own resistance movements. Since Crenshaw's initial articulation, intersectionality has been taken up in many areas of research, scholarship, and social criticism to analyze how other forms of social privilege and oppression beyond race and gender—such as age, class, disability, nationality, language proficiency, sexual orientation, and even further articulations of gender for trans, non-binary, and gender nonconforming persons—work in oppressive ways both in structural and institutional discourses *and* in discourses of anti-oppression and resistance (e.g., feminism, antiracism, queer/trans advocacy; see Carbado et al., 2013; Carbado, 2019; Collins, 2015; Steinmetz, 2020).

Because of intersectionality's ability to highlight the limitations of "single-issue" advocacy, it is able to attend to the ways in which many anti-oppression discourses neglect the needs of multiply marginalized people. This goes beyond mere performative instantiations of intersectionality that simply provide a summative list of possible oppressions or marginalizations to which researchers purport to attend, much like the listings that I have provided at several points in this research—that is, marginalizations based on sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, cissexism, race, class or socioeconomic status, disability, colonialism, and so on. These superficial listings have the potential to acknowledge without follow through, enacting very little in the way of actual analyses or attention to the interlocking nature of social oppressions, that result simply in an expansion of identity categories acknowledged under a single-identity-based approach (Collins, 2019). However, Crenshaw did not theorize intersectionality as a mere tool for identarian politics but as having the ability to understand

structural features of resistance organizing; she viewed intersectionality specifically as "a way of mediating the tension between assertions of multiple identities and the ongoing necessity of group politics" (1991, p. 1296). In other words, intersectionality sets out to recognize and validate difference, multiple identities, and their material implications *within* larger resistance discourses, as well as in the various dominant systems and institutions that structure our social lives. Collins (2019) described four main guiding premises upon which intersectionality rests:

> (1) Race, class, gender, and similar systems of power are interdependent and mutually construct one another. (2) Intersecting power relations produce complex, interdependent social inequalities of race, class, gender, sexuality, nationality, ethnicity, ability, and age. (3) The social location of individuals and groups within intersecting power relations shapes their experiences within and perspectives on the social world. (4) Solving social problems within a given local, regional, national, or global context requires intersectional analyses. (p. 48)

Collins explains that these premises reflect a paradigmatic shift in how thinking about intersectionality might inform intersectional theorizing, resulting in the centring of six core concepts: relationality, power, social inequality, social context, complexity, and social justice. These core concepts "provide tools for mapping the specific content of intersectional knowledge" (p. 49).

Building on these insights and responding to critiques of queer theory's normativizing effects, researchers have implemented intersectionality in work focusing on queer topics, seeing it as providing "a means of challenging queer theory's seemingly singular focus on sexuality in order to think more broadly about the 'queer' and the social" (McCann & Monaghan, 2020, p. 5). These applications offer opportunities to push beyond a singular focus on sexuality in order to attend to marginalizations along multiple axes of race, gender, class, and so on, and then to acknowledge and respond to the interlocking nature of their constructions (e.g., Cohen, 1997; Cho et al., 2013; Eng et al., 2005; Harper et al., 1997; Massaquoi, 2015); these approaches offer opportunities to resist the normativizing implications of a singular focus on sexuality and its production of normatively queer subjects. Intersectional queer analyses are increasingly common in research attending to 2SLGBTQIA+-inclusive

education, specifically in analyzing the multiple marginalization of 2SLGBTQIA+ subjectivities in schools, such as queer students of colour, queer students with disabilities, gender nonconforming or non-binary students, or those marginalized even within what we might call mainstream queer advocacy like bisexual/pansexual students (e.g., Airton, 2013; Airton et al., 2019; Duke, 2011; Elia, 2014; Lapointe, 2017; Marquez & Brockenbrough, 2013; McCready, 2004a, 2004b; Robinson, 2014). As Cho et al. (2013) describe, "what makes an analysis intersectional… is its adoption of an intersectional way of thinking about the problem of sameness and difference and its relation to power" (p. 795). This regard for intersectionality necessitates the recognition that oppression is not monolithic, that relations of power are diffuse and operate across social identities and positionalities. In short, interlocking systems of oppression connect across heteronormativity, cisnormativity, racism, colonialism, classism, and disability (e.g., Asher, 2007; Bartone, 2019; Brockenbrough, 2015; Duke, 2011; Kokozos & Gonzalez, 2020; Kumashiro, 2001, 2002; McCready, 2004a, 2004b; Wilson, 2015). Analyses that seek to take anti-oppression education need to take this into account.

It is worth reiterating that intersectionality analyses have implications beyond identity-based politics and beyond thinking about multiple marginalization for individuals. They offer opportunities to help recognize intersecting oppressions in institutional settings and collective organizing—and this provides opportunities to interrogate how those intersections limit, provide access to, and enable power, including the ability to recognize that heternormativity is not separate from white supremacy, institutional and systemic racism, colonization, patriarchy, or neoliberalism but interacts with these forms of oppression (e.g., Cohen, 1997). Chan et al. (2019) argue that queer theory and intersectionality theory are often confused or conflated in educational research, often because they both seek to investigate and understand power relations and social inequities, and they set out to distinguish between these theories as providing separate research paradigms. For this attempt, they articulated queer theory as primarily focusing on "disrupting the restrictions associated with binaries and identity categories" (p. 59) and described its focus on deconstructing identity categories "as misguided illusory social constructions of power rather than as identity markers associating lived experiences" (p. 64); they go on to

describe intersectionality theory as involving "an examination of social identities (e.g., race, sexuality, gender identity) and intersections" (p. 59), with a more specific focus on systemic and structural factors in highlighting "linkages between social identities or linkages between forms of oppression (e.g., racism, genderism, heterosexism)" (p. 64). While this distinction, I think, unnecessarily limits the scope of queer theory, it does usefully highlight the potential complementarity of queer theory and intersectionality (e.g., Kumashiro's, 2002, *Troubling Education: Queer Activism and Antioppressive Pedagogy* offers an exemplar of how these approaches may be usefully enacted in concert). Most usefully, however, the distinction Chan et al. (2019) make between queer theory and intersectionality theory provides a specific pathway for attending to the institutional, structural, and systemic manifestations of inequity. Bringing intersectionality theory into this research provides an avenue to consider how queer subjectivities may be read in and through policy, its discourses, the wider regulatory context of education, and the public discourses regarding education policy—both in explicit mentions of 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects and content and in how they are structurally implicated through interlocking systems of oppression (such as racism, cissexism, genderism, classism, colonialism, etc.). In other words, intersectionality provides a theoretical and analytic lens to attend to the structural and systemic nature of oppression in considering how 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects are constituted in education policy—and the particular ways that these policy discourses are tied up with race, ethnicity, colonization, nationality, class, and disability; queerness is not separable from these other forms of oppression, and to attend to queerness necessitates attending to interlocking systems of oppression along multiple axes in different contexts surrounding specific policies.

Governmentality

Governmentality emerged out of the later work of Foucault (1980b, 2007, 2008) and is particularly indebted to his conceptualization of biopower (articulated in *The History of Sexuality*, 1978, and more fully in *Security, Territory, Population*, 2007, and *The Birth of Biopolitics*, 2008; see Lemke, 2013) and his grappling with the sum of his genealogy researches (1980b). Governmentality conceptually centres the question of government and, specifically, the *how* of government—"how to be governed, by whom, to what extent, to what ends, and by

what methods" (Foucault, 2007, p. 89). The term *government*, it is worth noting at the outset, does not simply refer to governance by the state or nation, but rather is used to "designate the way in which the *conduct* of individuals or of groups might be directed" (Foucault, 2002, cited in Sokhi-Bulley, 2014). At root, governmentality is Foucault's attempt to grapple with the problem of government, to consider how it operates, its productive deployments and organizing principles. This problem of government emerged for Foucault in thinking about the emergence, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, of disciplinary power through the rational processes involved in the development of knowledge and the institutionalizing of knowledge in and through scientific discourses—a concern for which is reflected in his genealogical works on the development of knowledge in the areas of madness (1988), discipline (1977a), and sexuality (1978). In this way, we can see how disciplinary power is characterized by "the effects of the centralising powers which are linked to the institution and functioning of an organized scientific discourse" (Foucault, 1978b, p. 84), resulting in relations of power and its effects through the discursive constructions of norms through the familiar Foucauldian knowledge/power construction. Until this point, juridical power in the form of the right of sovereignty—a more consolidated form of governing through "law, rule, or sovereign will" (Foucault, 1978b, p. 106)—dominated. Foucault (1978b) saw these two forms of power as employing completely separate mechanisms, one operating on the level of law and the other on the level of the norm. These norms, importantly, are constituted through a process he refers to as *normalization*, by which he means the process through which the norm is established, which is reliant on knowledge constructed by scientific discourses; Foucault uses the term normalization specifically in reference to biopower and its particular regard for (the regulation of) populations[10]—not individual subjects. To distinguish the operation of disciplinary power on the individual level, Foucault uses the term *normation* to describe "the process of bringing subjects into conformity with a pre-determined norm" (Ball, 2013, p. 155). Disciplinary power, then, operates on

[10] Population, in Foucault's usage, refers "not simply to 'people' but phenomena and variables, such as birth rate, mortality rate and marriage statistics… [and] thus encompasses the whole field of 'the social', a phrase which describes the network of social relationships and the site at which political power operates" (Sokhi-Bulley, 2014).

the level of the norm, manifesting as *discipline* for individual subjects—i.e., individual bodies, the "anatomo-politics of the human body"—and as *regulation* at the level of populations—i.e., the social body, or the "species-body" that comprises the "biopolitics[11] of the population" (Foucault, 1978, p. 139). Succinctly, "the disciplines of the body and the regulations of the population constituted the two poles around which the organization of power over life [biopower] was deployed" (Foucault, 1978, p. 139).

The crucial question for Foucault in observing the monumental shift from the sole juridical power of sovereignty to diffuse disciplinary power is *how* the mechanisms of power work to govern through specific government mechanisms and tactics. Here, the shift in the general strategy of power is most readily situated in biopower, as I described above, and the regulation of populations through various systems and discourses through population-level variables regarding public health, epidemiology, mortality rates, sexuality, fertility rates and procreation, education systems, economies and production, and so on; on the level of individual subjects, disciplinary power encourages individual subjects to freely, willingly participate in the process of governing themselves, to self-discipline through a regard for their own conduct and to conduct themselves along the lines laid out by the discursive formations of knowledge that denote the normal (Foucault, 1977a; Simons & Masschelein, 2006). This focus on "conduct," as Sokhi-Bulley (2014) explained, provides the most concise definition of "governmentality" as the "conduct of conducts," or "the regulation (conduct) of behaviors (conducts)." Generally, governmentality enables for a close analysis of how biopolitics of the population works through and enacts disciplinary power through the government of the self by enlisting subjects as willing participants to be governed (Huff, 2020; Lemke, 2013; Simons & Masschelein, 2006; Sokhi-Bulley, 2014). More broadly, Foucault describes governmentality as referring to three things. First, "the ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, calculations, and tactics that allow the exercise of this very

[11] Foucault uses the term biopolitics to refer to the more political expression of biopower. For the sake of clarity in this explanation, I have generally used biopower to explain how governmentality relates population with power relations; I use biopolitics to refer to the specific political enactments of biopower in government.

specific, albeit very complex, power that has the population as its target" (Foucault, 2007, p. 108). Second, Foucault describes his understanding of "the tendency, the line of force, that for a long time, and throughout the West, has constantly led towards the pre-eminence over all other types of power—sovereignty, discipline, and so on—of the type of power that we can call 'government' and which has led to the development of a series of specific governmental apparatuses… and to the development of a series of knowledges" (p. 108). Finally, Foucault argued that by governmentality "we should understand the process, or rather, the result of the process by which the state of justice… became the administrative state… and was gradually 'governmentalized'" (pp. 108–109). Across these three understandings, there is a dual regard for (1) the practical mechanisms or apparatuses of power relations and (2) a way of thinking about how governing happens. Gordon (1991) succinctly described this by emphasizing Foucault's neologistic construction of the term—government and rationality—which highlights a regard for both the process of governing, its practices and tactics, and the rationalization of government, or a way of thinking about how governing happens (p. 3). This opens up a wide array of inquiries into the process of government and its power relations, not merely for thinking about formal state structures but also in thinking through the specific mechanisms and diverse practices of social institutions, including education systems, the economy, family, religion, and so on; accordingly, governmentality treats power as productive and reflective of the network of social relations that comprise government. Governmentality, in short, offers a way to think through government as "an assemblage of diverse elements, practices, and ways of thinking coming together to both frame and resolve problems" (Huff, 2020), generally founded on considerations related to order, organization, and discipline (Burchell et al., 1991).

Governmentality offers a useful conceptual approach to analyzing education policy and reform that has had widespread uptake in the field (e.g., Bacchi, 1999; Ball, 2013; Besley & Peters, 2007; Brass, 2015; Christie, 2006; Kaščák & Pupala, 2011; Kivinen & Rinne, 1998; Ozga, 2008; Peters, 2001, 2009, 2014; Peters et al., 2009;

Simons & Masschelein, 2006; Tikly, 2003)[12]. Offering a specific lens to consider how schools are organized and the power relations involved in their governance, governmentality has a certain utility in considering discourses, the regulatory character of education, and neoliberalism in educational contexts and, more specifically, in education policy, including the role of policy actors as agents of government (e.g., Ball, 2013; Besley & Peters, 2007; Simons & Masschelein, 2006). As Bacchi (1999) explains, "there is a direct connection between governmentality and problematization" that links governmental action through its structuring of problems to produce social and political outcomes, notably liberal outcomes (p. 47). Foucault's regard for government included a vital focus on the idea of freedom, specifically in relation to liberal political philosophy, and the reliance on the "capacities of free acting subjects" as a key factor in government (Besley & Peters, 2007)—thus, the importance of disciplinary power in enlisting self-governing subjects. The focus of much of Foucault's (2008) lectures on *The Birth of Biopolitics* (1978–1979 lectures) trace the development of government rationality in liberal contexts (and extend into consideration of early constructions of neoliberal ones), making the argument that the notion of individualistic freedom inherent in liberalism (as a political formulation) necessitates "the frugality of government" (p. 28–29); in other words, liberal political formations require government actions need to be limited, kept to a minimum as much as possible, to ensure it does not overstep, act too much, or infringe on the individual liberties of its citizens. One of the key ways government attempts to act "frugally" is by relying on norms—through statistical population-level data, through disciplinary processes and discourses—to guide appropriate interventions. With the onset of neoliberalist political formations in the second half of the 20th century, the invocation of the economy and economic action increasingly justified and bolstered its decisions to act and as a guiding principle for public policy. This has led to specific utility in analyses that focus on

[12] It is worth noting that several authors note initial uptake of governmentality was primarily among English-speaking and "Western" countries (e.g., Donzelot & Gordon, 2009; Simons & Masschelein, 2006), although its use has been spreading (e.g., Kaščák & Pupala, 2011; Kivinen & Rinne, 1998; Lemke, 2013). The effects of globalization have introduced a further layer to these conversations, particularly in the context of the spreading influence of neoliberalism (Donzelot & Gordon, 2009; Peters, 2014).

neoliberalism through a governmentality lens, linking social and political government to questions of economic rationality (e.g., Ball, 2013; Janzen & Heringer, 2023; Kaščák & Pupala, 2011; Peters, 2014). Brass (2015) argued that governmentality perspectives help researchers "recognise the ideas and practices that education policies have mobilised to steer… teachers' conduct towards specific norms, values and ends" (p. 10). Further, governmentality offers particular utility to "study the rationalities and technologies of education reform by analysing a range of educational texts, such as state and national curriculum documents, policy briefs and speeches, testing materials, opinion-editorials on education and the educational writing of for-profit and non-profit groups (e.g. OECD, Pearson, McKinsey, Deloitte) that comprise transnational policy networks in education" (p. 10). Brass's description of governmentality's facility aligns with my own research objective and approaches, but more importantly it outlines specific locations and technologies of governmentality in education as sites where the rationalities, discourses, knowledge formations, and power might be analyzed—including wider recognition of educational networks (or policyscapes). For instance, Ball (2013) introduces several of these techniques in his analysis of the histories of education policy specifically through the lens of their exclusions, centring race and the question of blood to consider the regulatory and normativizing character of policies, and then expanding his analysis to consider questions of neoliberalism. Governmentality theoretically frames questions related to how government operates, its power relations and the specific techniques and mechanisms of these operations, providing clear linkages to undertake analyses related to the regulatory contexts of education reform. These framings offer productive framings for my research focus on Bill 64 and the discursive constructions of 2SLGBTQIA+ subjectivities, treatments of 2SLGBTQIA+ content, and how public discourse contributes to and influences education reform efforts.

The uses of theory

The usefulness of this theoretical framework can be articulated in a number of ways. First, it is worth noting that even the selection of my research problem and formation of my research questions has been influenced through these theories. In deciding to study Bill 64—and committing to that research agenda even

after the bill had been withdrawn—I considered the project to be positioned in rather queer ways. What was the point of studying an education reform effort that never actually came to pass? Why was it important to consider a piece of legislation that was widely regarded as problematic and even harmful to the education system? In sitting with these questions, I recognized there was an opportunity to bring a critical analysis of the bill forward that centred not only the policy agenda represented by Bill 64 but also to consider public discourses that opposed the bill during that period. I came to think of this as a postmortem of the bill, dead and gone but its legacy lingering, and this was an attempt to understand how it died and what its fatal flaws were, and even an attempt to understand how the policy priorities forwarded in the bill represented potential future reform efforts and what their rationalities were. However, it was also something of a queer attempt to consider a future not realized, a path abandoned, an impending educational future narrowly avoided through collective response. This, to me, was an intriguing idea.

However, over the course of Bill 64's life, there was also such widespread discussion about education itself that it seemed an opportunity to consider what education means to people—or, to put it somewhat differently, how is the "problem" of education generally viewed? The representation of education in the bill and in Bill 64 was a contested vigorously between March and September 2021, and those conversations emphasized to me that attending merely to my own research question in the bill—that is, looking at how Bill 64 constituted 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects—was insufficient to understanding the problem. Queer theory furnishes just such an effort to consider the normative influences, discourses, and impositions of the bill, as well as considering the exertions of institutional power, subject positions, resistance, and possibilities beyond my initial concerns. Further, given the widespread contestation regarding Bill 64's purported rationale and justification by government—that Manitoba's education system was characterized by high spending and low student achievement, and the solutions for that were located in the Commission Review's recommendations—I recognized that there was an attempt to govern through a reform to the regulation of the education system and by working to shift educational norms, subject positions, and understandings of the problem of education. Governmentality

provided a clear theoretical application to consider questions related to government rationality, how government decided to operate in order to manage populations, the invocation of certain discourses to do so, and how the "population" reacted in response. Intersectionality relevantly highlighted the importance of considering the bill beyond a single-issue lens and attempt to understand interlocking systems of oppression and power relations in the bill, in public responses, and throughout the research. These concerns factored into data collection and analyses of results as well, foregrounding the interconnectedness of education's regulation, purpose, and notions of the public.

As my research centred questions regarding education policy and education reform in order to look at the discursive constructions of 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects in schools, this theoretical framework provided analytic and interpretive lenses to the problem. For instance, I had already begun formulation of my understanding of policy as related to problematizations and conceptualizations of policy as both text and discourse. Foucauldian notions of discourse, rooted in poststructuralist perspectives, appear variously across these theoretical areas and highlight a regard for power relations, institutional structures, and social inequities. While intersectionality makes the least use of discourse in its conceptualization, it importantly recognizes how interlocking systems of oppression, such as racism, cissexism, classism, and heteropatriarchy, inflect social and political decision-making. This, for me, brought a crucial lens to ensure I was considering conceptualizations of "queer subjects" beyond normatively singular or unitary concerns—as well as providing a way to identify how other oppressions or normative formulations interlocked with 2SLGBTQIA+-related oppressions. Governmentality provided a lens to consider government action—conceived more broadly than a top-down state-centred government—in terms of the operations of power relations not only through Bill 64 but diffusely throughout the regulatory systems of education; this concern linked to consideration of the biopolitical regulation of populations and how subjects were enlisted through the education reform policy process. Through governmental announcements and public discourse responding to the bill, the public not only resisted attempts to make them complicit in the reform, but also seized their subject positions (constituted in, through, and by education policy discourses) to collectively

organize—as teachers, as parents, as educators, as rural residents, and so on. This public reception of Bill 64 was largely oppositional, representing a form of resistance within the policy discourses of the reform and intelligible through governmentality, a site of policy contestation (to borrow Ozga's language). The power relations involved here are complex and my theoretical framework provided lenses through which to undertake analyses that attended to the bigger picture and the finer points, while also providing a means of looking outward and beyond the immediate situation to the extremities of power and interlocking oppressions in the bill. Both queer theory and governmentality provided theoretical grounding in utilizing methods to consider policy discourses, problematizations, and genealogies—allowing for framing questions regarding how knowledge about education and the regulation of this knowledge is constructed over time through policy, its implementation, and through its reading and reception by the public.

The usefulness of these theories in forming my critical approach to this research and analysis, however, is not without its limitations. For instance, in recognizing the potential for critical frameworks to create tunnel-vision or potential hidden areas in my analysis, I wanted to find ways to allow this research to surface unexpected or unanticipated outcomes. In an attempt to hold a degree of openness to unexpected results emerging from the research process, I looked to a critical grounded theory approach to supplement the theoretical framework for this research. While I recognize and ardently align with the idea that research is not an objective enterprise, I also recognize that relying too heavily on critical, theoretical, and conceptual constructions has the potential to limit what research is able to accomplish—and, importantly, it is necessary to acknowledge that and seek ways to compensate for those potential limitations. A critical grounded theory approach deviates from classical conceptualizations of grounded theory, which adopt objectivist/positivist paradigms regarding social reality and demand that researchers ignore other theoretical or research literature prior to data collection (e.g., Glaser & Strauss, 1967/2012). In contrast, critical grounded theory "has the potential to navigate between the positivist and radical constructivist positions within grounded theory because it focuses on the human perspective *and* on the structures, processes, and social relations that shape events and outcomes" through

critically informed research that seeks to operationalize theories and enact change (Timonen et al., 2018, p. 3; see also Oliver, 2012). Critical grounded theory aims to identify critical observations and experiences of critical issues prior to commencement of a study, ultimately to strengthen the research, centre critical approaches, and achieve emancipatory goals. Grounded theory is generally regarded as a methodology that is well suited to developing or constructing theory inductively through analysis of research data; however, as Timonen et al. (2018) argue, critical grounded theory does not necessarily require development of an entirely new theory from research data, but rather it is particularly well suited "to achieving greater conceptual clarity and to the refinement and reconstruction of existing theory" (p. 3).

Queer policy researchers in education emphasize the importance of recognizing the difference between paradigmatic approaches in the study of policy—whether more technical/objectivist or critical/poststructuralist (e.g., Duarte, 2020; Lugg & Murphy, 2014). Approaches that are grounded in positivist/objectivist approaches centre evidence-based data and generally treat policy problems as a given based on what the "objective" data describes. However, this neglects to take into account the inherent subjectivity of data collection or the experiences of those marginalized by dominant social positionalities through normativizing discourses—such as heteronormativity, cisnormativity, white supremacy, classism, and ableism (e.g., Brockenbrough, 2015; Duarte, 2020; Kokozos & Gonzalez, 2020; Lugg & Murphy, 2014; Marquez & Brockenbrough, 2013; McCready, 2004a; Snider, 1996). Duarte (2020) in particular discusses the challenges of conducting policy research that addresses both the macrosocial and microsocial policy contexts—which may be seen as mapping onto these two separate paradigmatic approaches—and argues that a multifocal policy research approach that adopts a critical queer commitment must take both into account; Duarte specifically advocates for a mix of quantitative and qualitative methodologies to address this gap and challenge the marginalization of critical voices in policy research. While I do not employ a quantitative methodology, I attempt to provide analytic space for a multifocal approach in my methodological orientation toward critical grounded theory in my critical policy discourse analysis. Lugg and Murphy (2014) advocate strongly for queer approaches to policy that fall within the realm of qualitative

research, as they argue these methodologies are better suited to developing critical insights that are not possible in quantitative research (because quantitative research often specifically focuses on outcomes-based measures and student achievement). Rather, Lugg and Murphy (2014) argue that qualitative methods pay critical attention to the needs of marginalized students and point out that these efforts need to motivate education policy reform efforts: "reform will need a whimsical queering of decidedly non-queer school policy" (2014, p. 1197). To further nuance this methodological blend, it is worth noting that intersectionality in policy studies is a relatively recent and underdeveloped area but that it is "increasingly recognized as an innovative approach for understanding the differential impacts of policy on diverse populations" (Hankivsky & Jordan-Zachery, 2019, p. 2). Given the "the exclusionary nature of traditional methods of policy," and particularly the ways in which policy problems and populations are addressed by and through policy, intersectionality provides a lens to understand not only the functioning of the state, but also "who is left behind as a result of existing structures and policies [and] how the policy-targeted groups are not simply responding but asserting their autonomy and power" in response to policy regimes (Hankivsky & Jordan-Zachery, 2019).

As I noted above, I recognize a certain affinity between intersectionality and queer theory because of queer theory's insistence on pushing beyond stable or fixed boundaries of knowledge and identity—and I see potential to push this boundary for policy studies as well. While much of the methodological work involving intersectionality is in the early years of development and predominantly focuses on considering the outcomes or effects of policy on multiply marginalized people, there is a recognition that intersectionality analyses of policy must attend to the process, content, and outcomes of policy according to critical analysis. It is also worth noting that the general approach to policymaking, which often takes a single "problem" as its focus and sets out to develop a single-issue solution to it, is often unable to consider intersectionality or multiple, interlocking social oppressions, due to policy's isolated articulation of the problem. As a result, I anticipated that my analysis may be limited in its ability to address intersectionality and, in some ways, it was; however, in applying an intersectionality lens in my analysis, I was able to identify certain patterns in which the complex, multiple, and

interlocking systems of oppression worked within Bill 64 across categories of social inequity. While my intention here was to operationalize intersectionality in my analysis by considering how 2SLGBTQIA+ subjectivities were represented and then to identify places where 2SLGBTQIA+ language also included reference to Indigeneity, race, SES/class, and/or disability. I also considered locations where 2SLGBTQIA+ content appeared in policy documents and in public response to Bill 64, and whether responses to the bill included content addressing intersectionality. While this produced limited results, I saw it as an opportunity to further develop potential insights in the area of intersectional policy studies and provoke opportunities to consider more deeply how policy studies may usefully engage intersectionality in policymaking and implementation. While these insights may be limited (findings discuss this further), an approach that attempts to take seriously the potential of offering insights into the effect of policy discourses on 2SLGBTQIA+ people is vitally important. As Loutzenheiser (2015) argued:

> Queer theory offers a lens through which to interrogate normativity and identity constructions in policy discourses, particularly discourses that rely on coherent understandings of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender presentation…. In policy terms, questioning the procedural effects of singular and fixed identity constructs can be utilized to better understand how gender and the intersecting realities of race, sexuality and class, limit the lives of those to whom they are applied and perhaps the policies attempted on their behalf. (p. 103)

Centrally, analyzing these policy discourses and their constructions of normativity along the lines of sexuality and gender required an analysis that reached beyond the present moment, beyond the immediate circumstances and events of Bill 64. Particularly, I recognized the importance of attending to how policy discourses have been reified over time and through their reference to historical patterns within education policy. Between queer theory, intersectionality, and governmentality, there is a shared regard for political, structural, and systemic forms of power and oppression that facilitated analyses that consider how interlocking systems of oppression interact, with intersectionality and queer theory similarly framing questions of identity—who is recognized in education, who is included, how are educational subjects formed and for what purpose, and who is

excluded in those—and an imperative to look beyond the boundaries imposed by policy discourses regarding who is recognized and how knowledge is treated (as valid, worth knowing, etc.) in education. Taken together, this theoretical framework made up of queer theory, intersectionality, and governmentality offered a cohesive theoretical perspective with complementary methodological alignments to approach the question of education reform and policy problematizations in Manitoba.

Research methods

Building off my theoretical framework, in this section I describe the methods I employed for my research into the education reform effort represented by Bill 64, its public reception, and the policy problematizations regarding 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects in education. There were three areas of data collection reported in this dissertation, including a policyscape of Bill 64 and Manitoba's education history, a critical policy discourse analysis of Bill 64, and interviews with participants about the bill. As the first two portions of the research involved primarily document analysis and publicly available information, ethics approval was required only for the participant interviews. Research ethics approval was obtained from the University of Manitoba Research Ethics Board 2 (protocol # HE2022-0121).

Policyscape: Histories of education and the story of Bill 64

In Chapter 4, I present the results of my policyscape analysis of Bill 64 and Manitoba's education system in a narrative form. While the entirety of this research could be considered a policyscape, as I describe at the outset of this Methodology section, I frame this chapter using the policyscape language to emphasize the importance of presenting a historical account and describing the context in which Bill 64 emerged. For this policyscape description, I also drew upon a policy genealogy/archaeology (Ball, 2013; Scheurich, 1994; Walton, 2010) approach to trace the lineage of policy-based interventions and reforms throughout Manitoba's history. Importantly, this policyscape recognizes that education policies do not exist in isolation but are linked to larger social discourses, political agendas, policy decisions, and public engagements. This is applicable not only to

education policy but also to its treatments of 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects. In considering how the problem of education is framed, and how 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects are framed within education, it is necessary to consider historical and contemporary discourses, political decisions, and actors to understand them. The results of the policyscape describe Manitoba's educational history, the story of Bill 64 and its public reception, and the legacy of the bill following its withdrawal, including education policy actions taken since then. I approach this account narratively using a policyscape approach (Mettler, 2016; see also Cumming-Potvin & Martino, 2018; Martino et al., 2019), informed by a policy genealogy/archaeology[13] lens (Ball, 2013; Scheurich, 1994; Walton, 2010). This policyscape predominantly utilized secondary sources to outline the history education in Manitoba (e.g., Britton, 2006; Bruno-Jofré, 1993; Gregor & Wilson, 1984); to create the account of Bill 64 and its aftermath, I drew upon news media coverage, editorials and opinion pieces, social media campaigns, and policy documents (e.g., proposed or current legislation, Manitoba education documents and strategies).

A policyscape approach recognizes that policies do not exist in isolation and are part of larger social discourses, political agendas, and policy histories in which they are developed. Policy contexts represent a complex overlay of actors, policies, and contestations that are sometimes concealed by the rationalities used to justify them. The goal here, in providing a deep description and tracing historical and contemporary connections, is to make these contextual connections explicit. Importantly, 2SLGBTQIA+-specific policies in education are also part of that larger policyscape, which represents a "historical legacy of 'political behaviour' that helps to deepen an understanding of the policy agendas and events in the present" and comprise the dynamic "networked

[13] Genealogy and archaeology were largely popularized as methodologies through Foucault and, methodologically, they have similar goals in seeking to identify the historical development of ideas over time, rooted in various historical concepts, forces, constructions of knowledge, and so on. While methodologically similar, archaeology often emphasizes particular historical (or historically situated) artefacts—in this case, for example, education policy documents through the history of Manitoba—to provide a "snapshot" or cross-section of a historical moment; genealogy, rather, emphasizes the development of ideas over time, concerned with the discursive development of ideas by tracing a present idea or phenomenon back through time, seeking its historical roots and the contingencies of its development (Kendall & Wickham, 1999). It is worth noting that Ball (2013) describes genealogy as a particularly useful policy tool, identifying Scheurich (1994) as a scholar who employs this type of approach; however, Scheurich (1994) names his methodology "policy archaeology." For my purposes, I name them both as I conceive of them as being closely related approaches that share methodological ground.

modes of governance" of policy actors (Martino et al., 2019, pp. 303 & 322). Understanding the social discourses regarding 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects in educational policy, alongside the policy agendas, events, and actors that inform how they are constituted, provides insights into the formation of policy problematizations and highlights the importance of policy stakeholders as agentic actors in the process (e.g., Airton et al., 2019; Cumming-Potvin & Martino, 2019; Iskander & Shabtay, 2018; Martino et al., 2019; Russell, 2006; Taylor, 2008; Walton, 2010). A key aspect of this historical overview leading up to Bill 64 is to detail salient history regarding 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion efforts in education in Manitoba (e.g., Short, 2013; Taylor, 2008) and pertinent regulatory documents and reform efforts related to 2SLGBTQIA+-inclusive education (e.g., Bill 18, 2012; Manitoba Education and Training, 2017a).

Supplementing this policyscape approach, I also draw from policy genealogy/archaeology methods (e.g., Ball, 2013; Scheurich, 1994; Walton, 2010), which pick up on Foucault's conceptualization of genealogy in recounting the development of what "we tend to think is without history" (Foucault, 1977b, p. 139). By emphasizing the historical roots of the present by recounting its development, policy research is able to resist a dehistoricized present policy context and emphasize the relevance of the historical development of policy as having an influence on present conceptualizations, events, power structures, values, and understandings in current policy frameworks. As Foucault (1997b) describes it, genealogy is rooted in the recognition that history is contingent, and this methodology seeks to identify how the historical development and emergence of concepts, events, forces, and ideas lead to present understandings and values. Policy genealogy/archaeology enables contextual understandings of how policy discourses and normativities have developed over time, how those policy discourses and problematizations are reified through their iterative institutional use, and how they become self-referentially validating through their citational quality in policy agenda setting; I see in this similarities to Bacchi's conceptualization of how problematizations seek to interrogate how policy problems come to be represented. Picking up on Foucault's methodologies, Scheurich (1994) adapts an archaeology methodology to policy studies, seeking to understand the social construction of policy problems by taking "a

radically different approach to policy studies in virtually all its aspects, including definitions of problems and problem groups, discussions of policies and policy alternatives, and presumptions about the function of policy studies within the larger social order" (p. 299). As Scheurich (1994) explains, policy archaeology does not treat policy problems as a given but considers the "powerful 'grids' or networks of regularities… that are constitutive of the emergence or social construction of a particular problem as a social problem, regularities that constitute what is labelled as a problem and what is not labelled as a problem" (p. 301). Other research that focuses particularly on 2SLGBTQIA+-related education has made use of this method for investigating education policy as well, establishing a small body of research to ground this approach (e.g., Meyer & Keenan, 2018, apply policy archaeology methodology to analysis of 10 school district policies regarding gender diversity; Walton, 2010, applies Scheurich's policy archaeology approach to investigating anti-bullying approaches to policy).

Policyscape methods, supplemented by a policy genealogy/archaeology approach, enable for contextual understandings of how policy discourses and normativities have developed over time and how those policy discourses have become reified through repeated institutional use, how they become self-validating through their citational quality in setting of policy agendas (akin to Bacchi's problematization understanding), and how they function as political technologies that govern public institutions. The larger goal is to seek to understand Bill 64, its particular situatedness in Manitoba's history of education and in its contemporary moment, and the larger dynamics that contributed to its development and to the education reform efforts; this method involved tracing potential motivations, rationale, justifications, and goals *beyond* what are explicitly stated by government in describing education reform efforts and by looking to public discourses and collective responses to the bill. In tracking the social construction of policy problems in Manitoba's education system and their contestation during Bill 64's tenure, I aimed to develop a broader policyscape that supplied a situated description of Manitoba's education system and its broader context in the province's historical regulatory frameworks, the discourses used in both concealed and explicit ways, and the actors involved who worked to develop, introduce, justify, and resist Bill 64.

Critical policy discourse analysis of Bill 64

In Chapter 5, I present the results of my critical policy discourse analysis of Bill 64. This analysis was conceptually based on my understanding of policy along a poststructuralist axis that recognized the simultaneous operations of policy as text and policy as discourse (Ball, 2014), while centering Bacchi's formulation of policy problematizations as discursive constructions of problems. My initial plan was to analyze several other policy documents that featured in the education reform effort, including the Education Commission report (Manness & MacKinnon, 2020), the BEST strategy (2021), and the Action Plans (Manitoba Education, 2022a, 2023) and Indigenous education policy framework (Manitoba Education, 2022b); however, as I proceeded with my analysis, I recognized that Bill 64 served more effectively as a nexus around which to build my analysis of the bill and its problematizations of education and 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects. In my analysis, I draw connections to these other documents, in keeping with the broader policyscape rationale for the research, and also feature them in the policyscape account in Chapter 4. As a result, my analysis of Bill 64 on its own provided sufficient content to investigate my research questions and, following the connections established in the policyscape, linkages to other policy agendas, education strategies, and wider discourses.

My research method for my analysis of the bill employed a critical policy discourse analysis of the Bill 64 text (Bacchi, 1999; Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016; Diem et al., 2014; Hyatt, 2013; Liasidou, 2008; Taylor, 2004). The goal was to understand how 2SLGBTQIA+ content and persons were addressed in and discursively constructed by the policy text, and to establish connections to the broader regulatory context of Manitoba's public education system. The analysis also set out to understand how Bill 64 constructed the problem of education through its focus on making structural and organizational changes to Manitoba's education system, and how 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects were treated as a result or within those reforms. My critical lens was informed by my theoretical framework, the common discourses regarding education reform that I identified in the research literature (including neoliberal, funding and austerity, structural/organizational, equity-based, etc.), by 2SLGBTQIA+-related discourses in education (including at-risk/victimization, silence and exclusion, safety, inclusion, homonormativity,

homonationalism, inappropriate or sensitive content, in opposition to "parental rights"), and by public discourses responding to Bill 64. However, I also recognized that my critical analysis needed to maintain a degree of theoretical "openness" in identifying these discursive constructions. While the research was largely formed through a critical policy studies framework (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016; Diem et al., 2014; Hyatt, 2013) that centred certain theoretical and conceptual understandings—of policy, of discourse, of problematization, of 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects, and of systemic oppressions—I recognized that this could create something of a barrier in recognizing certain emergent results during my analysis; as I described above (see The Uses of Theory above), I balanced the critical policy discourse analysis alongside a critical grounded theory approach.

My analysis consisted of reading Bill 64 three times to identify problematizations at work in the bill. First, I read the bill in its entirety to familiarize myself with its contents and provisions, comparing it to *The Public Schools Act* and *The Education Administration Act* (that were in effect at the time when Bill 64 was introduced to replace them). During this process, I manually coded the bill's domains to track the organizational logic and identify new provisions. During my second reading, I focused on the question of problematization in the bill, asking what the problem of education was that Bill 64 was attempting to respond to (i.e., the solution requiring reform). This second reading applied Bacchi's problematization approach, and it focused more closely on what changes the bill proposed, its overall structure, and what changes would have resulted for the education system; in this, a more specific focus emerged regarding the thrust of reform efforts and the ways that it made visible what it considered to be relevant for the problem of policy, the particular points at which it introduced, bolstered, reiterated, or otherwise reinforced values regarding what was important for solving education problems. At the same time, what the bill excluded, marginalized, silenced, or left unaddressed could be understood as irrelevant to the problem of education and the solution Bill 64 proposed. Through this analysis, I identified two main criteria to focus my analysis on for my final reading: First, the *dominance of the discourse* in the bill, both in terms of its centrality and effects; and second, the *specificity of the discourse* as it relates to 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects, either in its explicit reference to 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects or its potential (or discursive)

relevance to them. This criteria helped to organize the analysis for my third reading, in which I focused on understanding how dominant discourses exerted extensive and structural force within the proposed changes, as well as on where explicit mention of 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects or specific implications for 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects were located. In this, problematizations regarding the constitution of 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects were identified in the bill to understand where they appeared, how subjects (both persons and content) were positioned, and what discursive constructions they were linked to. This reading most substantively engaged my critical framework in considering how the policy text framed education, enacted relevant reform interventions to "solve" the problem of education, and construct 2SLGBTQIA+ people and position 2SLGBTQIA+ content. Between the dominant and specific discourses, I attempted to understand how policy worked to construct normativizing pressure to regulate 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects in schools. The result of this analysis produced thematic groupings of policy problematizations in Bill 64 relating to the construction of 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects, the purpose of education, and organization and governance of education, which are presented in Chapter 5.

Interviews with education stakeholders and public respondents

In Chapter 6, I present the results of my interviews with policymakers, education stakeholders, and individuals who engaged in public responses to the bill. My choice to conduct interviews for this research was informed partially by my positionality, as I am not formally involved in public schooling and wanted to hear from those who were. However, I also recognized that due to the extensive public discourse regarding the bill, there were a great many people who would be able to speak about education reform, their understandings of the bill and responses to it, and provide insights into the policy process and how they understood Bill 64 and participated in response to it. Given the articulate, comprehensive, and passionate engagements with Bill 64, I recognized that people engaged in public discourse because they felt they would be directly affected by the policy reform. Recognizing Ball's (1994) conceptualization of policy as both text and discourse, interviews provided a way to hear directly from subject positions constituted by and through policy, as well as the ways that they read, interpreted, and were enabled as agents to respond to the bill—to hear about how policy operated to

create both agency and constraint. Rather than conduct an open recruitment, I opted to identify potential participants who could act as expert informants, either due to their position in the school system, government or policymaking, or in participating in collective response efforts to the bill. The goal of the interviews, in short, was to invite participants to act as expert informants on Bill 64, including their personal reactions to it, and to prompt participants to provide informed, collaborative perspectives on how Bill 64 worked to construct 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects in and through the broader discourses of Bill 64.

Recruitment. Interview participants were recruited through a directed strategy with the intention of representing two main groups: (1) those working in formal roles in the education system, including educators, administrators, and policymakers; and (2) people who participated in public discourse regarding the bill, including their participation in social media campaigns, collective organizing, or editorial or academic writing on the bill. Targeted recruitment of interview participants was employed to ensure informed participants were engaged for this research (i.e., as the focus of this research specializes in policy and 2SLGBTQIA+ topics, both informants who are aware of policy processes, including the ability to engage with complex policy texts and contexts, and who are knowledgeable about 2SLGBTQIA+ identities and topics are required); and, relatedly, that theoretical sampling was observed (Timonen et al., 2018).

In thinking through who to interview for this portion of my research, I decided to conduct directed recruitment through individual, personalized invitations to people in (or who intersected across) two main groups: (1) educators, educational administrators, and policymakers, and (2) people who participated in public discourse regarding the bill. In the first category, I invited individuals who were employed in positions within the education system that could bring deeper insights and practical knowledge about how education governance currently operates and, therefore, relevant reflections on how Bill 64 would impact the education system. Eligible potential candidates in this category were identified based on their official role or responsibilities in the school system—such as superintendents or divisional administrators, teachers with demonstrated knowledge in the area of 2SLGTBQIA+ inclusion, affiliation or employment with professional organizations to support educators or

governor roles (such as Manitoba Teachers' Society [MTS] or Manitoba School Boards Association [MSBA]), or those in elected political positions to speak to the legislative process. In the second category, I extended invitations to people who were directly involved in public discourse regarding the bill, either through social media campaigns, collective organizing, or editorial or academic writing regarding Bill 64 or public discourse during the period in which the bill was tabled.

My efforts to extend directed invitations began with identifying people and groups who had been active in the public discourse, which involved drawing upon the information from following social media campaigns, seeing who was posting on the topic and extending this network by following cross-postings between different campaigns, reading editorials published in newspapers, tracking down references or individuals who were quoted or cited in posts or media coverage, attending public lectures or panels on the topic, and considering what educator and administrator positions would bring useful engagements to the data. Potential participants were identified with the aim of hearing from people in positions who I anticipated would provide useful insights as part of their professional roles or who participated actively in public discourse. People participating in public discourse were situated in many locations, and I developed a list of potential participants by observing social media campaigns, tracking cross-postings between groups and individuals, extensive reading of various response campaigns and editorial publications in newspapers, following media coverage over the period and identifying individuals, organizations, or people who were quoted or who spoke directly to the bill, and attending public lectures and panels on the topic.

Once potential participants, organizations, or campaigns were identified, I identified relevant individuals and their contact information to extend individualized invitations. In most cases, publicly available email addresses were used to extend initial invitations and participants could opt to use other emails or contact means in our correspondence. In some cases, social media profiles and direct messaging was used to extend initial invitations to participants when individuals were not readily identifiable or when collectives managed social media postings, and willing participants often supplied email addresses or other contact information to continue

the process. Initial invitations introduced myself, explained the project briefly and the purpose of the research, and explained what would be involved in the interviews. The initial invitational message invited people who were interested in participating or who wanted additional information to reply, at which point I supplied a copy of the full consent form and a copy of the semi-structured interview framework. Interested participants willing to proceed with an interview were asked about how they would like to be interviewed (either a virtual/Zoom meeting or in-person meeting) and consulted to set interview dates and times.

During recruitment, I paid particular attention to extending invitations to cover a variety of locations, positions, and positionalities (including, for example, those in rural areas, political or decision-making roles regarding provincial education policy, 2SLGBTQIA+ people, formal roles in speaking about or representing educator groups in public discourse, and those who took on less formalized public engagements through collective organizing and resistance or support campaigns). While these efforts ensured I made efforts to represent diverse perspectives, the final sample is limited in certain ways and represents people who predominantly were willing to revisit this challenging period and comfortable about speaking on the research record.

Those who agreed to participate were all passionate about public education, committed to their work in responding to the bill, or motivated by their sense of responsibility in contributing to the record through this research. This, of course, is not to say that those who declined invitations do not share these characteristics, as there were undoubtedly many reasons individuals declined the invitation. Despite my recruitment efforts, I was unable to recruit participants who publicly supported the bill or who had worked on its development and introduction during the roughly two-year period in which it was drafted, introduced in the Legislature, debated formally in the Assembly and discussed in public forums, and withdrawn. In some ways, as participants reflected to me during our interview conversations, this limitation may be seen as a reflection of the way Bill 64 became politically untenable and professionally threatening for those publicly associated with it—to such an extent that, understandably, there was a real effort to distance oneself from connection to it or to speak “on the record” in

relation to it. As a result, the data in this section are somewhat limited by the participants who were willing to participate, and the insights and perspectives of those in support of the bill are largely absent from the interview data. I do not speculate further or draw conclusions about this challenge in recruitment or the personal or professional reasons invitees declined to participate, as they are beyond the data collected.[14]

Directed recruitment took place over a period of seven months and was iterative, with individualized invitations being extended monthly, responsive to previous recruitment efforts. The intention of this process was to ensure as much as possible that the interviews represented a range of roles and positionalities throughout the education system and across the two recruitment categories. Each month, additional invitations were composed and sent based on the categories and positions represented by interviews conducted in the previous month. In other words, as I developed a list of potential interviewees and successfully recruited participants, I considered what positions or locations were not represented and directed future efforts to recruit from different areas identified in my list of potential interviewees. In total, 12 participants were recruited and represented various roles within the education system—including educational administration, professional organizations, and elected officials—and those involved in public response and social media campaigns responding to the bill.

Interviews and data collection. Interviews were conducted between November 2022 and April 2023, either by Zoom or in person (depending on participant preference). Interviews were between 30 and 90 minutes in length and recorded for transcription. The interviews were semi-structured to elicit open responses and allow for dialogically responsive interviews (Brown & Danaher, 2019; Irvine et al., 2013; Madill, 2011). A semi-structured interview guide (see Appendix A) with questions was shared with participants in advance of

[14] To state this as clearly as possible: I do not discuss why individuals declined to participate nor to whom I shared invitations, as these are beyond my ethical purview to share. Potential participants did not consent in any way to be part of the research, and those interactions were not shared on the record and cannot be included in publication. However, I recognize that this necessarily poses a limitation on the research data. In an attempt to address this limitation, I have made every attempt to include public statements and rationale for supporting Bill 64 that were made through press releases, editorials, and news reporting to represent perspectives supporting Bill 64 where possible in the policyscape and governmental rationale for the bill.

scheduled interviews, so they had an opportunity to see what questions I was interested in and to reflect on them in advance if they desired. The study consent form was also provided in advance and reviewed prior to the formal start of the interview; after participants had reviewed the consent form and we discussed important points and addressed any questions raised, consent was formally recorded, either through a signed form or through verbal recorded consent at the start of the interview. While anonymized participation was offered to all participants, individuals were offered the choice to be named (i.e., through an "opt in" on the consent form). I recognized it was important that participants be provided with the opportunity to choose to be named and identified in relation to their comments and perspectives to ensure they received recognition for their extensive work responding to Bill 64; wherever possible, I wanted to ensure participants' intellectual labour and public contributions were attributed accurately to them in recognition of the significant, passionate efforts they made to public discourse. In many cases, participants were already on the record through news articles, public statements, or organizing efforts, and providing them with opportunities to have their work attributed to them was ethically important as a way to resist extractive research processes. As a result, participants were given the opportunity to use their real name and receive appropriate credit for their work and ideas, which roughly two-thirds did.

The semi-structured interviews covered three main question domains: their understanding of Bill 64, their reflections on the bill and responses to it, and how they conceived of 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects in relation to the bill. Each of these three areas overlap in significant ways, and my approach attempted to understand how participants understood Bill 64 and its regulatory context, what discourses were deployed to justify the bill, what discourses formed or were invoked during discussions about the bill, and how these discourses work to address 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects in education through their inclusions, exclusions, and related regulatory provisions.

Interviews were recorded and transcribed using an automated transcription service; transcripts were reviewed and corrected against the audio file before audio files were deleted. Analysis was conducted using the transcribed interview text.

Participants. In total, 12 participants were recruited for 11 interview sessions (one interview included two participants), which, given the directed recruitment strategy targeting knowledgeable informants and theoretical sampling goal, was appropriate to the study's objectives (Thomson, 2011). While I provide a brief overview of aggregated participant characteristics below, I want to emphasize that the numbers and categories I created to report this aggregate snapshot provide only a partial picture of who I got to speak with. In the interviews, I provided an opportunity for all participants to identify their social positions and supplied prompts regarding their employment, sexuality, gender identity, racialization, and any additional positionality information they may wish to offer; however, I did not require any responses to these questions. Rather, I invited participants to introduce themselves and freely identify any personal affiliations or characteristics they considered relevant for the context of our discussion. I did this intentionally to ensure they were all comfortable sharing only what they wanted to and to ensure those who opted to be anonymized could identify in ways that they felt were appropriate.

One notable outcome of this process was that participants often identified more than one position in relation to the education system and the bill—or what I would describe as holding multiple subject positions in relation to the bill's discourses (for instance, participants who were teachers and also parents). In almost every case, participants occupied multiple subject positions and navigated between them throughout our conversations. Additionally, participants spoke often about how their positions were in flux and changing as a result of Bill 64, and this led to interesting observations about the unique stresses of the proposed Bill 64 reform, how their subject positions were constituted through the bill and determined by policy discourses outside themselves, and resulted in their ability to respond to these discourses, enact resistance and counter-conduct moments, that crossed temporal boundaries related to any fixed subject position. In other words, participants were able to anticipate how their roles might change and enact resistance preemptively, based on their current and future subject positions, to enact anticipatory resistance, oppose policy discourses they disagreed with, and activate their power as subjects produced by and through those discourses. In other words, participants claimed

current and future subject positions that empowered them to speak to, resist, and respond to both education and policy discourses—even while those discourses were shifting their subject positions.

I would also note that in the process of conducting my analysis, I recognized I would be limited in my ability to present participants in holistic ways that fully present the breadth and depth of our conversations, how incredibly rich they were, and the significant insights into the public education system they offered. As a result, I decided to create more detailed participant profiles for each interviewee, using their own words to describe themselves and their positions, and provide a brief quotation from the substantial transcripts we created in conversation (see Appendix B: Interview Participant Profiles). I saw these as opportunities to spend directed time with each participant, name notable affiliations or characteristics that arose in our conversations, and give each person a chance to speak in their own words in this dissertation.

As I mentioned, before turning to my discussion of the results and themes from my analysis, I offer a brief aggregate profile of participants below in chart form (Figure 3.1) to enumerate some of the characteristics and positionalities of participants. It is worth noting that participants were free not to respond to this question or to choose what information to provide, so numbers do not necessarily tally to 12 participants; also, as participants were often occupying several subject positions, they are sometimes represented multiple times in the counts below. This aggregate profile reflects the roles participants were currently occupying at the time of the interview. Overall, participants represented a variety of locations throughout the education system and self-identified subject positions:

Role in relation to education	# of participants
Divisional offices / Superintendent offices	3
Teachers	4
Parents	5 **3 current students*
Professional teacher organizations (i.e., MTS, MSBA)	2
Elected official (i.e., MLA)	1
Post-secondary educator	1
Non-education professions	1
Participation as an individual in response efforts or in collectives that organized response	5

(i.e., self-initiated/non-professional public engagement through specific social media campaigns or participation in collectives) Participation in professional organizations' responses or professionally affiliated with organizations with formal public campaigns **Note: These counts are not strictly reflective of participants' engagement in public response to Bill 64, as I did not include in these counts participants who, for example, wrote editorials, organized public discussion panels/learning sessions, or worked through their professional roles to respond to the bill. I based these counts on what participants discussed during our interviews.*	3

Personal self-identified characteristics	# of participants
Gender identity	
Man	6
Woman	5
Non-binary	1
Cisgender	4 (mentioned)
**No participants mentioned trans experience*	
Sexuality	
Queer (including lesbian, gay)	3
Straight or heterosexual	7
No mention of sexuality	2
Racialization	
White (or white settler)	8
Racialized (Indo-Guyanese)	1
No mention of race or racialization	3
"Marginalized identities" (one participant named having "marginalized identities" but to maintain anonymity I do not explain further; this participant identified as a woman)	1

Figure 3.1: Participant profile overview

Analysis. Once transcribed and reviewed for accuracy, I analyzed the interview data through a process of lean and axial coding (Saldana, 2016), based in my critical observations and findings related to my research on

Bill 64 alongside a critical grounded theory orientation that sought to identify critical perspectives on the "human perspective *and* on the structures, processes, and social relations" related to the bill (Timonen et al., 2018, p. 3). I read through interview transcripts in their entirety three times. First, I read the transcripts to identify the main topic areas in relation to the interview framework and conduct initial manual lean coding of the data to identify emergent themes. I then axially coded the initial coding themes with the research questions to surface connections between thematic areas and the research questions, and identify themes that spoke most prominently to research objectives. I read the transcripts a second time to recode the data using the axial codes and identify any additional emergent themes in the interview data based on the new code framework. Finally, I read the transcripts a third time using the axially-coded prominent themes to validate the coded themes and identify relevant quotations for results. In the process of coding, it became apparent that participants presented sophisticated understandings informed by their engagement with Bill 64 that involved integrated understandings of what the bill had to say, their reflections on it and their efforts to respond to it, and how the bill's content and public discourse related to 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects.

CHAPTER 4: The Policyscape of Manitoba's Public Education System: Histories of Education and the Story of Bill 64

This chapter describes the histories of Manitoba's public education system and the story of Bill 64, *The Education Modernization Act*. Initially, I conceived this chapter as simply providing deeper contextual understanding about how education had developed in the Province of Manitoba and to set the stage, as it were, for the introduction of an analysis of the public discourses and responses to Bill 64. However, as I worked to develop this narrative, I recognized how important this aspect of the research was to understanding public education in the province, responses to the proposed Bill 64 reform effort, and, for the purposes of this research, the construction of 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects as a policy problem to be addressed. While early educational policy in Manitoba does not explicitly address 2SLGBTQIA+ people or topics in schools, tracing the patterns of inclusion and exclusion in how the purpose of education was conceived (and subject to change over the years) and in the social and political developments over time offers insights to understanding public education in the province and related policy developments over time; these historical legacies inform the educational arcs leading into how 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects came to be introduced in the 1990s and gained recognition in education in the years following—leading eventually to the introduction of Bill 64 and its treatment of 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects, including how they were positioned and constituted in and by the bill. As a result, the account of Manitoba's educational history in this chapter is a concerted effort to resist the de-historicization of the policy context and sociopolitical reality in which Bill 64 emerged.

The policyscape presented in this chapter (see Chapter 3, Research Methods, Policyscape) is divided into three main sections focusing on: histories of education in Manitoba; the story of Bill 64, including the surrounding social and political context and public discourse in response to the bill; and a brief account of the legacy of and fallout from Bill 64 following its withdrawal. The broader historical influences and trajectories of Manitoba's education system provide insight into the introduction of Bill 64 and the ensuing resistance efforts, which in turn have reverberated in Manitoba's education system. The historical and contemporary

problematizations are important in considering Bill 64, how we read the bill and understand its discursive implications, and in how people interpreted the broader bill, largely, as an attack on public education. For 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects, these problematizations were not always readily apparent in the bill or in response efforts; as a result, this research has attempted to foreground these in considering the systemic oppressions and inequities of Bill 64. In the literature review above, I traced several of these policy problematizations and particularly considered how broader research on 2SLGBTQIA+ education develops educational discourses related to 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects. Throughout the literature, it is apparent that advocates for 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects have been instrumental in advancing 2SLGBTQIA+-specific educational policies, working alongside educators and policymakers to develop policies that seek to enhance safety, inclusion, and support for 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects in schools (Iskander & Shabtay, 2018; Martino et al., 2019; Short, 2013; Taylor, 2008). However, these processes have not been free from interference from those opposing 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion—opposition efforts that often take the form of religious objection, social conservativism and appeals to "traditional values," or reliance on appeals to generic or "neutral" strategies of inclusion (i.e., naming diversity without specifying who is included, relying on generic approaches). In instances of contestation over 2SLGBTQIA+-specific policy provisions and protections, 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion efforts are often stifled or watered down due to apprehensions that 2SLGBTQIA+ content is too sensitive for classrooms or children, that 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects are "political" or moral issues, or that parent/guardian and community apprehensions should take precedence (e.g., Macgillivray, 2004a; Payne & Smith, 2018; Short, 2013; Taylor, 2008).

These contestations have returned with renewed vigour in education, despite a shift in the 2010s toward more inclusive educational spaces for 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects and expansions of 2SLGBTQIA+-specific policy protections. Protests and policy challenges from socially regressive actors have increasingly been agitating for expanded restrictions on 2SLGBTQIA+ affirming policies and protections with varying levels of success in Canada. For instance, Saskatchewan passed Bill 137 (the "Parents' Bill of Rights") in 2023 amending the *Education Act* to restrict educators' ability to use trans and non-binary students' affirmed gender, chosen names, and pronouns

without parental consent; to pass the legislation and prevent human rights-based legal challenging, Section 33 of the Charter (the "notwithstanding clause") was invoked (Hunter, 2023). In Alberta, multiple pieces of legislation have been introduced to restrict the ability of trans youth to access affirming health care and education, including policies limiting students' ability to change pronouns or names, access sex education without opt-in permission, access gender affirming health care, and restrict their ability to participate in sports (Bellefontaine, 2024; Dryden, 2024; Jeffrey, 2024). Even at the federal level, the Conservative party has targeted 2SLGBTQIA+ people and adopted anti-equity positions, passing various platform positions with majority support at their 2023 national convention restricting youth access to gender-affirming care, reinforcing support for single-sex spaces for "female persons," and opposing preferential hiring of minorities based on race or personal characteristics other than "merit" and opposing mandatory diversity training (Tasker, 2023).

These larger trends representing a resurgence of opposition to 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion—as well as other social equity initiatives—across Canada are troubling, and it is important to recognize that they are manifesting in Manitoba as well, particularly in educational spaces. For instance, several notable book challenges have attempted to restrict schools' library collections from including 2SLGBTQIA+ materials (e.g., Brandon School Division's book challenge controversy; see Global News, 2023; MacLean, May 23, 2023), and anti-trans protests associated with "1 Million March 4 Children" have regularly occurred in Winnipeg and Brandon, alongside coordinated protests in other Canadian cities (Hoye, 2023). Even Manitoba's Progressive Conservative (PC) party introduced a commitment during their re-election campaign to expand parental rights in schools, referencing the broader "parental rights" movements that had gained traction among Conservative voters in recent years (MacLean, August 17, 2023). An article in the *Winnipeg Free Press* reported that during their final months in office in June 2023, the PC government had directed Manitoba Education to "conduct a jurisdictional scan of parents' 'right to know' [about changes to their child's gender identity] in other provinces" (Clarke, January 26, 2024); the *Free Press* obtained emails and the briefing note produced by the education department staff through a freedom of information request, which revealed the directive to conduct the jurisdictional review and the

findings from the briefing note indicating that such a "right to know" does not align with human rights legislation, best practices, or Manitoba Education's philosophy of inclusion and supporting policies, curriculum, and resources. These trends have largely been unsuccessful in Manitoba, with the PC party losing the election to the NDP, counter-protests in support of trans youth in response to the 1 Million March 4 Children demonstrations, and the defeat of censorship efforts in Brandon School Division; however, they represent a growing boldness among those opposing 2SLGBTQIA+ equity, particularly alongside the rise in anti-2SLGBTQIA+ sentiment and legislation in the United States. While these trends in Manitoba have mainly emerged since Bill 64's introduction and withdrawal, they reinforce the importance of adopting a policyscape approach in considering educational policy and the broader context of actors, events, and social discourses in the policy process.

In the remainder of this chapter, I consider how education policy has developed in Manitoba by tracking its historical development, describing Bill 64, its context, and public responses, and what has happened since its withdrawal. In detailing salient history regarding education in Manitoba, I predominantly draw from research utilizing secondary sources to outline the policyscape of education in Manitoba (e.g., Anderson, 2018; Britton, 2006; Bruno-Jofré, 1993; Gregor & Wilson, 1984) to explain the particular historical landscape of Manitoba's education policies "created in the past that have become established institutions, bearing consequences for governing operations, the policy agenda, and political behavior" in the present (Mettler, 2016, p. 369). I also aim to identify notable 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion efforts (e.g., Short, 2013; Taylor, 2008) to understand treatments of 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects in Manitoba's public education system through pertinent regulatory documents and reform efforts (e.g., Bill 18, 2012; Manitoba Education and Training, 2017a). I see these as constituting a critical contextual backdrop to understanding the context of Bill 64's development and introduction, inextricably linked to the political character and legislative priorities of the PC government, and entangled with the policy discourses related to 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects in schools and their problematizations.

Histories of education in Manitoba

As this policyscape description of Manitoba's public education system largely focuses on colonial state policy of Manitoba, I situate the beginning of this history in 1870 when the province was officially formed through the *Manitoba Act* and entered the Confederation of Canada as the fifth province. However, I would note that this was not the beginning of education in the territory of Manitoba; rather, this is the beginning of public education in the province and its related colonial policies and regulatory frameworks. Prior to the official formation of the province and its expansion in the following years to its modern-day territorial borders, the area had long been occupied by many Indigenous peoples for thousands of years, including the Anishinaabe, Anishininewuk, Dakota Oyate, Denesuline, Ininiwak, Nehethowuk, and Nehiyawak, and the northern areas of Manitoba included ancestral lands of the Inuit. First Nations and Inuit peoples had long histories of education on the land prior to colonial invasion, carrying thousands of years of knowledge through oral traditions and in relationship with the land, in ceremony, and through language (e.g., Wilson, 2016, describes thousands of years of knowledge through Cree cosmology, language, and connection to land).

Before Manitoba's official formation as a province, the area was considered part of Rupert's Land and under the control of the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) since 1670. During that time, as Gregor and Wilson (1984) explain, the Red River settlement in now-southern Manitoba functioned under trading rules and schools were slow to develop in the area, despite the recognition that education was important; until schools were built, children were sent to boarding schools in the east or in Britain, whenever possible and where financially feasible. In the early 1800s, efforts were made to establish schools in Red River settlements area, although HBC did not cover the costs of these and responsibility largely fell to denominational churches (Roman Catholic, Anglican, and Presbyterian) or on individual families to pay registration costs, which was a severe limitation for many and reinforced class divisions in who received an education. Gregor and Wilson (1984) explain that while education was considered a public good—particularly in its ability to resist the threat of "barbarism" common in frontier life and promote the type of "civilization" conducive to colonial expansion in the settlement—schools were not

viewed as necessary for everyone, and the needs of farming and frontier survival often superseded the perceived need to receive an education. Those from privileged families or who were seen as potential candidates for social leadership were prioritized for educational pursuits for the public good and mainly determined by their family's ability to financially pay for it. Where public schools were available with free or low tuition, they relied on the charity of the church and, as such, were heavily religious in nature, emphasizing the moral development of children and relying on primary use of the Bible as a textbook (Gregor & Wilson, 1984). This educational situation persisted until 1870, when Manitoba formed and education became a state-funded activity.

At the time of Manitoba's formation in 1870, Canada was actively seeking to protect its interests to expand westward and purchased the land from HBC in 1869 with the help of Britain (Tattrie & McIntosh, 2020). However, the residents of the area, including the First Nations, Red River Métis, and European settlers, were not involved in the purchase or transfer of land, nor any discussions about the terms of entering Confederation. This prompted opposition and political unrest, and the Red River Resistance formed a provisional government in 1869 with Louis Riel at its head[15]; they worked to negotiate terms of entry into Confederation with the Canadian government, resulting in lengthy negotiations with Ottawa that, through successive efforts regarding rights, formed the basis of the federal *Manitoba Act* (1870) that created Manitoba. The Act secured Manitoba as a "gateway" for Canada's westward expansion, a crucial development for the colonial project (Rea & Scott, 2021), and guaranteed a number of rights that shaped the formation of Manitoba, including the province be recognized as such (rather than as a territory) and the submission of the name "Manitoba" as the name of the province. Further, the Act ensured negotiated rights of Métis people to retain title to their lands, safeguarded English- and French-language rights in the legislature and courts, and guaranteed Protestant and Roman Catholic educational

[15] In November 2023, the NDP-led Manitoba government introduced *The Louis Riel Act*, which passed and received Royal Assent on December 7, 2023 (C.C.S.M. c. L229). The Act bestowed the honorary title of "First Premier of Manitoba" on Louis Riel and, notably, included an educational mandate directing the minister responsible for education "take reasonable steps to ensure that the curriculum delivered by public schools and independent schools includes the significant contributions of Louis Riel to Manitoba and to Canada and an acknowledgement of his honorary title" (*The Louise Riel Act*, s. 2).

rights (though not bilingual education rights) in line with the *British North America Act* of 1867. Successive numbered Treaties[16] between Canada and First Nations further solidified Canada's foothold in the area and intentions to expand westward, and each Treaty included an inherent right to education (INAC, 2010). Despite these Treaties and legislative guarantees regarding education and protections of land and language, Canada mismanaged its promises to Métis peoples regarding land rights in subsequent years and enacted the federal educational policy of residential schools, industrial schools, and day schools for First Nations communities—effectively enacting a culturally genocidal educational strategy that removed children from their parents, worked to eradicate Indigenous language and knowledge, and force integrationist and assimilationist agendas (Battiste, 2013; TRC, 2015).

Manitoba, following the provisions of Section 22 of the *British North America Act*, affirmed Constitutional guarantees protecting denominational schools for Roman Catholics and Protestants but not guaranteeing language rights in education, in contrast to the language provisions in the rest of the Act requiring both French and English languages be recognized in the Legislature and courts (s. 23). However, the Catholic population predominantly spoke French and Protestants predominantly English, and the two systems were established side-by-side in 1871 when Manitoba passed the *Act to establish a system of education in the province of Manitoba* to this effect. The Act provided denominational schooling in the parallel education systems to citizens and established a provincial board of education with roughly equal numbers of seats allocated in each system, reflective of the demographic of the settler population; local school district boards were established within various areas and funding was split equally between the two denominational systems (Gregor & Wilson,

[16] The Numbered Treaties were signed in the years following Manitoba's creation, with Treaty 1 (signed August 3, 1871) initially covering the then-postage-stamp province in the area immediately surrounding the meeting of the Red and Assiniboine rivers; subsequent numbered Treaties expanded to cover the surrounding areas to the west and north (Treaty 2 signed on August 21, 1871), to the east on the edge of modern-day Manitoba and northern-Ontario (Treaty 3 signed October 3, 1873), the west into southern Saskatchewan (Treaty 4, Qu'Appelle Treaty, signed September 15 and 21, 1874), and into the northern Manitoba (Treaty 5 in 1875–76, with the addition of northern areas in 1908–10) (Indian Affairs and Northern Development [INAC], 2010; Treaty Commission of Manitoba, n.d.).

1984). While Catholic schools were predominantly French and included substantial religious instruction during schooling, the Protestant schools provided instruction in English and did not include extensive religious instruction, likely in deference to the wider denominational variance of Protestant populations (Verrette, 2016). At the time, funding was provided through provincial grants but shifted in the following years to proportional granting based on the number of actual enrolled students (rather than potential students) and supplemented by district taxation of property (Gregor & Wilson, 1984).

At the time Manitoba joined Confederation, the number of anglophones and francophones was roughly equal; however, once westward migration began in earnest through the 1870s and 1880s, this balance shifted. As Simms (1944) reports, the rapid growth in Manitoba was reflected in its schools. To give some idea of the demographic change immigration brought, Simms reports on enrollment in the public schools of Manitoba, recording 16 Protestant schools (with a total attendance of 876 pupils) and 17 Catholic schools (with an enrollment of 639 pupils) in 1872, which by 1890 was substantially shifted in favour of Protestant schools, with 629 Protestant school districts and 90 Catholic districts by 1890 (Simms, 1944, pp. 52–53). With migration from Ontario of predominantly Protestant, anglophone populations, as well as an influx of immigrant settlers from Europe of Jewish, Icelandic, Ukrainian, Polish, and Mennonite peoples, the francophone population was increasingly outnumbered by the immigration boom of non-Catholic populations, and tensions began to arise between the denominational schools by the 1880s (Gregor & Wilson, 1984). Contributing to these tensions were the increasing number of English-speaking Protestants who held historical biases against Roman Catholics and francophones and the pressured movement of Métis populations further west into what is now Saskatchewan, as Manitoba neglected its commitments to them. While the immigrant populations from Europe were neither primarily English nor French, they either assimilated into the existing Protestant system or established their own autonomous schools (e.g., Icelandic settlers occupying the Gimli area, outside of the formal boundaries of Manitoba at the time, established their own colony with schools that eventually merged into the Protestant, English-speaking schools when Manitoba's borders extended around them; Mennonite colonies were largely

protected enclaves that established their own schools that almost exclusively involved religious instruction; Gregor & Wilson, 1984). As tensions mounted between the increasingly minoritized francophone population in Roman Catholic schools and the expanding anglophone population in the Protestant system, there was a mounting pressure to address the issue. However, there was another factor exerting pressure on education at the same time, which was linked to the motivation to establish Manitoba as a province in the first place: the project of nation-building.

While schools were seen as a civilizing activity during westward expansion into the frontier and contributing to the development of an educated citizenry, they were also seen as a site where patriotism could be instilled. For an emerging and expanding nation, this was an important aspect of education for building Canada (Gregor & Wilson, 1984). However, another key role for schools was their commitment to the "moral development" of children, primarily through the lens of religious instruction and development of virtuous character and industrious habits. At the time, elementary schools were treated as the "public schools" within the province and regarded as the only mandatory schooling to be completed; secondary schools were largely considered unnecessary for the general populace and, as such, were mainly unfunded and often only attended by those who would go on to leadership roles in public office or industry (Gregor & Wilson, 1984). Here again, we observe the pattern of educational attainment along class lines, linked to both financial means and aspirations to higher office, as well as the notion of proper moral development in line with national identity. Increasingly, the concern for nation-building, particularly with non-English speaking immigrant populations throughout the 1870s and 1880s, and the perceived need for English to be established as a common language were conflated with moral development.

Manitoba Schools Question

By 1890, the tensions between the Catholic and Protestant education systems, exacerbated by the demographic linguistic shift toward an English-language speaking majority in the province, came to a head in what came to be known as the "Manitoba Schools Question." It began in 1890 when Manitoba abolished French

as an official language (through *An Act to Provide that English Language shall be the Official Language of the Province of Manitoba*), which effectively eliminated the bilingual commitments established in the *Manitoba Act* of 1870. In the same month, Manitoba introduced two pieces of education legislation. The first, *An Act respecting the Department of Education*, consolidated the two education systems (the Catholic one and the Protestant one) into a single department. The second, *An Act respecting Public Schools*, divested the province of responsibility for funding both Catholic and Protestant denominational schools and, instead, created a tax-supported, non-sectarian public school system. As Verrette (2016) explained, the rationale was that "if Catholics, most of whom were francophone, wanted to continue to be educated in their religion, they would now have to fund their own schools, in addition to paying taxes for public schools" (n.p.). This education reform essentially eliminated Catholic schools from the public school system by merging the departments and defunding Catholic schools, but it also effectively eradicated French-language instruction in schools as well. As Gregor and Wilson (1984) explain, the extensive overlap between francophone populations and Roman Catholics makes it difficult to ascertain the definite motivations of the province—whether ethnic, linguistic, or religious in nature—in eliminating the Roman Catholic education system; however, they argue that both ethnic/linguistic and religious motivations were likely involved, and different political actors likely had motivations for marginalizing either Roman Catholicism or the French language. One related impact of this education controversy was that there were differential impacts for many Métis communities as well, due to strong ties in francomanitobaine communities where Catholicism was observed and French spoken. Ostensibly, the Manitoba Schools Question centred religion, but it featured francophone rights prominently. At its core, it was about denominational schooling, although I think it is worth emphasizing that undoubtedly ethnic and linguistic difference played a role, with religion almost certainly serving as a proxy for anti-francophone sentiment (and potentially reflective of compounding/interlocking oppressions and attitudes); since Manitoba abolished French as an official language in the province during the same year they eliminated Catholic schooling, the two policy actions must be considered together. I would further observe that the imbrication of Catholic adherents and francophone

speakers makes it virtually impossible to tease the two issues apart, which reveals the dominant motive of the education reform in eliminating difference and attempting to legislate a dominant notion of the Canadian citizen—one that speaks English and adheres to a non-Catholic, secularized Christianity situated in the nation state.

The linkages between Catholic schooling and francophones took on larger significance during this period, with Quebec and the rest of Canada paying increasing attention. A Constitutional challenge was mounted based on the Constitutional protection guaranteeing education in both Catholic and Protestant denominations; abolishing Catholic education in Manitoba was, therefore, a violation of the Constitution. As the challenge proceeded through the courts, francophone communities in Manitoba sought to find ways to ensure they maintained continued access to Catholic schooling; during this period, some municipalities began making contributions to their local Catholic schools to ensure that their francophone communities could continue accessing Catholic education in French, as desired by their community members. Manitoba, however, viewed municipal educational funding as an infraction of the education system's funding structure, and in 1894 the government restricted municipalities' powers to make expenditures to assist schools outside of the public education system, further exacerbating the financial difficulties of Catholic schools. Meanwhile, the courts adjudicated the Constitutional challenge, eventually turning to the question of funding to settle the dispute. They found that Catholic denominational schooling rights were still retained in Manitoba; however, the Constitutional guarantee for denominational schooling did not include *funding* for such education. In other words, while Catholic schooling rights were protected, funding for Catholic education was not, and so Manitoba's legislation of 1890 was upheld. This, obviously, was an unsatisfactory answer for Catholic populations—and the rest of Canada continued watching the situation unfold. In 1896, the federal Conservative government intervened and introduced a bill on behalf of Manitoba Catholics. However, the Liberal Opposition launched a campaign against it and prevented the passage of the bill. Later that same year, the federal election brought the Liberal government to power under the leadership of Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier, with the Manitoba Schools

Question exerting influence in the election and the larger significance of francophone rights upsetting Quebec voters. However, following the election, Laurier set out to bring the question to an end, proposing an approach that he called "the sunny way"—that is, achieving a resolution through a diplomatic negotiation rather than imposing one through legislation—and reaching an uneasy concession in the Laurier-Greenway Compromise. The resolution allowed for a half-hour of religious instruction at the conclusion of the school day, the hiring of Catholic teachers in public schools, and limited bilingual instruction of French, alongside other minority languages, where numbers warranted (Verrette, 2016). In some ways, this compromise brought a resolution to the question of education in Manitoba and reinforced English as the primary language of instruction, but it laid the groundwork for another unexpected problem.

While the Laurier-Greenway Compromise introduced the stipulation that bilingual instruction could occur where sufficient numbers warranted—detailing 25% or 40 pupils as the threshold for providing religious instruction or bilingual language instruction—it did not specify *which* languages could be used (Gregor & Wilson, 1984). In the intervening years, the diversity of Manitoba's immigration and overall settled population led to a proliferation of languages that met the sufficient numbers criteria, and this meant that even though English was the default in schools, French, German, Polish, Ukrainian, and other languages (reflective of immigration)[17] were increasingly being required in various communities throughout the province. In other words, due to the widespread immigration in the province, the number of languages spoken and linguistic diversity meant there was a proliferation of various languages being required in schools. Rather than a bilingual education system, the compromise resulted in a multilingual system, or a multitude of bilingual schools with different combinations of

[17] I observe that, notably, Indigenous languages were not included in this bilingual instruction provision. Given the expanding residential school system that punitively enforced language infractions and punished any who spoke Indigenous languages, it seems particularly restrictive and discriminatory that the openness to linguistic diversity was available, even if only for a 20 year span, only to non-Indigenous people in Manitoba—particularly as this linguistic provision was arrived at through a negotiation between the federal government (Laurier), who oversaw residential schools, and the province (Greenway). Again, this makes it blatantly obvious that the residential school system was a colonial project working to eradicate Indigenous languages, cultures, and knowledges.

English and other languages, that became increasingly difficult to staff (Gregor & Wilson, 1984). Whenever the 25% or 40 student threshold was met, the education legislation guaranteed that bilingual instruction could occur; however, securing adequately trained teachers for these schools who were fluent in both English and the other language—not always French, but representative of the 25% or 40 pupils—proved a persistent problem. As a result, the compromise could not be sustained long term and, in 1916, another education reform removed the bilingual instruction requirement, prohibited instruction in or the teaching of any other language—including French—and enforced English-only education again in the province. As Verrette (2016) notes, immigration introduced such widespread linguistic diversity that the policy provision allowing for instruction in minority languages had make "the school system less effective as a tool for imposing English as the dominant language"; the education level of the province's population as a whole was also considered poor at the time, and instruction in minority languages was a convenient culprit. However, the weak educational attainment was "attributable not so much to language issues as to the lack of a law making school attendance mandatory," which the 1916 reform also addressed by introducing mandatory school ages of 7 to 14 years. The 1916 reform legislation was likely influenced by other factors as well, including Canada's involvement in the Great War (World War I) and the desire to further bolster a national identity, reinforce English as the dominant language, and discourage citizens' attachment to non-Canadian, non-English (i.e., non-allied national) identities.

This education policy was met with francophone resistance efforts, and many teachers continued instruction in French by concealing it from the Department of Education who worked to enforce it, or by gaining lenience from sympathetic school inspectors. The Association d'éducation des Canadiens français du Manitoba (AÉCFM) formed in 1916 and encouraged francophone teachers to keep teaching French and using it as a language of instruction without letting authorities know; AÉCFM also defended any teachers who came under sanction, provided financial assistance to help future teachers pay for their education, and held a French contest for grades 4 through 12 students from 1923 to 1966 (Verrette, 2016). French language instruction was also aided at the level of local boards by school board trustees who were responsible for hiring teaching staff and who, in

francophone communities, were often populated by francophone Catholics. These efforts sustained French language instruction through a gradual thaw toward French language instruction through gradual policy reforms re-introducing French. In 1947, Manitoba authorized the teaching of French as a "foreign language" in secondary schools, in 1957 the education department approved a French textbook list, and in 1967 the use of French as a language of instruction was authorized for other subjects (i.e., not merely the teaching of French as an additional language) for up to half the school day. French-language education achieved equal footing with English in 1970, likely due in part to the passage of the *Official Languages Act* at the federal level in 1969[18], and the first French-immersion school, École Sacré-Cœur, opened in 1973. However, it wasn't until 1993 when French was granted autonomous administrative standing through the *Public Schools Amendment (francophone Schools Governance) Act*, which created Division scolaire franco-manitobaine (DSFM) as a French school division in the province with its own elected trustees.

The Manitoba Schools Question offers a number of insights into the administrative policy response to minority rights, in this case denominational schooling and francophone students. In 1870, given the roughly equal numbers of English and French language speakers, alongside the Protestant-Catholic balance and the legislative provisions protecting francophones in the *Manitoba Act*, education and French were provided equally. However, as population demographics shifted and French took on a minority status, the predominantly English population and government sought to eliminate French-language instruction through the defunding of Catholic schools. It is telling that the education reform of 1890 pulled levers connected with funding, while also "integrating" the two education departments into one; ostensibly, the move was a consolidation of the education system providing equal recognition of both Protestant and Catholic schools, but through the decisions to remove funding from Catholic schools, disproportionately impacting francophones, the "neutral" move of consolidating two departments into one effectively eliminated the provision of public education in French, as

[18] While the *Official Languages Act* was passed in 1969, Manitoba lagged in implementing French and received an official nudge in 1979 from the federal government to comply (Gregor & Wilson, 1984).

well as undermining the financial feasibility of Catholic schooling. Manitoba further reinforced that financial hardship in 1894 by prohibiting municipalities from funding local Catholic, francophone schools. Even the Constitutional challenge was resolved by considering the autonomy of education departments to choose how to allocate funding, and the courts affirmed the province's authority to remove funding from Catholic schools to resolve the legal challenge; this allowed them to affirm that the Constitutional guarantee of denominational schooling for Catholics had *not* been violated, ignoring the material reality of funding that severely limited the ability of Catholic schools to operate—drawing a line between public schooling and private schooling at a very early point in Manitoba's history. Despite the brief reprieve of the Laurier-Greenway Compromise, which resulted in the unforeseen proliferation of multilingual school system while also severely restricting the length of language instruction on any given school day to half-an-hour, Manitoba reintroduced a ban on non-English languages in 1916 that lasted through the better half of the century, until French was permitted to be taught as a "foreign language" 30 years later, achieving equal footing as English in principle over 50 years later, and finally gaining administrative autonomy through the creation of a French school division with elected school board trustees almost 80 years later. Throughout this period, the pattern of oppressing minority language rights in favour of dominant language reveals various policy strategies, including defunding Catholic schools (which "incidentally" affected francophones), and motivations, such as building a national identity through the enforcement of English language as the primary language of instruction. While these oppressive tactics worked to conceal the oppression of minority rights, they were met with resistance that allowed francophones to maintain their language and even teach it, albeit in limited ways, until policy changes began providing official standing for French.

Inclusive tensions in public education

Turning to other aspects of Manitoba's education history, the 1916 legislation also introduced mandatory schooling for youth aged 7 to 14, expanding the numbers of children who would undergo schooling. At the time, as I described above, legislators scapegoated language diversity as the problem with poor student achievement,

while in reality the problem was more probably related to the lack of a law regarding mandatory school attendance, meaning that many children attended irregularly, especially during periods when their labour might be required at home (e.g., planting or harvest in farming). Along with the increased focus on English-language instruction, the expansion of mandatory ages for schooling allowed education to take a more ideological focus on citizenship (Bruno-Jofré, 1999; Osborne, 1999). Effectively, the policy constituted an effort to address the "problem" posed by the unforeseen influx of immigrant populations since the province's creation, which increased the number of nationalities and languages but also posed a threat to the Canadianization of the population. Education became an integral site to promote conformity to a "dominant notion of citizenship," one which emphasized "community, duties, responsibilities, and social integration" (Bruno-Jofré, 1999). During this time, "the aim of public schools in English Canada was to create a homogenous nation based on a common English language, a common culture, identification with the British Empire, and an acceptance of British institutions and practices" (Bruno-Jofré, 1999, section "The Official Discourse of Citizenship in Manitoba"). Reforms during 1927 to 1930, prompted by a committee review of the curriculum completed in 1926, began introducing curricula focused on "the process of Canadianization and character building," which promoted allegiance to Britain, emphasized student individuality and their future as productive citizens in a democratic society, and was highly gendered in reinforcing binary gender notions of male and female social roles (Bruno-Jofré, 1999). These efforts constructed a hegemonic notion of citizenship that effectively worked to erase difference and constitute an ideal citizen as aligning with British values. In these efforts, Indigenous peoples were relegated to the social margins and excluded from classrooms—both their physical presence, as the education of First Nations peoples fell under federal jurisdiction and mandatory attendance of residential schools forced Indigenous children into attendance, and exclusions in the curriculum. Residential schools were enacting their own form of citizenship education, including gendered notions of education for girls and boys (e.g., gender-separate schooling, teaching farming and manual labour to boys, teaching cleaning and sewing to girls), and enacting cultural genocide through the punitive enforcement of English-only language requirements and

elimination of Indigenous knowledges—producing devastating and long-lasting impacts on Indigenous populations (e.g., Battiste, 2013; Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015). Bruno-Jofré (1999) notes that racism against Indigenous peoples constituted "a component of the process of building a Canadian identity." These exclusions worked to enforce a conception of what it meant to be Canadian—along lines of class, gender, race, settler colonialism—that exerted a normativizing influence on students and among teachers.

Through the latter half of the 20th century, there were increasing trends to professionalize teaching, centralize and regulate education, and expand the reach of education to make it more inclusive. Teacher certification had long been administered through normal schools—an unintentionally ironic name, given the focus of this research and recognition of the harmful effects of hegemonic normativity on those who do not readily align with normative values and identities. However, due to the limited number of schools and the high demand for teachers, particularly in rural areas, permit teaching was common throughout the province, which allowed teachers without certification allowance to teach for limited terms. Throughout the first half of the 20th century, there was an increasing divide between rural and urban schools along lines of professionalization, salaries, and autonomy (Gregor & Wilson, 1984; Perfect, 1978), and the sheer volume of school districts made enforcement of teaching standards a challenge (Bruno-Jofré, 1993; Gregor & Wilson, 1984). This gave rise to increasing pressure to consolidate districts, a project that was largely undertaken in the latter half of the 20th century. The Macfarlane report in 1959 prompted a large-scale restructuring of the education system, consolidating many smaller districts into larger divisions, which allowed divisions to share resources in order to provide services, such as specialized staff in the area of special education (Gregor & Wilson, 1984). The Macfarlane Commission was also the first in Manitoba to address the issue of special needs groups, calling the existing services "totally inadequate" and calling on school divisions to "provide facilities and teachers for mentally handicapped students" (Stewart, 2008). Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, children with special needs were increasingly introduced into public schools along with proactive integration strategies for students with disabilities; in 1989, the government released a document detailing policy and procedural guidelines for the

education of students with special needs[19] in public schools, mandating that divisions provide yearly reports on their activities that helped provide parents/guardians more flexibility in choosing educational programs (Britton, 2006). The late-1980s saw the introduction of the first instances of standardized testing in the province, along with an agreement between Council of Ministers of Education Canada (CMEC) and Statistics Canada to create the Canadian Education Statistics Council (CSEC); taken together, these events highlight an increasing concern for metrics in education.

Throughout the 1990s, these trends of regulating, centralizing, and tightening financial expenditures in education continued. There was a proliferation in reporting on education and student success, along with identifying strategies to identify specific ways to link education to society's needs. In the spring of 1991, the Manitoba government commissioned a panel to hold public consultations to investigate possible changes to education legislation, noting that it had been over 10 years since the last extensive revision of education legislation; this led to the 1993 release of the "Creating a Framework for the Future," listing 106 recommendations and identifying 25 major issues, ranging from the goals of education to school choice, financial accountability to responsibilities of school boards, students, and parents; the following year, the government released "Renewing Education: New Directions" committing to improving K–12 public education in the next 5–6 years through actions in defining basic learning competencies, setting educational standards, conducting school reviews and implementing reporting schedules, requiring schools establish advisory councils of parents and community members, enhancing educational technologies, reviewing and reforming teacher education, and detailing the fundamental responsibilities of teachers, principals, and school boards (Britton, 2006). This report,

[19] It is worth clarifying briefly that language regarding "special needs" learners, learning exceptionalities, and students with disabilities (e.g., physical, sensory, cognitive, learning) has evolved over time. There is no real consensus on what language should be used and some terms might be considered ableist or confer negative judgement regarding a person's abilities or health conditions. Language in the field of inclusive education has evolved over time, including terms like "special needs" or exceptional learners. In general, I use "person first" language to refer to people with disabilities and I use *disability* to refer broadly to functional limitations that exist primarily because of barriers to access. In cases where another researcher, source, or policy document uses other language, I generally follow the author's convention, recognizing that these terms may be dated, reflect normative assumptions about ability or needs, or otherwise limited in addressing disability.

somewhat ironically, was released the first year of a run of financial reductions aimed at the public school system under Filmon's PCs, with reductions or 0% increases from 1993/1994 to 1997/1998 school years. There was also a review of school division boundaries conducted in 1994, followed by a supplemental review in 1995, an announcement supporting the concept of amalgamation in 1996, and finally the announcement of reduction in the number of divisions from 54 to 37 in 2001/2002 with the passing of *The Public Schools Modernization Act (Public Schools Act Amended)*[20]. Preceding this, in 1992, a new funding formula was announced for public schools that stipulated funding levels for divisions were not guaranteed but would change from year to year based on changes in enrollment, assessment, and expenditures (Britton, 2006). Alongside this, there was an expansion of standardized testing throughout the student population of Manitoba. In 1993, Manitoba students from sample schools aged 13 and 16 participated in the first School Assessment Indicators Program (SAIP), a pan-Canadian standardized test led by CMEC, focusing on math, reading, writing, and science (Manitoban students performed poorly in math, leading the Minister to announce major revisions to the math curriculum); SAIP was to become a permanent activity, and a staple for CMEC, who that same year set a national agenda for education referred to as the Victoria Declaration that committed to public reporting on student performance (Britton, 2006). In 2000, PISA testing was added to these standardized testing schedules as well, allowing for international comparisons of student performance.

Beginning in the 1990s and extending into the 2000s, Manitoba's education system also substantially expanded efforts at inclusion. The Native Education Advisory Committee was established in 1991, composed of Indigenous people from across Manitoba to "review current programs and draft recommendations for a [K–12] Native education policy" (Britton, 2006, p. 9); these efforts at Indigenous inclusion gained traction throughout the 1990s and a range of initiatives were introduced, including adding material on Indigenous perspectives,

[20] This amalgamation was introduced by the newly formed NDP government and provided school divisions with the option to voluntarily merge with neighbouring divisions, which several chose to do; following this effort, a number of others were "assigned" consolidation based on the number of students or geographical features (Levin, 2005). Notably, this education legislation also used the "modernization" language that Bill 64 employed years later.

developing Indigenous language resources and programs, trainings on respecting Indigenous cultures, engagement programs targeted at Indigenous populations, and funding programs. With expanding recognition of the right of Indigenous peoples for autonomy in education, the Manitoba First Nations Education Resource Centre (MFNERC) was established in 1998 by a resolution of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs. In 2004, the "Aboriginal Education Action Plan: 2004–2007" was introduced, specifically targeting increasing graduation rates, entry into and participation in the labour market, and improving research related to Indigenous education and employment. With the release of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples final reporting in 1999, followed some years later by the TRC's final report in 2015, recommendations for education for Indigenous peoples were given increasing attention among educators, particularly given the devastating legacy of residential schools that defined the national regard for Indigenous peoples—a reality made especially forceful given the final school's recent closure in 1996.

Alongside these increasing recognitions of Indigenous peoples, a multicultural policy called "Multicultural Education: A Policy for the 1990s" was released in 1992 to complement the provincial policy for multicultural society (released in 1990).[21] The education policy set out to ensure all Manitobans were allowed "full participation in society," to provide cultural and linguistic supports to students, and "to promote

[21] Multiculturalism began to be more widely adopted in federal policy in the 1970s, first recognizing ethnic multiculturalism and expanding immigration policies in 1976, and then expanding equity and rights-based multiculturalism through the Charter portion of the Canadian Constitution in 1982 (which also enshrined language rights and included Quebec as a "distinct society" in Canada through a 1987 amendment). Additionally, multiculturalism is named in Section 27 of the Constitution (1982), which laid out Charter Rights and Freedoms, and stipulating that "This Charter shall be interpreted in a manner consistent with the preservation and enhancement of the multicultural heritage of Canadians." This directly links rights with this expanding multicultural recognition and inclusion movement. In 1985, the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act* passed, which also recognized Aboriginal rights, prized Canada's multicultural heritage, recognized English and French languages and provided allowances for other languages to be used, affirmed equality rights including race and religion, and minorities' rights to enjoy their cultures. As Tooth (2008) argues in their analysis of Manitoba's civics textbooks (from 1911–2007), notions of citizenship took an assimilationist perspective from 1911–1920, emphasized community life and service from 1921–1960, and shifted to a multiculturalism perspective from 1961 onward. These shifting notions all rely on a notion of what it means to be a Canadian citizen and what is considered to be a valid identity, even while that notion became more inclusive over time. While citizenship under this scope takes a more inclusive view, it relies somewhat on notions of tolerance and respect rather than acceptance—although the shift in the intervening 40 years may have seen more substantive shifts in social attitudes toward acceptance.

intercultural understandings and harmony among all citizens" (Britton, 2006, p. 10); while somewhat problematic, this policy represents a significant shift from the early educational efforts focusing on exclusionary notions of citizenship. In 1992, there was also a challenge to mandatory religious exercises in schools, which were provisioned in Section 84 of *The Public Schools Act*; the court challenge, Manitoba Association for Rights & Liberties Inc. v. Manitoba, resulted in Manitoba Court of Queen's Bench declaring religious exercises for all students unconstitutional, striking down the part of subsection 84(1) after the word "non-sectarian" and all subsections 84(2) through 84(7), retaining only subsection 84(1) reading "Public schools shall be non-sectarian" and 84(8) allowing for petitions (i.e., the province allowed for religious exercises to be conducted if requested by petition [with signatures of 75% of parents/guardians in schools with fewer than 80 pupils, or with at least 60 signatures in schools with 80 or more pupils] and only for students receiving parental consent). This comprised a substantial shift in recognition of Christian influence in schools and shifted toward the non-sectarian recognition of equal standing of religious affiliation.

The question of rights, having been relatively recently formalized in the *Charter* provisions in 1982[22], may have acted as a galvanizing force for these inclusion efforts in education—though it is likely shifting social values, attitudes, and advocacy and rights movements contributed to these changes. This may certainly be seen to be the case for 2SLGBTQIA+ students and content, particularly after the 1995 *Egan v. Canada* court challenge that read sexual orientation into the *Charter*. There was also the expanding recognition of protections regarding sexual orientation through provincial and territorial human rights codes, in some cases prior to federal recognitions. For example, even though the *Canadian Human Rights Act* was created in 1977, almost 10 years

[22] For clarity, rights were not newly introduced through the *Charter*, nor were they new within the liberal democratic polity of Canada; the *British North America Act*, or the *Constitution Act, 1867*, as it was later known, included a small bill of rights, but it did not specifically address human rights provisions. The first federal statute bill of rights was introduced in 1960, the *Canadian Bill of Rights*, which was the earliest legislation reflecting human rights law, formalizing an implied common law bill of rights. The Constitution of 1982, and the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, expanded this bill of rights at the level of constitutional rights and protections. More to the point, the extensive public and political discourse regarding human rights in the context of the Canadian Constitution would likely have brought these issues to the fore in the social milieu.

after the (partial) decriminalization of homosexuality in 1969, the Act did not explicitly include sexual orientation until 1996 (following Egan v. Canada) and added gender identity and expression as recently as 2017. The first province to add sexual orientation to their human rights code was Quebec; Manitoba was the fourth, doing so in 1987; and the last was Alberta in 2009. The increasing recognition of 2SLGBTQIA+ persons and our inclusion in policy and regulatory human rights documents certainly lent support to inclusion in public education. For instance, Winnipeg School Division (WSD) introduced an anti-homophobia policy in 1999 using the rationale that linked human rights explicitly with anti-homophobia (Taylor, 2008); this led to the introduction of mandatory anti-homophobia trainings for all WSD staff and a dedication to resource development for anti-homophobia and LGBTTIQ-inclusive books, including the development in 2002 of a 225-page *Human Rights/Anti-Homophobia Resource Guide* (Taylor, 2008, pp. 164–165). These human rights connections were further bolstered by the legalization of "same-sex" marriage in 2005 (following the court challenge *M v. H* in 1999, recognizing the validity of same-sex common-law unions, and the marriage equality court challenge in Ontario in 2003, *Halpern v. Canada*), making it clear that legal equality was gradually being conferred on 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals in Canadian society more broadly. It is worth noting that legal protections regarding employment discrimination, legal adoption, gender equality were recognized at different times, often involving court challenges or prolonged legislative struggles.

In 2004, Manitoba Education also introduced the *Safe Schools Charter*, amending *The Public Schools Act* and *The Education Administration Act*. The Charter obligated school boards to provide safe and caring school environments, establish codes of conduct and emergency response plans, and enable the creation of regulations regarding positive and safe school environments. This furnished Manitoba Education and educators working in the public schools system with the ability to centre issues of safety in school through the Safe and Caring Schools initiative (see https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/safe_schools/index.html). In the following years, Safe and Caring Schools expanded with the addition of cyberbullying and electronic devices in 2008, the requirement for adults to report unacceptable conduct in 2011, and the expanded provisions of Bill 18 (2012) defining bullying and

introducing the requirement for school divisions to create and maintain a "respect for human diversity" policy. Through the growth of the Safe and Caring Schools initiative and supporting legislation, education increasingly foregrounded the need to provide safe and inclusive school environments, defined by principles of safety, respect, and inclusion. Publications by Manitoba Education supporting this area often open with Manitoba's "Philosophy of Inclusion," which explains "Inclusion is a way of thinking and acting that allows every individual to feel accepted, valued, and safe. An inclusive community consciously evolves to meet the changing needs of its members. Through recognition and support, an inclusive community provides meaningful involvement and equal access to the benefits of citizenship" (Manitoba Education, 2017b). While Safe and Caring Schools takes a broader view of school safety and encourages proactive policy interventions and school planning to create safer school environments—particularly through addressing bullying, introducing "whole-school" approaches to planning for safety and belonging, and including a "Provincial Code of Conduct" directive (e.g., Manitoba Education, 2014/2017, 2014, 2017b)—it is also notable as the location where 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion has found its surest foothold in Manitoba's education policy framework.

In 2012, Manitoba's then–Minister of Education Nancy Allan introduced Bill 18*, The Public Schools Amendment Act (Safe and Accepting Schools)*, a limited educational reform which was passed and enacted the following year in 2013. The bill introduced five specific provisions to *The Public Schools Act* that added language regarding bullying—including a definition of bullying, recognition of cyberbullying, language that explicitly named human diversity characteristics as grounds protected from harassment, a Gay–Straight Alliance (GSA) support mechanism, and a mandate to develop a "respect for human diversity" policy. Building on the existing Safe and Caring Schools initiative, Bill 18 was informed by the recent release of the First National Climate Survey (Taylor & Peter, 2011), which provided extensive, statistically reliable evidence that 2SLGBTQIA+ students faced disproportionately hostile school climates. Bill 18 also mirrored Ontario's similar legislation, Bill 13, *Accepting Schools Act* (2012), which passed the year before and similarly introduced a GSA provision. Before Bill 18 passed, however, there was a period of intense public discussion regarding the bill. Public discourse and media attention

regarding the bill was dominated by a small but vocal opposition to the bill's explicit inclusion of "people of all sexual orientation and gender identities" (ss. 41(1.8)(a)(iv)) and the provision supporting GSA student groups. While the bill did not focus exclusively on sexual orientation or gender identity—its main focus, in fact, was on providing clear, anti-bullying protections through formalized "respect for human diversity" policies for various forms of diversity named in human rights legislation, including race, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, and so on—other aspects of the bill did not excite the type of opposition that the protections for sexual orientation or gender identity, or that the language regarding the GSA provision, did. Officially, the PC Opposition publicly criticized the bill for its lack of definitional surety regarding what constituted bullying.

At the time of the public hearings on Bill 18, one story of a local student came to the fore: The year before this legislation was introduced, Evan Wiens, a 16-year-old student in the politically and religiously conservative town of Steinbach, asked his school, Steinbach Regional Secondary School in Hanover School Division, if he could start a GSA; he was given permission to do so but told he was not permitted to advertise the club by putting up posters or mentioning it in the morning announcements (CTV News, 2013). Despite being told that this was the case for all student clubs—i.e., that *no* student groups were allowed to promote their clubs—Wiens's GSA group was the only one that teachers and administrators enforced the rule for. As one student observed, there are "posters on the improv team and like worship ones for morning devotion… and all the religious groups" (CTV News, 2013, n.p.). Wiens ended up abandoning the club until Bill 18 was put forward the following year, and then he asked his school again if he could advertise the GSA. Minister Nancy Allan explicitly linked Wiens's experience to the proposed legislation's mandate for schools to promote awareness, understanding, and respect. Allan went on record with media, stating, "If the poster is advertising that there is now a gay-straight alliance in the school, that is allowed under the legislation, so I would determine the poster is allowable"; at the time, Hanover School Division superintendent Randy Dueck refused to answer media queries about whether Wiens would be allowed to advertise his GSA (CTV News, 2013). Evan Wiens's situation became a focal point for the debate around Bill 18, and his situation achieved national prominence in the media (see

Canadian Press, 2013; Wingrove, 2013). Public debates regarding Bill 18 came to be characterized as one of religious rights versus queer rights (see Short, 2013, 2014), with conservatives throwing their social and political clout behind religious rights in opposition, broadly, to the legislation and in opposition, specifically, to 16-year-old Evan.

In the end, Bill 18 passed and all schools in the province were compelled to allow GSAs upon student request (and required them to be adequately resourced commensurable to other school clubs). As well, all school divisions had to develop a respect for human diversity policy that acknowledged characteristics that were protected from bullying or discrimination, including explicit mention of sexual orientation and gender identity. However, this amendment involved the casualty of Wiens' privacy and safety. Situations such as these are, unfortunately, not uncommon in Canada's public education systems, and many of the achievements gained in the effort to create equity for 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects in schools are similarly focused on instances of discrimination or harassment of students, educators, and families—or, as Airton (2013) argues, relying on the conflation of the "suffering queer" as justification for intervention. This highlights a key question in education reform, particularly for policies regarding 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects, that considers not only *whether* 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects are included but also *how*. Bill 18 was premised on the notion of safety in schools—and rightly so, given the disproportionately negative climates students experience regarding 2SLGBTQIA+ people—and it positively and expressly named 2SLGBTQIA+ people as protected within the legislation. It even introduced the mandate that GSAs were to be provided where requested and students had the right to use that name for the club. This excited a certain degree of opposition when the bill was tabled and in the committee stage (317 people registered to speak at the public hearings, although only 238 spoke; Froese, 2021, May 24). However, it was a vital intervention in establishing the principle that 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects were to be included and supported in schools. By linking those protections to human rights frameworks and the baseline regard for safety in schools, it established clear principles for 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects to be included and extended protections to them. It further furnished Manitoba Education with the ability to develop resources for Safe and Caring Schools that explicitly

included 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects, including a *MyGSA Toolkit* (Manitoba Education & Egale, 2014) and *Supporting transgender and gender diverse students in Manitoba schools* (Manitoba Education, 2017a), and ensured that Manitoba Education could rely on official, legislative safe schools principles that named 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects and supported them throughout the safer schools initiatives. This, notably, meant that 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion was not implied under a neutral inclusion mandate or a broad reference to human rights, but rather was included through the explicit naming of sexual orientation and gender identity. However, the link between safety and 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects, as explained in the literature review above, is not without discursive effect, and it often constitutes a notion of 2SLGBTQIA+ students as being inherently at risk of victimization or as only worthy of inclusion when their physical safety is at stake (e.g., Airton, 2013; Loutzenheiser, 2015). Importantly, the safety argument does provide needed protections for 2SLGBTQIA+ students and provide entry points to inclusion efforts—but it is limited in its ability to establish proactive interventions, such as curricular inclusion. Some educators and researchers have recognized that effective anti-bullying interventions need to go beyond addressing individual incidents and work to educatively intervene to address anti-2SLGBTQIA+ attitudes and biases that give rise to homophobic, biphobic, and transphobic harassment; in other words, broader inclusion of 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects is a necessary next step to supporting 2SLGBTQIA+ people in schools and creating positive school environments.

This brief history of education in Manitoba is relevant in considering Bill 64, as it elucidates historical patterns in Manitoba's regulatory decision-making and demonstrates a persistent tension between the education system's purpose—who has access to schooling, who is included and how, what is taught, what values are prized, how diversity is addressed—and the broader regulation of the population. These regulatory efforts in education have mainly worked to reinforce dominant notions of Canadian citizenship along Eurocentric lines—as being white, English speaking, Christian, heterosexual, and aligned with gendered notions of "natural" differences between males and females. Education over the course of Manitoba's history has enforced these in values and conceptualizations in various ways. Given the early policies that defined the Manitoba Schools Question and

initiatives intended to Canadianize students, subsequent education reform efforts have largely worked along similar lines albeit with slight adjustments to their trajectories. The increased recognition of rights in the latter half of the 20th century have effectively increased the number of seats (or the diversity of people occupying them) at the table of education, but the table itself has not significantly changed. Most notably, the past three decades have been marked by neoliberal concerns for fiscal austerity, increased regard for market measures and student labour capacity, heightened regulations regarding professionalization, centralization, and responsibilization (of students for academic performance, of teachers for their ability to teach and "deliver" student performance). Despite the increasing recognition and affirmation of the diversity of the population, and students in the education system, alongside the protections of human rights legislation, there is a degree to which education systems lag behind these changes—as, for instance, with 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusions over the course of the past 40 years. Partly, there are misconceptions that 2SLGBTQIA+ content is somehow sexually explicit or sensitive content from which students must be shielded, or the persistence of socially regressive attitudes toward 2SLGBTQIA+ people, that hamper 2SLGBTQIA+ recognitions and inclusions in educational spaces. Even when explicit protections for 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects are included, they are often implemented slowly or neglected in curricular areas—either because curriculum does not provide substantive direction for including 2SLGBTQIA+ content or contains contradictory messaging regarding this content, or there is apprehension about potential objections to 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion. Resultingly, education sometimes relies on "neutral" or generic approaches that leave educators in the unenviable position of having to venture inclusion of 2SLGBTQIA+ content without the surety of protection from reprisal or complaint. These "neutral" approaches are insufficient, particularly when histories of oppression or systemic exclusion exist, as they reinforce a culture of silence (the "unspeakable" 2SLGBTQIA+ subject) or ignore the power of institutional approval. While Bill 18 and the Safe and Caring Schools resources make it clear that 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects are to be included, even in curricular areas, the lack of developed curriculum and the "high level" of removal from the classroom leave a crucial interpretive gap between explicit support at the highest level (Manitoba Education) and how that message is interpreted,

conveyed, and delivered in classrooms (passed down through school boards to superintendents to principals to teachers to be enacted for students). Overall, this historical overview sets the stage for Bill 64's introduction in 2021 and establishes something of a policy genealogy in Manitoba's history of education and reform efforts.

The Story of Bill 64

Following four terms of NDP government in Manitoba from 1999 until 2016, the Progressive Conservative (PC) party was elected to a majority office in 2016 under Premier Brian Pallister. At the time of this election, the NDP were undergoing internal turmoil following the departure of long-time Premier Gary Doer and his replacement by Greg Selinger, and they had recently introduced an increase to PST in the province, which the PCs strongly opposed and campaigned on the promise of eliminating—which they made good on in 2019 after they were elected with a strong majority in 2016 to form government for the 41st Legislative Assembly. The PCs were elected to two terms (forming the 41st and 42nd Assemblies) spanning 2016 to 2023, which included the period during which the COVID-19 pandemic occurred. In their first term, the PCs enacted several policy changes they justified under austerity measures (Wilt, 2019), including a public-sector employees wage freeze legislation under *The Public Services Sustainability Act* in 2017, which was challenged in court by a coalition of unionized employees called The Partnership to Defend Public Services (which included MTS, the Faculty Associations of universities of Manitoba, Winnipeg, and Brandon, the Manitoba Nurses' Union, among others) as violating workers' rights to collective bargaining (MacLean, May 29, 2018); significant changes to Manitoba's healthcare system, including the closure of three (of six) emergency rooms in Winnipeg (Victoria Hospital in 2017 and Seven Oaks Hospital and Concordia Hospital in 2019), which they converted to urgent care centres; and eliminating legislation that restricted the sizes of K–3 classrooms to 20 students[23] in 2017 (CBC News, March 14, 2017). In

[23] The following year, in November 2018, NDP MLA Matt Wiebe introduced a private member's bill to counter the elimination of the cap, attempting to re-introduce limits to K–3 class sizes. Bill 202, *The Public Schools Amendment Act (Small Classes for K to 3)*, received first reading on November 29, 2018, but did not proceed any further.

early 2019, the PC-led Manitoba government announced plans to conduct an education review of the K–12 education system, announcing commissioners Clayton Manness and Janice MacKinnon would lead the review; the announcement also named Avis Glaze as lead consultant for the review, who had recently conducted a review in Nova Scotia that led to the elimination of elected school boards with an advisory council (Lambert, March 16, 2019; Froese, 2020). The review was conducted throughout 2019 and set to release its final report in March 2020. However, the emergence of COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a delay to the release of the report, as public health measures required drastic changes that overwhelmed the education system.[24]

From the outset, the Education Review Commission's report was anticipated with apprehension by education stakeholders. The education review was commissioned in early 2019 and its final report, *Our Children's Success: Manitoba's Future: Report of the Commission on K to 12 Education* (Manness & MacKinnon, 2020), was set for release in March 2020; however, the release was delayed due to arrival of the COVID-19 global pandemic in Manitoba. The COVID-19 pandemic led to school closures in the final months of the 2019–20 school year and necessitated extensive changes to education delivery across the province, as educators adapted to online instruction, staggered class attendance, and public health restrictions in response to COVID-19, heightening the stress of educators and students alike; these measures began in the final months of the 2019–20 school year and continued into the 2020–21 school year to follow. This added further strain to the education system, which Alan Campbell, President of MSBA, cautioned made this the wrong time to attempt widespread change (Bernhardt, 2021). Even before this enormous upheaval, the education review was anticipated with trepidation by education stakeholders due to the austerity-minded track-record of the PC government and the make-up of the review commission, which was "led by former education minister Clayton Manness and former Saskatchewan finance minister Janice MacKinnon" and enlisted Avis Glaze, "who previously led an education review that resulted in

[24] In my interview with Josh Watt, Executive Director of Manitoba School Boards Association, he explained that Manitoba Education delayed the release of the final report in consultation with education stakeholders and at their request, citing the overwhelming demand of educators and the system to be attentive to the needs of students during the extensive educational adaptations required by public health measures.

sweeping changes in Nova Scotia," as lead consultant (Froese, 2020). When he initially announced the review in early 2019, then–Minister of Education Kelvin Goertzen said "nothing is off the table" and that he was not convinced that the number of school divisions and school trustees in Manitoba was right, and he later announced that significant changes were to be expected. The PC government had also promised, in fall 2019 during the lead-up to the provincial election, that they would reduce the role of school boards and phase out education property taxes (Froese, 2020). When the education review report was released in March 2021, it was at the same time that the full text of Bill 64 was released in its entirety; this meant that the education review was overshadowed by the impending proposed legislation and the review, at least initially, received little attention. It is worth noting that the education review did not call for the elimination of elected school trustees, which Bill 64 attempted to do, leading opponents of the bill to characterize it as being ideologically driven by fiscal conservativism and a desire to increase control over the education system and centralize authority under the Minister.

Further, the announcement and introduction of Bill 64 was itself uncharacteristic. In November 2020, Minister Goertzen, regarded as the "architect" of the bill, announced on behalf of the PC government that Bill 64, *The Education Modernization Act*, was being introduced (along with a raft of other legislation) and described the legislation as ensuring "that the education system is focused on providing the best outcome for students in Manitoba" (quoted in A. Campbell, 2020). However, the full text of Bill 64 (along with 18 other pieces of legislation; Thomas, 2021) was initially withheld, contrary to common practice[25]. The early announcement of the impending education legislation, which had been teased since the announcement of the education review in 2019, without the full text provoked education stakeholder responses criticizing this move and speculating on the bill's contents. For example, Alan Campbell, President of the MSBA, speculated that Bill 64 meant "communities could… lose their democratically elected local voices and choices when it comes to education" (A.

[25] The text of Bill 64 was released in full on March 15, 2021, along with the Education Review Commission's final report—one year after the initial release date and the onset of COVID-19—when it was brought to the Assembly.

Campbell, 2020), citing the previous reform legislation nearly two decades prior called the *Public Schools Modernization Act* (Bill 14, 2002), which laid the foundation for the elimination of school boards throughout Manitoba under the auspices of saving those funds and investing them in the classroom instead; however, even Campbell didn't expect Bill 64 to aim for the complete elimination of school boards, but rather a "forced amalgamation" of divisions that would reduce the number of elected trustees and thereby reduce local representation in school governance.

Prior to the start of the spring session of the Legislative Assembly, the PCs shuffled their cabinet, moving Goertzen out of the role of Education Minister and replacing him with Cliff Cullen who would usher Bill 64 into the Legislative Assembly. In February 2021, a month before the official release of Bill 64, Cullen announced a 1.56 per cent increase in funding for the 2021–22 school year, what he described as the "highest dollar investment in Manitoba's education history." However, Cullen also teased the upcoming reform, describing the education system as "very top-heavy" and in need of reform, stating that "Manitoba has the third-highest spending per student in Canada at $14,815" in 2017/2018 but that "Manitoba students often score well below their counterparts across the country in national assessments" (Bernhardt, 2021; see also Hill et al., 2021). It is worth noting that this assessment of Manitoba's low scoring is a selective reporting, based solely on final scores on standardized test comparisons between provinces, but it does not take a comprehensive account of the scores or recognize that standardized tests do not necessarily reflect student learning or understanding; while Manitoba's scores on the Pan-Canadian Assessment Program (PCAP) testing generally appear in the lower end of the scoring range, Manitoba is within 35 points of the Canadian average and has had a positive change in their scores over time on both Mathematics and Science scores (see Alphonso, 2021; O'Grady et al., 2021). Minister Cullen cited Manitoba's consistent ranking among the lowest in Canada on national and international student assessments for reading, math, and science as the motivation for the bill and stated that he hoped this legislation would soon make it the "most improved education system in Canada" (quoted in CBC News, 2021, March 15).

When Bill 64 was introduced and the full text finally released in its entirety in March 2021, the bill topped 300 pages and represented a massive overhaul of the education system. At the same time as the full text of Bill 64 was released, the Manitoba government also released the education review report by the Commission on K to 12 Education (Manness & MacKinnon, 2020) and its own education strategy in a document called *Better Education Starts Today: Putting Students First* (Manitoba Education, 2021). In the coming months, when criticized by opponents of Bill 64 for the lack of clarity in the legislation, Cullen would point to the Better Education Starts Today (BEST) strategy as explaining Bill 64. This bill proved to be particularly contentious and was opposed publicly not only by the official NDP Opposition—who designated the bill (i.e., officially delayed second reading until the fall session of the Legislature), along with four other bills[26] (Froese, 2021, June 1)—but also by the MSBA, MTS, numerous school divisions, several public campaigns calling on the government to kill the bill, and even several municipalities (e.g., Winnipeg, Winkler). These opposition advocacy efforts led to a record-making number of over 500 people signing up to speak about the bill in the committee stage in fall 2021 (which was set to commence after 2nd Reading). However, it never got that far. The widespread opposition to the bill led to its withdrawal, which was announced in early September 2021 less than six months after it was introduced in its entirety (officially, on October 6, 2021).

The larger context of Bill 64—its development and introduction, its extensive ties with other government policy agendas and activities, the extensive public discourse surrounding it and contributing to its withdrawal, as well as the subsequent aftermath of the turmoil it produced and what reforms have followed since—provides

[26] The Official Opposition is permitted to Designate five bills during each session of the Legislative Assembly, which essentially delays second and third readings and the final vote on whether to pass them in the Assembly. All bills are passed through a "committee stage," for which members of the public can register to present, or speak to, the bill. During the 3rd Session of the 42nd Legislature (2020–2021), the NDP Opposition designated five bills to hold over till the next session to allow time to respond, including Bill 16 (*The Labour Relations Amendment Act*, to change labour relations for public sector unions), Bill 35 (changing the mandate, governance, and funding of the Public Utilities Board, including deregulating increases), Bill 40 (amending *Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries Act* and *Liquor, Gaming and Lotteries Control Act* to permit third-party sales of liquor and cannabis), Bill 57 (*The Protection of Critical Infrastructure Act*, which would introduce limitations to rights to assemble and peaceful demonstration), and Bill 64. All were subsequently withdrawn on October 6, 2021.

insights into what was at stake and why the bill prompted such a strong public response. While I will go into significantly more detail on these changes in the next two chapters in my analysis of the bill itself and the interview findings, it is worth providing a brief outline of some of the most significant changes that provoked opposition to the bill to connect it into this policyscape.

Bill 64,* The Education Modernization Act*, and its contents

Bill 64, *The Education Modernization Act* (2020), proposed extensive reforms to Manitoba's education system under the rationale of improving student outcomes, introducing a new governance structure for Manitoba's education system, and achieving what they claimed were significant cost saving measures. Perhaps the biggest change proposed by Bill 64, and the one that led to some of the most significant opposition, was the elimination of school boards and elected school trustees in all but the French-language division, Division scolaire franco-manitobaine (DSFM). Alongside this change, the bill proposed amalgamating school divisions, taking the current 37 divisions and forming 15 regions instead—including consolidating Winnipeg's five current divisions into one region, which would represent over half of the students in the province. In place of the elected trustees, Bill 64 proposed the formation of school community councils (SCCs) at every school, for which a SCC Executive would be elected at the start of each school year from among the parents or guardians of students attending the schools to form a council executive; the council would have input into the running of the school, including making recommendations for hiring, assisting in assessing program effectiveness, analyzing student achievement and learning outcomes and determining how and by when those outcomes are to be improved, recommending the need for performance evaluations, and reviewing and recommending priorities and policies for the school (Part 5, section 84 of Bill 64). One member of a school community council from each of the newly created 15 regions would be forwarded to sit on the Provincial Advisory Council on Education (PACE), a parents' committee to advise the Minister of Education (Part 5 of Bill 64), under whose centralized authority the education system would now run and have the responsibility of establishing provincial objectives and priorities, determine which educational services would be provided, and issue directives regarding educational matters (Part 3 of Bill 64). Bill

64 would also create a board comprised of 6 to 11 appointees of the Provincial Education Authority (PEA), a government agency to oversee the administration of education in the province, including appointing one director of education for each region (Part 4 of Bill 64). The bill also proposed removing principals and vice-principals from the bargaining units of the MTS teachers' union, in which they currently are members in the Council of School Leaders (COSL) of The Manitoba Teachers' Society (Part 10 of Bill 64); this would effectively place principals and vice-principals in managerial roles within individual schools. Opposition to Bill 64 often took aim at these system changes and critiqued the proposed rationale of introducing them—supporting student success. Public campaigns took issue with the elimination of an entire level of elected officials in dismantling school boards and school trustee positions along several lines: it would remove "local voices" from the education system and place added responsibility on untrained and unpaid parents/guardians in school administration; the consolidation of school divisions would reduce the number of local voices in educational administration and input into curricula in schools, particularly in the disproportionate representation of what would be the Winnipeg region, where the majority of the province's students and the most diverse demographic populations are located; the reference to standardized student testing as the primary measure of student success; and picking up various intersections of social justice that these changes would systemically reify (e.g., lack of any mention of poverty or socioeconomic status, and race or racialization, in the education legislation; reduction in community representation in the administration of education in the province).

While the proposed changes I outline above constitute the major structural changes to the education system in Manitoba, there were several changes embedded in the bill that specifically relate to gender and sexual diversity that are worth pointing out. As Janzen (2021), a member of the University of Manitoba Faculty of Education, observed in her editorial in the *Winnipeg Free Press*, the bill neglects student diversity in general:

> There is a lack of acknowledgement in the bill about the diversity of students; that students are agentic; that they come from different families, communities and circumstances; and have

different languages, races, ethnicities, abilities and interests. And deplorably, there is no recognition of the need for and importance of our collective commitment toward reconciliation.

This constitutes a substantial oversight in the bill's neglect of the inclusive philosophy of Manitoba Education. Janzen's editorial summarizes many of the social justice-based objections to the bill. Interestingly, however, Janzen did not mention sexual and gender diversity in her critique of the bill, where language, race, ethnicity, ability, interests and diverse families and circumstances have all been named—perhaps reflective of a further lack of visibility or perceived relevance for 2SLGBTQIA+ students more generally. This suggests that gender and sexuality may have fallen off the radar of both policymakers and in public discourse regarding the bill, perhaps because people felt that gender and sexual diversity had already been addressed through Bill 18 provisions. After all, Bill 64, to its credit, retained the changes introduced in 2012 through the NDP's Bill 18, *The Public Schools Amendment Act (Safe and Inclusive Schools)*, which the PC opposition had opposed; at that time, Brian Pallister, who was Premier in Manitoba from 2015 to August 2021 and oversaw the creation and introduction of Bill 64, was the official opposition education critic. Bill 18, as I described above, was often treated as legislation that expressly addressed "gay" content, and it was opposed by a vocal minority of social conservatives on these grounds, particularly among conservative, fundamentalist Christian constituents; however, the bill's mandate was broader and provided specific bullying and harassment protections for students and institute respect for human diversity—including the full range of protected personal characteristics in human rights codes and, importantly, explicit protections on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity. Despite opposition, Bill 18 passed and successfully amended *The Public Schools Act*,[27] introducing language that defined bullying

[27] While there was substantial opposition to Bill 18 in 2013, it was largely the result of a vocal minority that were committed to opposing the "gay" aspects of the bill and, ultimately, these opposition efforts did not lead to its withdrawal. At the same time, Bill 18 also received substantial support from the public and from the community, which bolstered the majority NDP government's commitment to seeing it through. Interestingly, despite the similar position that the PC government occupied with a majority government, they were not able to sustain their commitment to passing Bill 64 because of the overwhelming magnitude of the opposition efforts; citizens on both the right and left of the political spectrum had strong objections to the bill and this contributed to its eventual withdrawal.

(including cyberbullying), introduced a mandate for school boards to expand their policies about Internet usage, and requiring boards to create a "respect for human diversity" policy to "promote the acceptance of and respect for others in a safe, caring and inclusive school environment"; part of this policy mandate provided for the inclusion of accommodations for student activities that promote inclusivity in schools and, expressly, allowed "student activities and organizations to use the name 'gay-straight alliance'" (Bill 18, 2012). Bill 64 retained these aspects of *The Public Schools Act* (section 138 of Bill 64); however, it also introduced a "sensitive content" clause, which mandated parents be notified when "instructional materials dealing primarily or explicitly with potentially sensitive content are to be used in a physical education or health education course," particularly where there is content that conflicts with a parent's or child's "religious, cultural or family values" (section 144 of Bill 64). While this was not an entirely new provision, as language regarding "potentially sensitive content" currently resided in the Physical Education and Health curriculum, it would have moved that curricular guideline into the legislation, making it harder to change and giving it the force of law. I return to this point in the next chapter in my analysis of the bill itself—but for now it is worth noting that this change would have installed as law language where historically anti-2SLGBTQIA+ sentiment has resided and where common objections to 2SLGBTQIA+-supportive interventions have been situated.

Altogether, Bill 64 proposed extensive structural changes to Manitoba's education system. The bill sought to eliminate school trustee positions, re-map the existing 37 school divisions into 15 regions, centralize education under the Minister of Education and in the appointment of provincial educational authority, remove principals and vice-principals from the teachers' union to move them into managerial roles within schools, and expand the influence of parents/guardians at the level of individual schools through parental advisory committees. It is worth noting that a parental advisory committee would be unlikely to provide an equitable council of representatives of the student population; rather, it would disproportionately favour those who have the time to volunteer for the council and the desire to be involved, potentially advantaging certain social positionalities, such as parents/guardians with higher SES, those who are ideologically motivated, or those with higher levels of

education. Further to this point, the bill did not devote any explicit attention or add any new provisions regarding social equity concerns—save the preservation of the status quo in the existing legislation's language regarding human rights protections and the respect for human diversity policies. This virtual silence effectively ignored the impacts of social marginalization on learning; for example, if low scores on student performance evaluations were truly a motivating factor for introducing Bill 64, then the bill ought to address poverty and socioeconomic status (SES) as one of the primary indicators of academic attainment is SES (as opponents of the bill argued). This silence on social issues conveyed a political choice that intentionally excluded thinking about the impacts of marginalization, disregarding the lived realities and identities of students, which have real impacts on learning and experiences in education. In other words, the bill individuated students, treating academic performance as the sole indicator of educational success, scrubbed clean of the potential impacts that race, disability, SES/poverty, sexual orientation, and gender identity may have on the experiences of students (as Janzen & Heringer, 2023, have argued).

Public Discourse and Collective Responses

With the introduction of Bill 64 in March 2021, public discourse about education in Manitoba virtually exploded. News coverage and editorial opinion pieces on the bill were a daily occurrence, education stakeholder organizations initiated advocacy campaigns with near constant messaging, and individual and collective-organizing efforts formed to speak about the bill and the future of education in the province. Local news media covered not only Bill 64 and its opposition in depth, publishing regular news items, but also provided a platform for a multitude of editorials throughout the roughly six-month period when Bill 64 was tabled. Immediate opposition to Bill 64 involved an official delay to the bill's second reading in the Legislative Assembly by the Official Opposition NDP through a designation of the bill, which moved the second reading to the fall session of the Legislative Assembly. This delay bought crucial time to review the proposed reforms and organize collective opposition movements featuring public discourse. During this period, amid the editorials and news coverage and social media campaigns, over 500 individuals signed up to speak at the Committee Stage involving public

hearings regarding the bill following its Second Reading, a record in the history of Manitoba's Legislature. Part of the public messaging by those opposed to the bill actually foregrounded this effort and encouraged members of the public to sign up to speak during the Committee Stage (e.g., MSBA's Local Voices, Local Choices campaign) and called for people to get involved (e.g., A. Campbell, 2021, May 7). The NDP created a digital tool kit providing information about having conversations about the bill and speaking at committee, with Kinew stating, "I want this committee hearing to be record-breaking…. With the Pallister government's majority and the amount of political capital that they've tried to push Bill 64 forward with, the only chance we have to really stop this thing is if there's widespread public outcry against it" (quoted in Froese, 2021, May 24).

Public reception predominantly opposed the bill, citing its anti-democratic elimination of elected school board trustees (e.g., Bedford, 2021, May 18), the centralization of education authority in the province (e.g., Yoon & Young, 2021), and control of the education system's financial and resource allocation (e.g., O'Leary, 2021). These critiques of the structural and governance changes were mainstays in public discourse and also enabled organizations, institutions, and municipalities time to organize and take stances opposing the bill. Resistance to the bill by stakeholder organizations, such as MTS's Slam the Door on 64 / Combattre 64 and MSBA's Local Voices, Local Choices, and by non-education institutions, such as the NDP, Liberal party, municipalities, and Indigenous groups, brought larger force and institutional resources to efforts opposing Bill 64. For instance, several municipalities passed resolutions in the summer of 2021 calling for the withdrawal of Bill 64 and the retention of democratically elected school boards to reflect the principles of local governance—including, for example, the municipalities of Louise (Resolution # 2021.07.30), Stonewall (Resolution # 2021/280), and Winkler (Resolution # 2021-0232) (see Laychuk, July 17, 2021; Macintosh, July 15, 2021).[28] The City of Winnipeg also

[28] MSBA posted an extensive listing of rural municipalities, town/cities, and other local governments that have voiced their opposition to Bill 64, including: Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc. (MKO); the municipalities of Argyle, Armstrong, Cartwright-Roblin, Deloraine-Winchester, Ellice-Archie, Hamiota, Grahamdale, Grey, Fisher, Louise, Norfolk Treherne, Piney, Prairie View, Rossburn, Rosedale, Ste. Anne, Ste. Rose, Stanley, Stuartburn, Taché, Victoria Beach, Wallace-Woodwoth, West Interlake, Woodlands, Yellowhead; and the towns/cities of Altona, Sainte-Anne, Teulon, Winkler, Winnipeg.

passed a motion on July 22, 2021, calling for the maintenance of elected school boards, with former school trustee and current Councillor Sherri Rollins stating, "Bill 64 is an absolute attack on local government" (Keele, 2021). Grand Chief Garrison Settee, of Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc., issued a letter to Minister Cullen and Minister of Indigenous and Northern Relations Eileen Clarke calling for the immediate withdrawal of the bill, as it legislated contrary to *The Path to Reconciliation Act* (C.C.S.M. c. R30.5); Grand Chief Settee noted not only the delayed release of the bill's text, but also explained that "Collectively, the development and introduction of Bill 64 is undemocratic, perpetuates colonialism and are inappropriate in light of Legislative Assembly's endorsement of the principles of reconciliation, the calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the principles of the United Nations declaration on the rights of Indigenous peoples and the Legislative Assembly's express direction as to the conduct of Members of the Executive Council through the *Path to Reconciliation Act*" (Settee, 2021). An open letter from "recently retired superintendents" in the province[29] stated the bill was based on faulty assumptions and, if passed, would harm Manitoba's education system:

> Among other inaccurate contentions, Bill 64 is based on false and divisive premises and promises—of quality (test scores vs. poverty); participation (individual parents vs. school boards); collegiality and professionalism (principals vs. teachers); and efficiency (extreme centralization vs. local discretion). Nowhere in the world have the solutions being advocated ended in the results being proclaimed. And everywhere in the world, extreme centralization has led to standard formula-driven prescriptions—one-size-fits-all answers—insensitive to local differences and impervious to local input. And nowhere in the world have they increased trust in government. (Bryant et al., 2021)

[29] The letter was posted to the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents website and listed the following in signatory to the letter: Coralie Bryant, Bob Cesmystruck, Karen Crozier, Paul Cuthbert, Ray Derksen, Arnold Dysart, Catherine Fidierchuk, Cam Giavedoni, Brian Gouriluk, Don Hurton, Ken Klassen, Scott Kwanitza, Pauline Lafond-Bouchard, Brett Lough, Lawrence Lussier, Ross Metcalfe, Paul Moreau, Dan Reagan, Strini Reddy, Vern Reimer, Jean-Yves Rochon, Janet Schubert, Roy Seidler, Winston Smith, Jerry Storie, Dave Swanson, Don Wiebe, John Wiens, and David Yeo.

These efforts sought to highlight the anti-democratic undercurrent of Bill 64, as well as the ways that the bill was constructing a false picture of education in the province to justify their actions, including the ways the bill contradicted or conflicted with other commitments or was counterproductive to their stated intentions. Organizing against the bill at this level also involved a lawn sign campaigns, which several organizations developed and made available for people to display their opposition to the bill (see Figure 4.1), with some estimates playing the number of signs across the province at over 15,000.



Figure 4.1: Photos of lawn signs opposing Bill 64, depicting (left to right) the NDP's "Protect our schools FightBill64.ca"; the Liberal party's "NO to Bill 64" sign; both MTS's "Combattre 64" and "Slam the Door on 64" signs; MSBA's Local Voices sign "Your Voice Matters, Stop Bill 64"; Communities Not Cuts (a coalition of diverse individuals and groups in Manitoba committed to strong public services and opposition to government cuts) sign "Kids not cuts: I support our schools"; and the officially unaffiliated "Kill Bill 64" sign.

MSBA's "Local Voices, Local Choices" campaign and MTS's "Slam the Door on 64 / Combattre 64" both sought to represent concerns of their membership and centred public education in their work.[30] Presidents of both organizations were active in writing editorials (e.g., Bedford, 2021, May 18; A. Campbell, 2020, 2021) and available to newsmedia for comment on the bill. MTS even solicited comments from its membership and took

[30] MSBA's Executive Director, Josh Watt, and MTS's President, James Bedford, both explained that their main concerns were for public education in the provinces and the democratic foundations it was built upon; in interviews for this research, they both emphasized that they were not motivated by self-protectionist concerns but by what would be beneficial for education and students.

out a full-page ad in the *Winnipeg Free Press* and *Brandon Sun* (see Figure 4.2). MSBA's campaign created branded graphics that explained the "facts" of Bill 64 and the reform effort (see Figure 4.3). These graphics were hashtagged, included the website created for the campaign, and provided shareable graphics with brief messaging about the bill and its implications; they focused on pointing out how specific changes would change the education system and framed their messages in relation to contemporary coverage of the bill and public discourse.



Figure 4.2: Full-page ad in the *Winnipeg Free Press*, May 8, 2021 (picture by author)

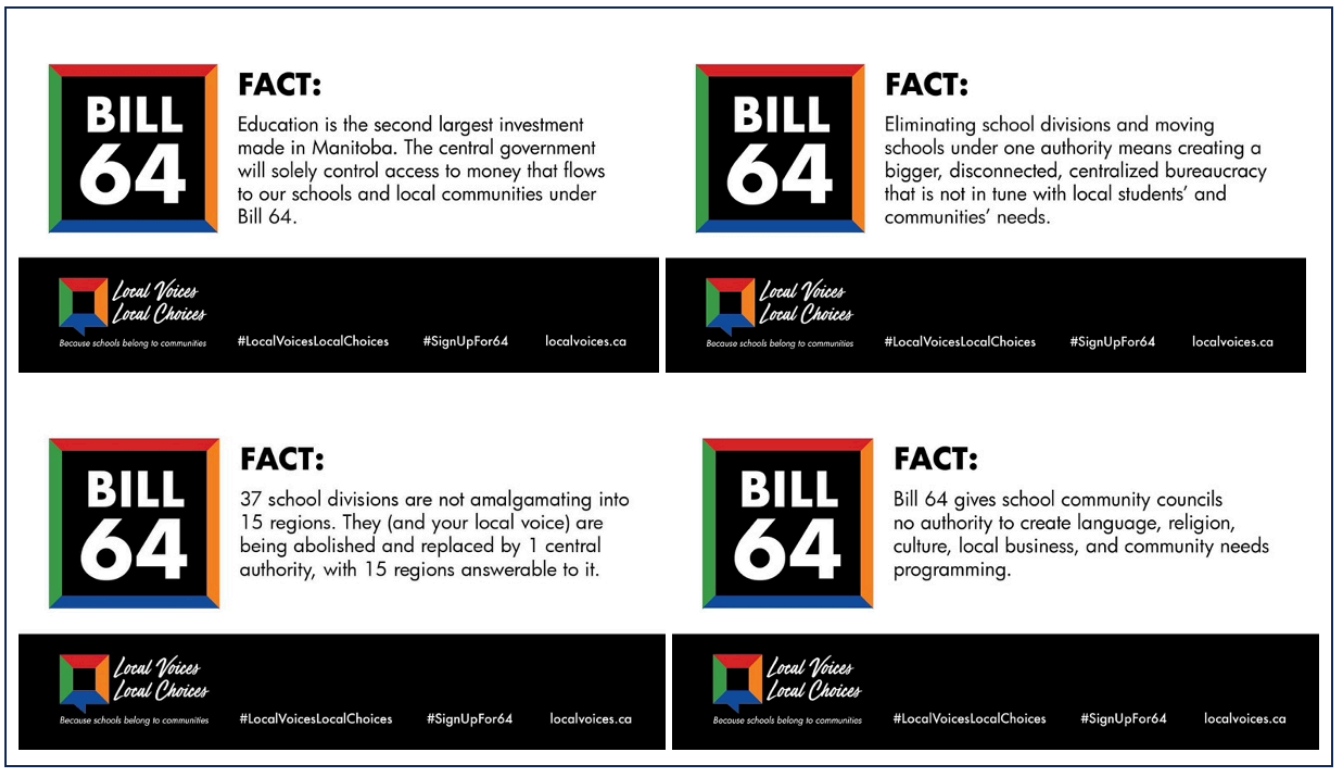


Figure 4.3: MSBA's Local Voices, Local Choices campaign graphics

However, public discourse was not defined solely by news coverage, editorials, or even these official campaigns or organizations' messaging opposing the bill; very quickly after the bill was released, individuals and collectives emerged that took up opposition and resistance stances (e.g., Froese, 2021, May 24; Macintosh, 2021, March 17, June 12, July 15). Several groups emerged, either from existing networks or collectives (such as Manitoba Educators for Social Justice) or on their own (such as Rural Voices United); where groups already existed, they often took to re-posting the messages or commentary of others to amplify messaging and ensure critical voices were being heard. These groups also, vitally, included groups of parents, the very demographic about whom Minister Cullen repeatedly invoked as being the group that would be protected and empowered through the bill (e.g., Macintosh, 2021, April 6; Darbyson, 2021, April 15, April 21). To name a few of these groups:

- Protect Ed MB collective (https://www.protectedmb.com), which gave rise to the Red for Ed campaign (calling on teachers to wear red on Fridays in support of public education; Macintosh, 2021, June 12);
- Parents for Public Education MB (https://www.facebook.com/groups/882404448964800/; see Macintosh, 2021, April 6);
- Rural Voices United (https://www.facebook.com/RuralMbVoices/);
- Kill Bill 64 (Instagram @killbill64mb, https://www.instagram.com/killbill64mb?igsh=ajN4bHY2aGI3eDBv);
- Concerned Manitoban (Twitter [now X] account, @64onBill64 dedicated to messaging about Bill 64: "For the next 64 days, my plan is to share a thought a day on Bill 64" [posted July 5, 2021]).

The proliferation of public discourse—whether creating specific campaigns, participating in collective organizing, reposting the messages of others or news articles/editorials with additional commentary, or simply posting on one's own—prompted news coverage on how widespread these opposition efforts were (e.g., Froese, 2021, May 24; Macintosh, 2021, June 12, July 15). These efforts involved a number of strategies, including cross-postings on social media, letter-writing initiatives and open letters on the bill, organizing protests, coalition building, and educational efforts such as town hall meetings or "teach-ins" (see Figure 4.4; see also Fraser, 2024, who



Figure 4.4: Posted on Instagram, @RedforEdMB, July 11, 2021 (left) and July 19, 2021 (right)

describes the efforts of People for Public Education as a community advocacy group and their efforts to set objectives, define their values, and take action opposing Bill 64).

There was even one instance in which Bill 64's education reform effort was taken up in one of Winnipeg's high schools, Windsor Park Collegiate. Teachers at the school had "devised a Grade 9 lesson plan on how legislation becomes law earlier in the semester," which built a unit around Bill 64 featuring guest speakers[31], critical analysis of news articles and opinion pieces, and a persuasive essay assignment—and they recognized an opportunity to bring critical discussions into the classroom about the legislation and the future of public education (as reported in Macintosh, 2021, May 27). Students presented their work at a virtual town hall, some in favour and some opposed, and picked up on various aspects of the bill, including the lack of concrete details on how education would be improved under the new governance structure, the bill's failure to address poverty and only a single mention of "mental health" in the legislation, and questioning how underrepresented

[31] Macintosh (2021, May 27) reported: "NDP Leader Wab Kinew, Liberal Leader Dougald Lamont, NDP education critic Nello Altomare, teacher Rick Haley, and Free Press columnist Niigaan Sinclair all visited the classes virtually to discuss the bill and answer students' questions. / The premier, education minister, deputy education minister and Progressive Conservative MLA who represents the constituency the high school is in, declined requests to participate."

communities would have a voice in the new system. Minister Cullen, in response, said, “We don’t think—I think many parents would agree—that the classroom is an appropriate place to discuss government policy and specific proposed legislation. We’re not going to engage in partisan politics in the classroom,” while also noting that there will be opportunities for public input on the future of K–12 education, including through a new student advisory council (cited in Macintosh, 2021, May 27).

Cullen’s response highlights one of the key features of the government’s response to opposition efforts, shifting away from legitimate questions about the bill and downplaying public concerns—even to the point of accusing those asking questions and raising concerns as engaging in partisan politics that politicized the education system (e.g., Macintosh, 2021, May 7, reported on a characterization of the PCs as being the ones politicizing education, which Cullen subsequently turned back on opponents, particularly in response to the educational efforts at Windsor Park Collegiate to discuss public policy; Macintosh, 2021, June 8, reported Minister Cullen accused MTS of sharing “false information” that creates fear and politicizes the classroom; almost from the outset, opponents of the bill criticized it as being based in a political agenda and ideologically driven, see Bedford, 2021; Goerzen, 2021; Macintosh, 2021, September 3; Reimer & Brown, 2021; Thomas, 2021). However, Cullen’s dismissal of student learning about Bill 64 in the classroom seemed to strike a particular nerve with the public and among educators, reinforcing their concerns that the government and Bill 64 legislation did not have a concern for students, learning, or education at its core. Evergreen School Division’s superintendent, Roza Gray, released a letter the day after Cullen’s comments on May 28, 2021, addressed to students, staff, parents and caregivers (posted to their Twitter [now X] account); the letter described Windsor Park Collegiate’s learning initiative and the town hall featuring student work, and went on to quote Cullen’s comment that the classroom is not an appropriate place to discuss government policy, before clarifying Evergreen’s educational mission: “We believe that our classrooms are *exactly* the places where students should learn about policies and legislation. Our students are interested and have the right to know about matters that

will affect them. Our students are capable of analysis, determining their own point of view, and are eager to share their unique insights about what matters in schools."

However, the various opposition campaigns continued and drove public discourse in persistent, unrelenting ways that made it difficult to dismiss the questions and challenges to the bill's proposed reforms—although the government attempted just such a strategy. Amid mounting pressure, persistent questions about the bill and how it would be enacted, and dropping party approval, Minister Cullen expressed support for the bill and repeatedly pointed to the BEST strategy as explaining what would happen under Bill 64. He alleged that "detractors of Bill 64 and the province's Better Education Starts Today strategy have been 'intentionally misled' through a 'misinformation campaign' led by the NDP, Manitoba School Boards Association and the leadership of the Manitoba Teachers' Society" (Froese, 2021, June 14; see also Macintosh, 2021, June 8, June 15). He characterized these opponents to the bill as purposefully working to "instil fear and anxiety in parents and educators" (Cullen quoted in Froese, 2021, June 14) and described opposition as the voices of a "vocal minority," reiterating again this sentiment in an attempt to diminish the concerns being raised. Cullen also announced that the government was releasing a "fact versus fiction" page online to counter the misinformation regarding the intentions of the bill. NDP Leader Wab Kinew responded by highlighting the validity of community concerns: "It seems as though the minister came out today to respond because they're feeling pressure, but the way they responded, it doesn't do justice to the real and legitimate concerns that people have about Bill 64…. There's a lot of people who spend a lot of time looking into the bill, educating themselves about it, and for the minister to come out and try and attack those folks or undermine the work that they put in to understanding the issue—to me, it does a disservice" (quoted in Froese, 2021, June 14).

At the time, Minister Cullen asserted that there were a "number of individuals" who had "spoken highly" of the bill (Froese, 2021, June 14), and government messaging consistently attempted to convey support and allay anxieties about the bill. Responses generally addressed funding concerns and reiterated commitments to review the funding formula for education, emphasizing that local voices would be heard through Parent Advisory

Councils, explaining that the government was committed to addressing poverty but that poverty should not be an excuse for academic performance, and attempting to make the case for the redrawn regional jurisdictions. Other PC MLAs took up Cullen's effort to try to bolster support for the bill. For instance, Wayne Ewasko (2021) publishing a column *The Carillon* in July, stating,

> While classes do not resume until the fall, I know that Bill 64: The Education Modernization Act and the Better Education Starts Today (BEST) strategy continues to be top of mind for many school administrators, trustees, principals, teachers, parents, and special interest groups. As MLA for Lac du Bonnet with a couple of school divisions, I have virtually met with school trustees over the past few weeks to allay some of their concerns while putting correct facts on the record. Several special interest groups many of which are politically aligned with the NDP (and Liberals) are hosting campaigns, workshops, and media blitzes over the summer and fall meant to fear monger the general public with false information.

These efforts attempted to counter the groundswell of opposition and assure the public that support for the bill existed. It is worth noting that there was seemingly scant support for the bill evidenced in the news and social media. In one editorial expressing support, Rodney Clifton (2021, March 31) argued that Bill 64 would not destroy public education: "With the battle heating up, isn't it time to stop thinking about negative outcomes and start thinking about positive ones? What new possibilities can Bill 64 bring about for students and their parents?" Clifton went on to argue that the removal of principals and vice-principals from MTS would free them to form their own professional association and be leaders "without the interference of the teachers' union"; he acknowledged that parental councils "may become stronger and a little more active, but seasoned administrators will easily take that minor change in stride." More importantly, he asserted that the changed structure may free principals, or "leaders" in the editorial, to use Bill 64 "to take control of their schools in ways they could only dream about when they were burdened by overbearing school boards, trustees and teachers' union…. Surely, a few of these instructional leaders will realize their desire to create more effective schools is

now within reach." Overall, the picture Clifton paints assumes that school leaders are obstructed by the interference of other educators and administrative relationships, while they easily navigate parent ones—particularly if they are "seasoned"—and the proposed changes would only free them up to transform their schools. Clifton then goes on to describe the Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP) that has "taken over an increasing number of schools in the US" and asserted that this program gives school leaders the opportunity to reorganize their schools similar to KIPP schools. Introducing KIPP as an exemplar for Canadian public education is not a neutral move, nor is it one that solely reinforces the "good educational practices" Clifton explains; rather, KIPP has predominantly been utilized in education privatization efforts and used in charter school movements in the US[32], further reinforcing critiques of Bill 64 that argued the bill was an attempt to advance privatization of Manitoba's education system (see Henderson, 2021; Moore & Janzen, 2021). However, even these supporters shifted as Bill 64 became more contentious, and by August support for the bill was shifting to calls to rework the legislation and ground it in the Commission's recommendations (Long et al., 2021). However, the small show of public support for the bill was overshadowed by opposition to it—and attempts to dismiss opposition only spurred it on.

The strategy of diminishment and dismissal—and of posing counter-accusations regarding the politicization of education in the province—that were intended to redirect reception to Bill 64 toward more supportive stances by minimizing the opposition's concerns seemed to backfire. Despite the government's

---

[32] Bettina Love (2023) describes the foundational work of Harriet Ball, a Black woman who she credits as developing the innovative pedagogical strategies that would later come to be known as KIPP. Love extensively describes how Ball's work came to be co-opted by two white men, David Levin and Mike Feinberg, who met Ball in 1992 when they graduated from college and joined Teach for America—a nonprofit program that "places college graduates in urban and some rural classrooms across America without the requirement that they've majored in education or obtained a teaching licensure" (Love, 2023, p. 87). As inexperienced teachers, Levin and Feinberg asked Ball to mentor them, and then, after two years, opened their own school calling it Knowledge is Power Program and using Ball's methods, songs, and teaching practices. Since the opening of that first school, the KIPP program has expanded and, at the time of Love's writing, has "over 250 schools serving more than 110,000 students, most of whom are Black and Brown—and poor" (p. 186). KIPP receives philanthropic donations from the Walton family and Gates Foundation. KIPP Foundation, as Love recounts, is built on Ball's intellectual property, for which she received no compensation, and operates as a privatized education model; Love describes this account as an example of white philanthropists using education "to advance their racist and anti-Black agenda—while acquiring fame, wealth, and power" through the privatization of education.

insistence that they were conducting meetings with various school divisions, trustees, education administrators, and groups of parents to answer questions and allay concerns, opposition efforts were not satisfied and felt their questions were *not* being answered at all. The diminishment of their concerns, in fact, seemed to accomplish the opposite and fueled their efforts to reiterate that their resistance was grounded in legitimate concerns and a desire for answers about how Bill 64 would be implemented and what its impacts would entail—and opponents continued asking questions and grappled with what changes Bill 64 would actually make to education in the province. These groups focused their efforts on responding directly to government's statements and responses, quoting or describing what was happening and then seeking to clarify what government announcements and explanations were communicating.[33] For instance, Rural Voices United made several direct responses to government announcements and messaging. In response to the release of the Fact vs. Fiction document released by government, which Cullen announced in mid-June, Rural Voices United developed and posted their response "fact checking" the document, directly referencing Bill 64 and BEST in a comparison with the fictive "misinformation" circulating by opponents of the

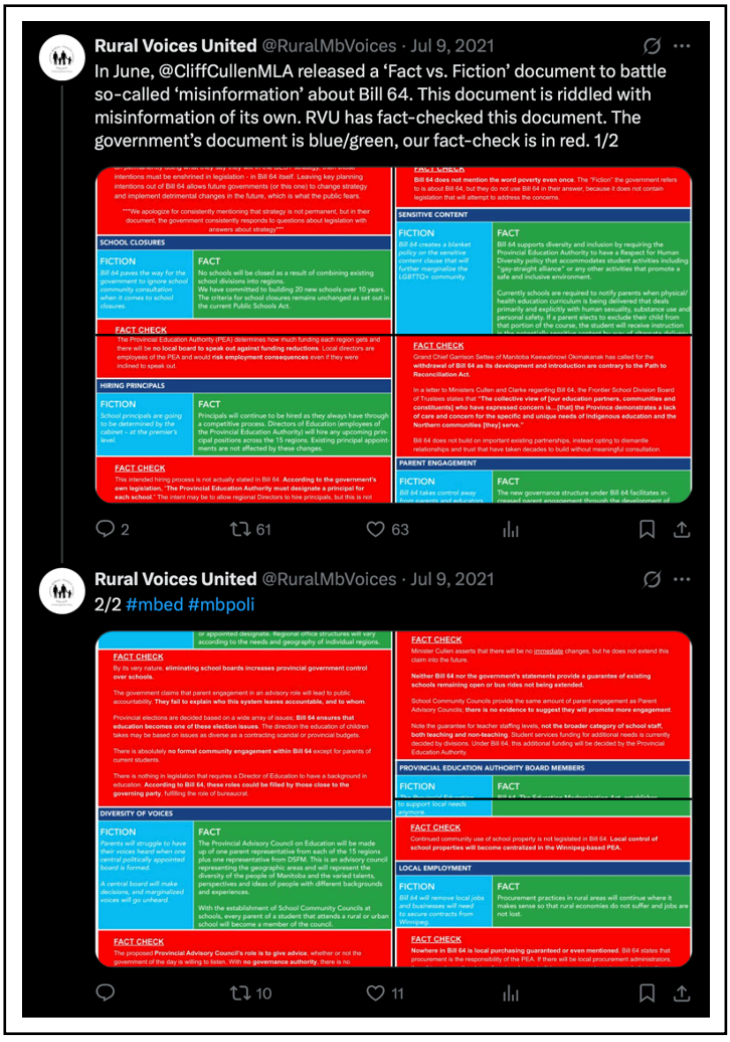
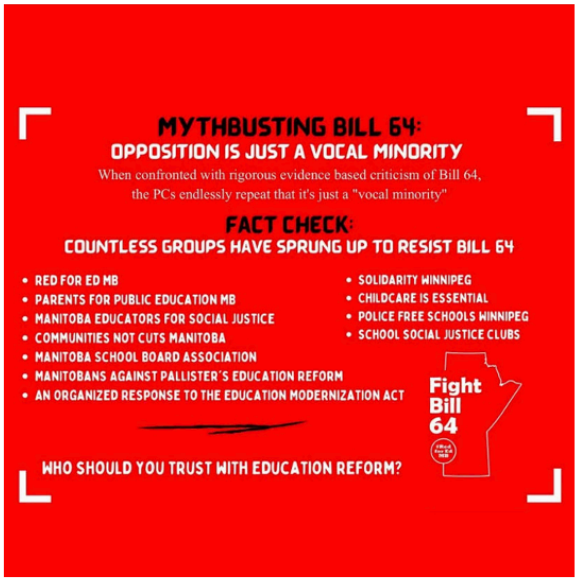


Figure 4.5: Rural Voices United responding to the Fact vs. Fiction

[33] In our interview, Josh Watt explained that one of the goals during the Local Voices, Local Choices campaign was to respond to government announcements and attempt to clarify what Bill 64 actually said and explain the implications for the education system.

bill (posted on their Twitter/X, July 9, 2021; see Figure 4.5). In an op-ed in *Southern Manitoba Review*, Rural Voices United (2021) responded to a recent letter from MLAs to constituents that they were "committed to rural education" and accusing critics of Bill 64 of "wanting to mislead" Manitobans; the PC MLA letter stated that the "real facts of what [their] government is doing is laid out at BetterEducationMB.ca [the home of the BEST strategy]." However, the op-ed questioned: "But that website will not become the law of Manitoba that dictates the control, governance, accountability, and structure of our education system. Rather, Bill 64 will become law. NOT the BEST strategy. NOT the Better Education website. Manitobans aren't being misled; we are reading and understanding the impact of Bill 64 as it is written." The op-ed continues and poses a paragraph's worth of questions about removing local authority and elected trustees, relying on volunteer parent councils, removing one hour bus limits, centralizing procurement, the creation of regional catchment areas, and lack of support for the bill. "Convince Manitobans that the bill is good. We do not 'want' to spend our summer fighting against this bill; we have enough to do. Manitobans can read and think, and nothing we have heard from Minister Cullen thus far has done anything to persuade the so-called 'vocal minority' that Bill 64 will ultimately be good for Manitobans, whether rural, northern or urban."



Posted to Instagram, @RedforEdMB, July 11, 2021



Posted to Instagram, @RedforEdMB, July 12, 2021

Figure 4.6: Responses to "vocal minority" opposition characterization

Bill 64 opposition seized on this characterization of their work being the voices of a "vocal minority" to increase pressure and reinforce that there was nothing minor about the number of people raising questions. For instance, RedforEdMB made two posts (see Figure 4.6) specifically aimed at countering the characterization of opposition to Bill 64 as being "just a vocal minority," listing a handful of the "countless groups" that had sprung up to resist the bill, working to amplify the multitude of voices and further collectivize their efforts. In the comment on the July 12, 2021, post, they wrote, "Also curious then, is Minister Cullen saying he does not feel it's important to listen to communities that aren't the majority? What does that mean for kids who do not represent the majority?" Not only did these posts provide evidence countering the mischaracterization of the opposition to Bill 64, but they highlighted the bill's neglect of minoritized groups. Even the *Winnipeg Free Press*, in a rather tongue-in-cheek editorial, asserted that the "vocal minority" was getting louder and Minister Cullen's early attempts to dismiss resistance to Bill 64 as the self-interested, partisan politics of the few was out of touch with the reality of Manitoba's opposition (Winnipeg Free Press, 2021, July 19).

In an editorial in the *Winnipeg Free Press*, Janzen (2021) took aim directly at Cullen's characterization of criticisms of Bill 64 as coming from a "vocal minority," explaining that resistance to the bill is nothing of the sort but rather "a perfect example of the values we uphold in our social democracy—values of political engagement and critique, which represent our commitment to the public good of education"; Janzen then lists the myriad "dissenting citizens" organizing to represent the resistance effort—organizations like MTS, MSBA, MAPC, CCPA and "teacher associations, parent councils, Facebook groups, a coalition of the faculties of education in Manitoba, and community groups such as ProtectEdMB [that] include parents, teachers, trustees, researchers, students and community members." Janzen notes that the concerns being raised relate not only to the education governance structure of Manitoba's education system, but they also highlight concerns regarding students and "the ways in which Bill 64 considers students to be a homogenous group whose main concern should be to 'develop competencies' for 'entry into the workforce.'" As Janzen explains it, Bill 64 was eliding the heterogeneity of students in the public education system and relegating them to the position of future employees; the effect of

this in thinking about education is that it instrumentalizes education as a way of developing human capital and constitutes the purpose of education as being situated in relation to employment (Janzen & Heringer, 2023, develop this argument further in terms of a neoliberal construction of the student).

Opposition efforts consistently emphasized the bill's discriminatory inequities, advancing critiques that had been present virtually from the outset. Public discourse identified these intersections of inequity and expanded messaging aimed at identifying the multiple inequities and the attendant shortcomings of structural and governance changes in perpetuating and reifying systemic inequities. The impacts on marginalized and minoritized groups, alongside and imbricated with the larger structural and governance changes in the education system, were identifiable for poverty, diversity initiatives, Indigenous communities, racialized communities, and 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects. For instance, in an editorial in the *Winnipeg Free Press*, Reimer and Brown (April 28, 2021) explain that Bill 64's proposed changes would be "both anti-democratic and discriminatory," arguing that the increased focus on standardized testing would disproportionately affect schools with "more poor, Black and Indigenous students" and would not affect affluent communities as deeply. Others quickly identified standardized tests had to be contextualized with "rates of child poverty and children in care" (Macintosh, 2021, March 19) and should not be treated as "the single source of information to determine the quality" of education (Martha Koch quoted in Macintosh, 2021, March 19). Editorials and news coverage focused variously on the impacts of poverty on education (e.g., Wiens, 2021), the overall lack of diversity in the bill (e.g., Macintosh, 2021, March 30, described critics of the bill emphasizing the reform's prioritization of parents but its neglect of student diversity), impacts on Indigenous communities (e.g., Sinclair, 2021) and racialized communities (e.g., Braul, 2021; Ennab, 2021; PressProgress, 2021), potential for opening up education privatization (e.g., Henderson, 2021), and impacts on 2SLGBTQIA+ students through the "potentially sensitive content" clause (Macintosh, 2021, April 3; Winnipeg Free Press, 2021, April 10). Other events locally and nationally served to remind people of the importance of equity considerations and anti-oppression in education as well—including the discovery of 215 unmarked graves at Kamloops Residential School and Winnipeg's Seven Oaks School Division being directed by

Manitoba Education to remove Pride flags from poles with the Canadian flag[34] (Macintosh, 2021, June 22). The Pride flag directive highlighted the particular implications for 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects in schools and suggested that the government's directive was not neutral but aimed at excluding 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects.

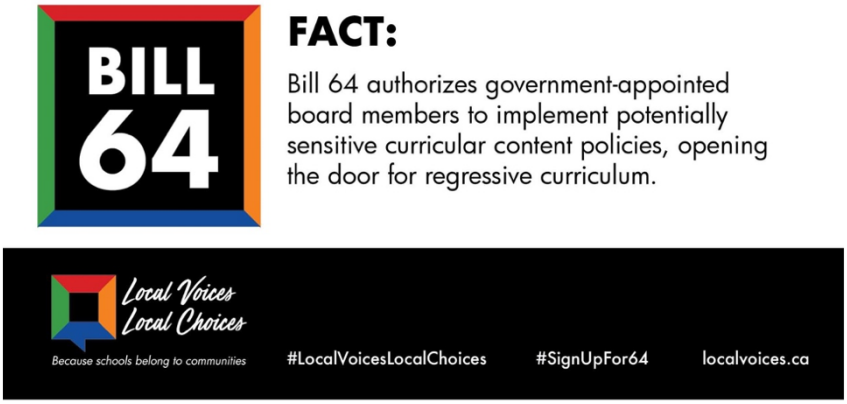
The equity-based messaging by opponents of the bill established a pattern of critique recognizing the potential inequities of Bill 64. For 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects, a common concern emerged regarding the "potentially sensitive content" clause and linked it to regressive curriculum measures (see Figure 4.7). News media covered this aspect of the bill as well, citing educators' concerns about the sensitive content clause and



Posted to Twitter, @64onBill64, August 9, 2021



Posted to Instagram, @RedforEdMB, July 27, 2021



Posted to Twitter, @MBSchoolBoards, 2021

Figure 4.7: Potentially sensitive content as regressive curriculum

[34] The directive from Manitoba Education cited Heritage Canada's flag protocol, asking Seven Oaks to cease the practice of flying the Pride flag below the Canadian flag. The directive resulted from a single complaint to the Minister of Education and was seemingly directed only to Seven Oaks School Division. Superintendent Brian O'Leary made inquiries and sought clarification on the Heritage Canada protocol, finding it to be solely a protocol without the force of law or regulation and, therefore, resumed the longstanding divisional practice of flying the Pride flag during Pride Month. On June 23, 2021, a statement from a spokesperson on behalf of the Minister of Education announced that it was conducting an investigation into the directive, blaming it on an error by a department staff member, and stating that no directive was issued from the minister or ministry of education banning the flying of Pride flags (Rosen, 2021).

explaining apprehensions about a centralized authority creating guidelines to define sensitive content across the province (Macintosh, 2021, April 3; Winnipeg Free Press, 2021, April 10). The RedforEdMB campaign also re-posted pictures of teachers wearing red in support of education in the province and holding signs reading, "I wear red because my sexuality should not be considered 'sensitive content'" (@RedforEdMB posting, July 27, 2021) and "I wear Red for Ed because talking about 'sensitive issues' saves lives" (@RedforEdMB posting, August 15, 2021). RedforEdMB even foregrounded discussions about 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects with directed posting naming their support and promoting the Protect Ed MB summer teach-in on August 3 focused on the question, "How does Bill 64 silence and marginalize 2SLGBTQIA+ students, staff, and families?" (see Figure 4.8).



Posted to Instagram, @RedforEdMB, July 27, 2021

Posted to Instagram, @RedforEdMB, August 2, 2021

Figure 4.8: Support for 2SLGBTQIA+ communities

While I draw specific attention to this strand of collective response related to 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects, collectives variously amplified the needs of and expressed support for different equity-related communities and issues. For instance, Protect Ed MB also held a teach-

in related to how Bill 64 impacted reconciliation and Indigenous communities (on July 27); Concerned Manitoban (@64onBill64) dedicated days to how Bill 64 silenced diversity for BIPOC communities (on August 8), the misrepresentation of PISA test score and neglect of poverty in Bill 64 (on July 27), and the differential social inequities during the pandemic (on August 25); and RedforEdMB helped organize with Protect Ed MB a "No Truth, No Reconciliation" rally on Saturday July 17 to stand with Indigenous communities. The coordination of these efforts served to amplify shared concerns and build solidarity in opposition to the bill—building coalitionary action across difference. I return to the discussion of collective organizing and the development of the larger collective movement that coalesced through the opposition efforts in the interview results below. However, it is worth stating plainly that the broader landscape of opposition and response, as well as the responses from the government, help to frame the larger movement during this period. Ultimately, these opposition efforts paid off and led to the withdrawal of Bill 64 in October 2021, following the resignation of Brian Pallister from the Office of Premier (see Brodbeck, 2021, June 14).

The End of Bill 64 and What Followed

Due in part to the public response and resistance to the bill, support for Pallister and the PC-led government eroded, even among the PC voter base and among the MLAs whose party introduced it. Despite having a majority in Manitoba's Legislature, which would have allowed the party to pass the legislation without further support from either the public or other members of the Legislative Assembly, the vehement and widespread opposition to Bill 64 contributed in part[35] to a significant loss of support for the PC government (according to a poll conducted by Probe Research, 2021, the PC party's support had dropped to 37% by December 2020 and reached its lowest point in June 2021 at 29%) and made the bill seemingly toxic for PC MLAs to support any longer. Upon Brian Pallister's announcement that he would resign as Premier of Manitoba in the

[35] The Manitoba's mishandling of the COVID-19 pandemic response effort was also widely expressed, particularly in relation to the earlier attacks on the health care system, and explains the primary reason for loss in confidence in the PC-led government (Wilt, 2019). One of the key planks in the NDP's election platform in 2023 was related to repairing the health care system in Manitoba.

summer of 2021, members of the PC party began to publicly withdraw their support from Bill 64 (Brodbeck, 2021, June 18). Heather Stefanson, MLA for Tuxedo, was the first to announce that she would put an end to Bill 64, making it a centrepiece in her announcement that she was forwarding her name to become the next leader of the PC party (and the Premier) following Pallister departure. Of note at Stefanson's announcement, Cliff Cullen, the Minister of Education at the time, was among the MLAs who attended this announcement, making a public show of support for Stefanson and her pledge to withdraw the bill that had been under his ministerial portfolio. Stefanson ultimately won this leadership contest on October 30, 2021. Less than a month after Stefanson's announcement, when Kelvin Goertzen was appointed interim Premier following Pallister's resignation, he announced the PC government was withdrawing Bill 64, along with the four other pieces of legislation that the NDP had designated during the previous legislature session (Macintosh, 2021, September 3; Winnipeg Free Press, 2021). Of particular interest are the actors involved at this level, as Kelvin Goertzen, Interim Premier who withdrew Bill 64, was the former Minister of Education who is regarded as the architect of Bill 64 and the MLA who introduced Bill 64 on November 2, 2020. At the time Bill 64 was introduced, it was seconded by then–Minister of Families, Heather Stefanson, who later pledged to eliminate the bill (to applause by the Minister of Education, Cliff Cullen, Bill 64's sponsor) during her announcement that she was running for leadership of the PC's after Premier Pallister announced he was resigning.

During the same Legislative Session, the PC's had introduced and passed two other education-related bills. The first, Bill 71, *The Education Property Tax Reduction Act* (2021), reduced education property taxes levied for school funding through a system of rebates, effectively setting in motion a 50 percent reduction of the education property tax within two years, with an immediate reimbursement of 25 per cent for the current year (a further 25 per cent reduction was set to follow in 2022, although this was briefly called into question with the change of party leadership to Premier Heather Stefanson; see Brodbeck, 2021, October 29). Despite Bill 64's withdrawal, Bill 71 carried forward (Kusch, 2021) and reduced education property tax through rebates throughout the province by approximately $248 million (as reported at the time by Winnipeg Free Press, 2021,

September 2; Sale, 2021, breaks down education spending, noting 3% is dedicated to administrative costs with only marginal savings to be had by Bill 64's proposed restructuring of governance, and goes on to explain approximately 59%, or $1.4 billion, of total education costs comes from the province and 41%, or $1 billion, from the special levy, resulting in a substantial shortfall in education funding as a result of the property tax rebate that would disproportionately benefit homeowners with more highly appraised property values).[36] Bill 71 was passed on May 20, 2021, late in the spring seating of the Legislative Assembly and reduced education property tax in anticipation of Bill 64's anticipated fiscal savings (Kusch, 2021). The second education-related legislation introduced during the same Legislative Session was Bill 45, *The Public Schools Amendment and Manitoba Teachers' Society Amendment Act*, which centralized collective bargaining for all teachers employed in the public school system (except for DSFM, which was not affected by this change and retained its distinct bargaining position) and included the stipulation that arbitrators in negotiations had to consider the fiscal and economic situation of school divisions and the province of Manitoba in making awards[37]. Given the Pallister-led government's track record with public sector unions and labour relations—particularly the legislation-related retrenchments of the public sector since the PC's took office in their first term (including a restructuring of Winnipeg's health-care system that involved ER closures and a public-sector wage freeze led to a prolonged court challenge and inhibited collective bargaining for several years in the province), alongside another unsuccessful bill (Bill 16, which was also designated by the NDP Opposition) that would have allowed employers to fire employees for "strike-related misconduct" (see Winnipeg Free Press, 2021, September 2)—the centralization of collective bargaining for teachers was likely an attempt to limit the bargaining power of teachers.

[36] The property tax rebates remained under the NDP and rebates were still issued to homeowners, although with the modification that physically mailed cheques would not be the means of the reduction benefit.

[37] Given MTS surrendered the right to strike action in the mid-1950s to obtain a guarantee of binding arbitration in labour disputes, this stipulation limiting arbitrators' ability to make awards and making arbitrators subject to the broader financial situation of school divisions and the province as a requisite factor in their decisionmaking imposes on the bargaining process and infringes on the benefit of binding arbitration.

However, even though Bill 64 was withdrawn—and was roundly and repeatedly critiqued by numerous campaigns and education stakeholders as being an ideologically oriented piece of legislation that was not grounded in either the education review or in evidence—the PC-led Manitoba government made it clear that education reform remained a priority area for them and that the BEST strategy would continue in Manitoba, suggesting that even if legislative changes were not impending many of the aims and goals of Bill 64 would remain intact. However, the government also announced that the voices of Manitobans had been heard and that the government would embark on public consultations. At the time of Bill 64's withdrawal, Education Minister Cullen declined to comment on whether revised education reform legislation would be introduced during the 2021–22 school year, but he did indicate that the province intended to reflect on the K–12 education review and the Better Education Starts Today strategy while it worked to rebuild relationships with education stakeholders. At the time, it seemed likely that the PCs would introduce modified versions of their education reform, as speculated by several editorials (e.g., Brodbeck, 2021, August 20; Clifton et al., 2021; Forbes, 2021; Henderson, 2021). Several, in fact, noted that there was a need for education reform in the province in light of the widespread public discourse of the previous six months, as well as being necessary as a result of related legislative changes (e.g., Bill 71, Bill 45) during that time (e.g., Clifton et al., 2021; Forbes, 2021).

In January 2022, Cullen was replaced as Minister of Education by Wayne Ewasko (MLA for Lac du Bonnet), and Cullen moved into the role of Minister of Finance. Following shortly on the heels of Manitoba's provincial budget announcement (which included the announcement that education would receive the largest funding increase in over a quarter century[38]), a new educational strategy, *Manitoba's K to 12 Education Action Plan* (Manitoba Education, 2022a), was introduced in April 2022 (Manitoba Education, 2022a). At the same time,

[38] This announcement of the increase in funding for education was critiqued at the time as being the largest *dollar* increase, not necessarily the largest proportionate increase, a critique compounded by the observation that education had been underfunded in recent years (including withholding federal funding for education related to COVID), and the increase for 2023 would not be sufficient to meet the needs of schools, nor did it make sense alongside the education property tax rebate.

the province launched a new Indigenous Education Policy Framework, *Mamàhtawisiwin: The Wonder We Are Born With* (Manitoba Education, 2022b) through the Indigenous Inclusion Directorate of Manitoba Education. The *Action Plan* was "updated" in May 2023 (Manitoba Education, 2023) with the release of a new document detailing the progress that had been made.

The new educational *Action Plan* (Manitoba Education, 2022a, 2023) indicated the PC's intention to continue with a softer educational reform strategy, modified and rebranded to align more closely with the Education Review Commission's recommendations (Manness & MacKinnon, 2020). The plan explicitly linked its intended actions to all but three of the 75 recommendations of the Commission's—abandoning "plans to downsize the province's 37 public school boards, adjust the trustee governance model, and remove principals from the teachers union" (Macintosh, 2022). This served to situate changes more clearly in the evidence of the Commission's findings and recommendations, and also distanced it from the unpopular Bill 64 legislation that Minister Cullen had continually linked to BEST in public announcements. In linking the *Action Plan* more explicitly to the education review that was touted as the rationale for Bill 64—a claim that critics of the proposed legislation had repeatedly challenged due to the incongruence between the commission's recommendations and the bill—the plan described its "engagements" since the release of the report in March 2021 (p. 7, with a more detailed listing in Appendix A of the 20,000 engagements of the "Parent Engagement Task Force," regional meetings, virtual school visits, and advisory groups established and consulted, p. 20). The *Action Plan* went on to describe the "Vision for Student Success" and "Guiding Principles" (which included advancing truth and reconciliation, achieving equity, ensuring inclusion, and prioritizing well-being, alongside striving for excellence and enhancing accountability). The *Plan* names *Mamàhtawisiwin* in its introduction as evidence of their "deep commitment to Truth and Reconciliation" and commitment to a Philosophy of Inclusion that "maintains a focus on French language education in keeping with Charter rights for minority language education" (p. 5), also describing their "Vision for Student Success" in terms of "The Good Life," which forms Manitoba Education's Framework for Learning (mino-pimatisiwin, translated as "the Good Life"). The *Plan* then goes on to explain its

plan for "Moving Forward," emphasizing that these plans rely on "partnership" (pp. 10–11), and is accompanied by a six-page appendix listing specific initiatives under each of the four priority focus areas, linking them to specific recommendations in the Commission report and indicating what actions (underway, upcoming, and future) would be taken. The priority areas of focus identified in the *Action Plan* bear remarkable similarities to the BEST strategy, naming "High-Quality Learning," "Student Engagement and Well-Being," "Excellence in Teaching and Leadership," and "Responsive Systems" (compared to BEST's four pillars, "Governance and Accountability for Results," "High-Quality Learning and Outcomes," "Future-Ready Students," and "Excellence in Teaching and Leadership"). Two areas are titled almost verbatim between the two, while the others change to emphasize the main thematic thrust of the *Action Plan* in centring COVID responsiveness and emphasizing the difference in strategy from Bill 64. The move away from BEST's emphasis on governance and accountability for instrumentalized purposes—accountability for results, learning for outcomes, discursively creating future-ready (i.e., employment ready) students, predominant concern with financial investment—constitutes a key difference, suggesting their recognition that the feedback and public response to Bill 64 had been heard, at least to the extent that attention was paid to the discursive connotations of messaging here.

Notably, the *Action Plan* included scant mention of Bill 64, with two exceptions. First, Minister Ewasko's opening message in the document emphasizes the feedback from the public, linking the withdrawal of the legislation to this process: "Thank you to the thousands of Manitobans… for sharing your perspectives and participating in planning and engagement. This important feedback has resulted in changes that ensure a priority focus on COVID-19 response planning. It also resulted in the withdrawal of Bill 64, which proposed changes to the school trustee model among other governance changes" (Manitoba Education, 2022a, p. 4). Second, in describing engagements with the public, Bill 64 is mentioned as going "too far" and referencing the pressures of COVID as inhibiting the timing of proposed changes—"Public feedback emphasized that governance changes contained in Bill 64 went too far by removing elected trustees and deviated too greatly from the Commission's findings" (p. 7); and naming again that feedback had emphasized priority focus needed to remain on COVID-19

response planning, the withdrawal of Bill 64, and a ”modification of timelines” in making changes in the education system. In explaining the Bill 64 reform did not align closely enough with the Commission’s findings, the report also notes that based on the feedback, three Commission recommendations would not be included: #11 “Create a principals’ association and removed principals and vice-principals from the teacher bargaining unit”, #12 “Reorganize administrative staff to create business manager positions for schools or families of schools”, and #68 “Consolidate the province’s public school boards into six to eight regional boards consisting of five to seven trustees, the majority of whom would be appointed and the others elected” (p. 10). Interestingly, these are among the few recommendations from the Commission report that *had* initially found their way into Bill 64, although in modified form (e.g., the Commission recommended consolidation of existing boards into regions with a blend of appointments and elected positions, not the complete elimination of elected position). But the public response had clearly made an impression and these were exempt from the new plan. On top of this, in 2023, Manitoba Education introduced Treaty Education for All, a joint initiative between the education department and Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba. The initiative has the goal of ensuring that all staff and students receive Treaty education to understand the importance of Treaties, Treaty relationships, and their original meaning and intent; this mandate was linked to the TRC Call to Action 62i and requires students in K–12 public schools receive education and all educators attend professional development on the topic (Manitoba Education & Treaty Relations Commission, 2023).

Following the release of this *Action Plan*, after a seemingly suitable period of caution regarding education during which the *Plan* did not appear to excite public opposition, Minister Wayne Ewasko introduced Bill 35, *The Education Administration Act (Teacher Certification and Professional Conduct)*, on March 14, 2023, in the 5th Session of the 42nd Legislature—during the PC’s final session forming government before the fall 2023 election brought the NDP to majority government under the leadership of Wab Kinew. Despite the widespread opposition to Bill 64, there was seemingly scant public interest in Bill 35, even though it did carry forward parts of Bill 64’s proposed changes; specifically, the bill focused on several aspects of teacher certification in Manitoba

and heightening accountability oversight and disciplinary measures through the creation of a publicly accessible teacher registry (including date of issue, certificate class, current status, and record of disciplinary action) and by establishing competence standards for teachers. The bill also created a disciplinary commission to review and adjudicate complaints, misconduct, and incompetence. MTS recognized the increase in accountability measures that did little to protect children, despite the government's insistence that this was the purpose of the bill, and expressed concern over the inclusion of "teacher competence" language as reason for discipline; as a result, MTS did publicize their opposition to the bill (e.g., Clarke, 2023, April 14; Manitoba Teachers' Society, 2023). However, the bill passed and received Royal Assent on May 30, 2023. Despite being introduced and passed by the PC-led government, the 2023 election resulted in a NDP majority government, who carried forward with the launch of the teacher registry and appointing of the first commissioner (former General Director of MTS, Bobbi Taillefer) in January 2025 (Macintosh, 2025, January 13). The NDP also completed the consolidation of teacher collective bargaining into one provincial collective agreement for those in English language boards in August 2024 (Macintosh, August 27, 2024) and one for teachers in the French-language board DSFM in October 2024 (Macintosh, October 11, 2024).

The election was called for Manitoba in fall 2023, and the PCs and NDP went into campaign mode. During the election campaign, the Heather Stefanson-led PC party took aim again at education, though this time putting forward the promise that they were "Fighting for Manitoba Parents" (MacLean, 2023, August 17)[39]. The PCs promised to expand parents' rights over what they would learn in school, including updating the "seven basic rights of parents" that are enshrined in *The Public Schools Act* (e.g., forming a parent council, consulting with teachers about academic achievement); they suggested four new rights to be added, cautiously assuring

[39] For more on the PC's invocation of "parental rights" in this election and its effects, see Moore and Lopuck (2025). In their article, Moore and Lopuck conduct a critical discourse analysis of this "parental rights" language in the context of the PC's election worked to legitimize parental rights discourses through their campaign materials and in media. Ultimately, the parental rights movement works to erase 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects, undermine and disregard the rights of children, and privileges certain parents' views.

parents and teachers that they would be consulted: the right to be informed about curriculum, be involved in addressing bullying and other behavioural changes, receive notice about presentations by people outside the school system, and consent about any image of their child is taken, shared or stored. While some seemed supportive of these promises, others pointed out that these amounted to little and were, largely, already reflected in educational practices in schools. The larger concern, as critics noted, was that this re-election promise was attempting to sow suspicion about schools as attempting to "hide" things from parents and reinforce discourse regarding "parental rights" that had gained traction in the US related to anti-trans sentiment, through recent book challenges in the province, and in relation to New Brunswick's change to its gender identity policy in schools (MacLean, 2023, August 17). However, the PC party was unsuccessful in their re-election campaign and the NDP were elected, led by Wab Kinew, with promises to prioritize repair of the healthcare system, reverse cuts to public spending, and work to ensure economic stability.

Since forming government in 2023, the NDP have introduced a number of legislative reforms to Manitoba's education system. In 2023–24 during the 1st Session of the 43rd Legislature, Bill 21, *The Public Schools Amendment Act*, expanded the definition of "resident pupil" to ensure children of new Canadians, refugees, and those residing in Manitoba on a work or study permit were included, as well as lowering the compulsory schooling age from 7 years of age to 6 (with children retaining the right to attend school as early as 5). In 2024–25 during the 2nd Session, eight bills were introduced focusing on changes to education (Bills 6, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 39, and 40), as well as two private member bills (Bill 207 and 225). The government bills included a range of initiatives, including:

- provisions to ensure people living on reserves can participate in and vote for school trustee elections (Bill 16),
- regulating trustee election campaign contributions, including limiting out-of-province contributions and mandating reporting on contributions and expenses (Bill 39),

- ensuring every public school provides a free nutrition program to all students (Bill 17, Nutrition Equality for Lasting Learning Outcomes, which has been referred to as "Nello's Law")[40],
- allow an Indigenous language to be the language of instruction used in a school when authorized by a school board (Bill 18, Indigenous Languages of Instruction),
- enhance school safety by ensuring sexual abuse prevention and training are provided in schools (Bill 19),
- establish policy frameworks to support learning for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis education, including ensuring all students are educated about "truth and reconciliation, treaties, colonial history, the ongoing impacts of colonization and the contributions of First Nations, Inuit and Métis" (from "Explanatory note", Bill 20), and
- require school boards establish and implement written policy respecting land and treaty acknowledgements, remove provisions respecting religious exercises (that were found unconstitutional in the 1992 legal challenge), require schools to hold a Remembrance Day observance between November 4 and 10, and move obligations from the regulation to the Act regarding the singing of "O Canada" and citizenship exercises (Bill 40).

There is also currently a bill to add "gender identity" to Manitoba's *The Human Rights Code* (Bill 43), which is referenced in education legislation and by school board policies on respect for human diversity. These legislative reforms regarding Manitoba's education system stand in marked contrast to Bill 64 by expanding protections,

[40] With the passing of MLA Nello Altomare, minister of education, in January 2025, the NDP announced they would install "Nello's Law" to make universal school nutrition programs part of *The Public Schools Act*. Altomare had previously introduced a Private Member's Bill in 2022/23 (Bill 222 in the 5th Session of the 42nd Assembly) on Nutrition Programs in schools, requiring boards to report on what schools provided nutrition programs that the minister would use to create a publicly available report; the bill passed during the spring session of the PC-led government, their final session as majority, and received Royal Assent on May 30, 2023. Building on this previous bill, the new bill ensured not only that boards would report on their nutrition programs, but that all schools were able to provide these nutrition programs for students. The bill also installed a "protection" measure to prevent its repeal or reduction; the bill (Bill 17), interestingly, includes a stipulation that any government that passes a bill to reduce or repeal this province-wide nutrition program will incur a 20% ministerial salary reduction, presumably to discourage any attempt by future governments to roll back this nutrition program.

increasing accountability at the upper level of educational administration, and reinforcing inclusive principles. However, they have not prompted much public discourse or controversy.[41]

While it may be tempting to see the change in government and legislative agenda in a wholly positive light—and to be clear, I do consider these to be mainly positive reform efforts—the legacy of Bill 64 cannot be solely considered in terms of "relief" after the threat of regressive reforms. For instance, following the withdrawal of Bill 64, educators were dogged by feelings of burnout as they responded to the Bill 64 education reform effort on top of COVID, reporting high blood pressure and frayed nerves (Macintosh, September 4, 2021). As I described at the beginning of this chapter, there was also a marked increase in the following years of anti-trans protests and demonstrations opposing 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion in schools (e.g., by Action4Canada and 1 Million March 4 Children), as well as emerging trends in other provinces to enact anti-2SLGBTQIA+ policy initiatives. These efforts have not left Manitoba unscathed, and despite the relative protections of an inclusive government, instances of anti-trans sentiment and book banning have emerged in public discourse (Macintosh, March 15, 2024). In September 2024, the Mountain View School District passed a board motion to ban all flags except the federal, provincial, and school, which was criticized by employees and community members in the area as targeting 2SLGBTQIA+ people for exclusion (Shebahkeget, 2024). The MVSD board released a statement explaining their decision was rooted "in a commitment to creating a safe, caring, and respectful environment for everyone" and intended to "send a clear message: everyone is welcome, included, and supported under these banners"; flying these flags conveys MVSD is "embracing these principles under our provincial and individual school flags and logos" and that these symbols are intended to promote "unity" under which "we can work to eliminate negative responses towards diverse cultures and communities, especially during sensitive times" (MVSD, 2024). The insistence on inclusivity under a neutral symbolic banner (of Canada, Manitoba, and schools)

[41] At the time of writing, all government bills discussed here were passed, except for Bill 40. Neither of the private members' bills passed (Bill 207 focused on teaching experience of principals, by MLA Wasyliw; Bill 225 focused on universal screening for learning disabilities, by MLA Lamoureux).

neglects the historical exclusion of diversity within these institutions, refuses to signal inclusion through the naming of diversity or adoption of symbolic gestures to signal diversity, and obfuscates the key role education plays in addressing "negative responses" toward diverse cultures and communities. However, some divisions have been prompted by anti-2SLGBTQIA+ sentiment to enact more robustly supportive policy, such as Seine River School Division's development of a procedure supporting "Policy 116: Respect for Human Diversity"; the procedure (116.1), effective April 9, 2024, lays out comprehensive supports for all forms of human diversity and, specifically, inclusive of transgender and gender-diverse students and stuff (i.e., supporting self-identification, name and pronoun use, privacy and confidentiality, access to washrooms and change rooms, and professional development and curriculum inclusion). Despite being plagued by a financial deficit crisis (prompting a review of the division's finances in January 2024), due in part to the pandemic, responding to Bill 64, and repeated turnover of the senior team (Bernhardt, 2024), the board proceeded with the procedure development and implementation.

Summary discussion

The aim of this chapter was to provide a deeper contextual description of Manitoba's education policyscape, beginning with the earliest days of Manitoba's education system and proceeding through to Bill 64, its introduction and public discourse on the bill, and concluding with its withdrawal and aftermath. By describing the policyscape of Manitoba education and particularly the circumstances surrounding Bill 64, I aimed to identify the actors, associated policy agendas and political behaviour, voices of stakeholders and the public in relation to policy proposals to surface the various dynamics impacting 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects in Manitoba's education system. The purpose of such a policyscape is to resist the dehistoricization of educational policy in the present moment and demonstrate how current policy provisions are influenced by those from the past. Bill 64 attempted, in many ways, to "naturalize" itself through the creation of a Commission to review the education system and then reference that as justification for the introduction of the sweeping changes it proposed; public responses to the bill pointed out that the changes Bill 64 proposed were not in line with the Education Review,

and one commissioner publicly stated that the government's strategy did not align with the Commission's report (J.D. Lees quoted in Macintosh, 2021, March 24; see also Lees, 2021). This policyscape also highlights the important role that collective responses and public discourses played in relation to Bill 64, countering its educational strategy, and enacting a democratic polity that responded strongly in opposition to legislation they found to be potentially damaging. These collective responses forwarded a vision of schools that emphasized the importance of the *public* in "public schools" and who should be included and considered within that term; not only did these efforts argue in favour of institutions founded on democratic governance (through elected school boards), but they also argued against the inherent discriminatory and differential impacts of the proposed changes in the bill. Other events, including the pandemic and the discovery of unmarked graves at residential school sites, brought forcefully to mind the impacts of underfunding and assimilationist policy agendas, which fed the fire of collective resistance and laid the groundwork for coalition building among opposition efforts—a point I return to in the interview results below (Chapter 6).

Although some of the distant history of Manitoba's education system may seem unrelated, there are a number of trends in the development of public schools that provide insight into inclusion and exclusion in education, as well as explain decisions in Bill 64. Most notably, the Manitoba Schools Question provides an early example about how assimilationist agendas in education were resolved, with the interests of the dominant (English-Protestant) population being prioritized in public spending and in conceptualizations of citizenship; with the emergence of tensions between anglophone and francophone citizens, the Protestant and Catholic education departments were consolidated into a single department with the announcement that Catholic schools would no longer receive funding. Not only did this disproportionately impact francophones, who predominantly identified as Catholic and attended those schools, but it also obfuscated that fact and constructed the "problem" as one of funding with the side effect of marginalizing francophone Manitobans. The Constitutional challenge even resulted in the decision that the province was within its rights to allocate funding in such a manner, and it found that there was no violation of the Constitutional guarantee for denominational

schooling; Catholics retained the right to attend denominational schools, but the province had the right not to fund them. The resolution of the Question took almost 70 years to resolve and another 20 before francophones were given administrative standing with their own school board (DSFM) in 1993. I would speculate that this helps to explain why Bill 64 proposed to eliminate all school boards and elected trustees in the province *except* for DSFM's elected trustees; as well, Bill 64 introduced a new "Whereas" statement reaffirming the Constitutional guarantee respecting minority language education (and named the francophone school division). The extended period in Manitoba's history during which the Question exerted pressure on the school system is significant, and it highlights how the public (in public schools) was constituted, what exclusion entailed and how it was rationalized by governmental policy, and sheds light on patterns of exclusion and their purposes in education.

With the shift toward more inclusive notions of citizenship in the latter half of the 20th century, along with related federal and provincial policies, education followed suit. Educational initiatives expanded inclusive schooling practices and slowly introduced notions of human rights equality that foregrounded the introduction of 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects in schools. School safety and anti-discrimination initiatives were the foundation for these initiatives, led by school divisions like Winnipeg School Division that recognized 2SLGBTQIA+ exclusions from school were not in line with human rights protections and needed interventions to ensure schools could be inclusive spaces. In 2013, through Bill 18's introduction of anti-bullying measures that specifically named sexual orientation and gender identity alongside rights-based protected personal characteristics, the education policy landscape shifted to at least nominally extend specific protections for 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects in schools. However, during this same period of inclusive advances, increasing austerity discourses acted as something of a counter-balance that began a steady process enforcing limitations on public spending for education and, by extension, undercutting schools' ability to allocate funding in ways to support educational equity. The shifting tensions related to inclusion, and particularly the expanding recognition of what constitutes the student body in public schools, throughout Manitoba's history of education serve to trace how education systems shifted toward considering how they could foster more equitable outcomes in recognition of the diversity of students. While

these efforts have been somewhat limited—often stymied by underfunding and limited recognition of how to include diversity in ways that do not diminish or efface difference, that do not rely on conformity or normativity—they have significantly shifted the educational landscape.

In contrast to these trends, Bill 64 represented a regressive reform that eliminated elected trustees from governance of education, imposed changes to governance that centralized control of the education systems and had discriminatory impacts, and shifted education toward neoliberal initiatives that opened the door for privatization and constrained educators and students to prescribed roles. In Bill 64, despite naming inclusion and diversity in various places in BEST and the bill, inclusion was relegated to the sidelines using language that put difference aside in favour of a neutral student identity devoid of difference; the important role of education, as presented by government rationale for education, was ensuring that students excelled—based on standardized test scores in academic subjects. Recognition of the impacts of minoritization on student performance, including the impacts of poverty, racialization, Indigeneity, and sexual and gender identity, did not merit any special provision. As Janzen and Heringer (2023) argue, Bill 64 constructed "the student—through its relation to knowledge, others, and self—as objectified and homogenous, and as being valued for economic contributions, thereby marginalizing other ways of being" according to oppressive neoliberal discourses (p. 545). For 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects, Bill 64 worked to silence, marginalize, and exclude them from the education system; despite the retention of the anti-bullying provisions, the mandate to maintain a respect for human diversity policy within the centralized education authority, and the GSA provision, the bill introduced a "potentially sensitive content" clause for health education that reinforced anxieties about including 2SLGBTQIA+ content and had the potential to limit recognition of the importance of including 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects in schools. Alongside these specific areas relating to 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects in the bill, the PC-led government also took several actions that revealed a deeper antipathy toward 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects, including the mysterious directive to Seven Oaks to cease flying the Pride flag in June 2021 and their subsequent re-election promise to bolster "parental rights" in schools. While it is tempting to read Bill 64 as a purely neoliberalist attempt to introduce privatization

measures, enforce normativity in schools that effaces difference, and strengthen ties to the economy, adjacent actions and policies reveal that a deeper level of exclusion toward diversity and difference—and toward 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects in particular, as is worth noting as the focus of this research—existed as a motivating factor.

CHAPTER 5: The Discourses of Bill 64: 2SLGBTQIA+ Subjects, the Purpose of Education, and Governance

This chapter focuses on the text of Bill 64, *The Education Modernization Act*, and presents my findings of a critical policy discourse analysis of the legislation itself.[42] In many ways, this chapter represents the heart of my dissertation research. From the start of my work on this project, Bill 64 occupied my thinking as the central policy document driving the conversation about public engagement regarding the future of education, how education would be organized, and who had a voice. Running to over 300 pages, Bill 64 was a significant legislative amendment consolidating three pieces of existing legislation—*The Public Schools Act*, *The Educational Administration Act*, and *The Community Schools Act*—with the intention to reorganize the governance and structures of Manitoba's education system and, less overtly, to redefine education's values and goals. This effectively positioned the bill as a discursive node producing a proliferation of public discourse, documents, news items, social media posts, and conversations about what education reform meant and what was to happen. In response to the legislation, publics organized across the political spectrum to raise sustained objections based on its anti-democratic character in eliminating elected school trustee positions, reorganization of governance structures and funding, centralization of educational authority, undermining of equity by eliding diversity within the province, and emphasis on what we might broadly label as neoliberal approaches to education. Bill 64 effectively pulled together the discursive strands of educational histories within the province and other government policies, as discussed in the previous chapter, and set out to redeploy those discourses in the education system based on the premise that Manitoba was overspending on education and its students

---

[42] The full text of Bill 64, *The Education Modernization Act*, can be accessed here: https://web2.gov.mb.ca/bills/42-3/b064e.php
Readers may also be interested to refer to other documents related to Bill 64's education reform effort, which I reference in this section. The *Better Education Starts Today* education strategy can be found here: https://manitoba.ca/asset_library/en/proactive/2020_2021/better-education-starts-today-report.pdf
The review commission's report, *Our Children's Success: Manitoba's Future: Report of the Commission on K to 12 Education*, can be accessed here: https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/educationreview/docs/commission-report/index.html

underperforming; Bill 64 was effectively, as Education Minister Cliff Cullen claimed, the means to change education and make Manitoba's system the "most improved education system in Canada" (cited in CBC News, March 15, 2021). Public responses were savvy to these justifications and set out to speak to them directly, undertaking opposition campaigns that involved collective organizing, lawn signs, editorial writing, social media information campaigns, and letter writing. For roughly a six-month period from March to September 2021, public discourse exerted increasing pressure to oppose the bill until it was officially withdrawn on October 6, 2021.

This period of intensive public response felt all-consuming in many ways; it was virtually impossible to escape from these conversations, from news about the bill, or from seeing signs fill neighbourhood lawns. I was continually drawn back to the legislation to look at how a recent news release from the province or editorial or social media post engaged some aspect of the proposed reform. The text of Bill 64 was invoked and contested again and again. It provoked response and acted as a discourse in a fundamentally productive way for legislators, educators, students, and citizens as they grappled with education and its principles—productive of subject positions in relation to the legislation, productive of speech acts to respond to the bill, productive of efforts to make meaning of education and the purposes of the bill. Observing these engagements, I came to recognize the significance of Ball's (1994) theorization of policy as text and policy as discourse, and it prompted my thinking about how to approach my investigation of education reform. As discourse, the bill was pervasive and working to exert pressure on the norms of education, and by dint of its status as reform it was acting with a normalizing power to shift existing norms and establish new ones; it reshuffled governance and altered the subject positions of education stakeholders; it overlapped with other legislation and invoked rationale for the proposed changes linked not solely to educational outcomes; it worked fundamentally to pervasively change the education system through a process of "modernization." Indeed, the very naming of the bill—*The Education Modernization Act*—invoked the notion that the current system was antiquated in some fashion, in need of a modern touch to keep up with the times. Further, the word "modernization" also acts as coded language for "educational reform" that couches neoliberal initiatives and privatization impulses for education (van Leeuwen in Ball & Youdell, 2007, p.

3). The term also appeared in a previous education amendment in Manitoba's 2002 *The Public Schools Modernization Act*, which amalgamated school divisions and reduced the number from 54 to 37.[43]

In this chapter, I take on the text of Bill 64 itself and directly engage with it as a productive text to understand how it creates and engages with educational discourses and impacts 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects. Centrally, Bacchi's (1999, 2009) notion of policy problematizations—what the problem is represented to be—provides a vital perspective to reading the policy text. At base, this crucial concept asks what policy problem situates Bill 64 and acts as its impetus: what is the problem of education that is in need of reform? This question positions Bill 64 as the response in the applied problem-solving mode of policy, and the bill operates as the solution in supplying a reformed education system. Further, this analysis engages with the governmental rationale—governmentality—in taking reformatory action, considers how their action is justified, and what that rationale communicates about education and 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects. Reading the bill with problematization in mind, the bill's fundamental changes, refiguring of subjects as educational "partners," various clauses and stipulations, ordering of sections, consolidation of statutes—all of it—informs our understanding of the problem of education in Manitoba and what needs to be done about it. The result is that the policy text itself forms the framework for education, and what is furnished by the policy is positioned as the solution. In other words, what is made visible and relevant in the policy is what acts as the fundamental solution to the problem of education; and conversely, what is excluded, silenced, or unaddressed can be understood as not relevant or as laying beyond the core problem that the reform effort is meant to address.

With this conceptual framework as my starting point, I set out to understand how 2SLGBTQIA+ students and content could be situated in Bill 64. While this might seem an impertinent question, particularly with what

---

[43] *The Public Schools Modernization Act* (Bill 14 in 2002) was introduced by an NDP government and focused on amalgamating school divisions but, crucially, it included a government directive that neighbouring divisions could voluntarily do so in advance of a governmental directive to do so (Levin, 2005). This offered a degree of local agency through the process and several boards submitted amalgamation proposals; the remaining amalgamations occurred through a government mandate.

seem to be much bigger problematics related to elimination of elected trustees and centralization of governance at play, I envisioned it as an opportunity to investigate structural inequity in education reform policy. Increasingly, there are calls to attend to structural inequity and systemic oppressions in institutional cultures and policy frameworks; however, when I searched the literature to find instances of research investigating the topic *during* a large-scale education reform effort, I found no satisfactory studies or scholarly engagement. My research agenda, it seemed, became clear. I undertook to examine how 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects (both students, as subjects constituted in and through policy discourse, and content) fared during educational reform when the main focus was purportedly on structural, organizational features of the education system—not on social equity or 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects in particular. The challenge was to attend to the appearances, omissions, silences, exclusions, and locations implicitly affecting 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects—especially when 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects were supposedly "irrelevant" to the problem at hand, a decidedly queer orientation—and understand how this language either contributes to or counters oppression related to heteronormativity, cisnormativity, and outright discriminatory stances. This was most readily observed when 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects are expressly included by analyzing the ways they are named, what language is used, and to what provisions they are linked. However, it goes beyond this by considering how 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects are present when they are not explicitly made visible. Crucially, I also attend to the ways 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects are neglected or excluded when they are subject to neutral treatment that reifies status quo approaches; the omissions, invisibilization, and elision of 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects contribute just as powerfully to notions of what social inclusion looks like. This is especially relevant in considering how policy constructs individuals as neutral actors—that is, neutral subjects that are not named or marked by inherent characteristics such as sexual orientation, gender identity, racialization, disability, and socioeconomic status that persist as factors of social inequity and as having effects on educational attainment. Taking this approach, I read the bill with an eye to understanding what the proposed solution to education carried with it for 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects—what representations, subject positions, and potential educational impacts could be found in the bill.

The challenge, of course, was finding a way to attend to the omissions and exclusions as well as the explicit inclusions of 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects, and doubly so in seeking to engage an intersectionality analysis. Given the sheer size of the bill and its far-reaching implications for the education system, much could be said about the bill's various proposed changes to the school system. However, I focus my critical policy discourse analysis by employing two criteria: (1) the *dominance* of the discourse, in terms of its centrality and scope in the bill; and (2) the *specificity* of the discourse, in its explicit relevance to 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects. In other words, in organizing my analysis, I identified policy discourses in Bill 64 that feature centrally and exert extensive, dominant, or structural force in and across the proposed education system; simultaneously, I identified discourses that carried explicit mention or specific implications for 2SLGBTQIA+ students and content. For example, accountability discourses pervade Bill 64, appearing in various ways and at different points throughout Bill 64's proposed education system, and because of their pervasiveness they feature in the following analysis, even though their specific relevancy for 2SLGBTQIA+ students may not be readily apparent. Similarly, although the "potentially sensitive content" clause appears only briefly (in s. 144 of Bill 64), its potential impacts for 2SLGBTQIA+ content and students are significant, and thus it too is included. These may be regarded as discourses that were (1) *dominant* in Bill 64 and (2) *specific* in their implications for 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects. These discourses emerged at the cross-section of the extensive public discourses related to Bill 64 during its six-month tenure as pending legislation, from the discourses related to education reform and 2SLGBTQIA+-inclusive education described in my literature review, and through my reading and coding of the text of Bill 64. The result, I hope, does justice to the considerable scope of the legislation while maintaining a focus on my specific research question in analyzing the implications for 2SLGBTQIA+ students and content in education.

The remainder of this chapter focuses on the following three policy problematizations in Bill 64:

- 2SLGBTQIA+ Subjects
- Purpose of Education
- Organization and Governance

I begin with the specific 2SLGBTQIA+ mentions in the bill and proceed into a discussion of the dominant themes of education's purpose, as articulated in the bill's "Whereas" statements, and conclude with the organizational and governance features, including the re-organization of the education system and the subject positions constituted by the new organization and the narrowing and proliferation of accountability measures. Although I discuss these problematizations separately, there are overlaps between them and they work across groupings to inform, support, and echo one another.

2SLGBTQIA+ Subjects

Bill 64 included two mentions specific to 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects—one respecting the creation of safe schools and bullying prevention, and the other related to "potentially sensitive content" instructional materials. Both had some standing within the previous public schools system, either in *The Public Schools Act* (PSA) legislation or in Manitoba's official curriculum documents. I describe each mention in turn below and explain some of the implications for how 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects are regarded in the education system.

Anti-bullying, safe schools, and respect for diversity policies

The first mention of 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects appears in relation to anti-bullying provisions, which were first introduced in 2013 through Bill 18, *The Public Schools Amendment Act (Safe and Inclusive Schools)*, and retained in Bill 64 from PSA. These anti-bullying provisions include language mandating the Provincial Education Authority (PEA) develop a "respect for human diversity" policy that has "due regard for the principles of *The Human Rights Code*" and accommodates students to establish activities and organizations in service of promoting a safe and inclusive school, including the ability to use the name "gay–straight alliance" (ss. 138(1-3)). Importantly, throughout this section, acceptable conduct is linked to respectful behaviour among staff and students in creating safe schools, and both the code of conduct and respect for diversity policy sections include explicit connection to human rights. However, even though this invocation of human rights provides a clear connection between the purpose of the policy in preventing discrimination and unacceptable behaviours in schools, it does

not include explicit mention of these protected characteristics.[44] As a result, the existing limitation of these clauses persists in the Bill 64 reform, eliding sexual orientation and gender identity under the banner of diversity. The closest these policies get to stipulating what that diversity might include is in describing what student activities or organizations must be accommodated in schools by the policy: those related to "gender equity, anti-racism and the awareness and understanding of, and respect for, people who are disabled by barriers and people of all sexual orientation and gender identities" (ss. 138(3)(c)) and to ensuring students groups and activities have the right to use the name "gay–straight alliance" (ss. 138(3)(b)). This is certainly a positive inclusion and goes a long way toward ensuring students have official permission in pursuing social equity groups related to gender, race, disability, and sexual orientation; however, it does require students to be the active agents in initiating the creation of these groups and supplying this extracurricular content in schools.

These anti-bullying and respect for human diversity directives are situated within the broader bill—that is, their discursive positioning—in a subsection on "Safe Schools," which provides a definition of bullying and describes other mandates for the PEA board to develop codes of conduct and emergency response plans to address unacceptable conduct. The reorganization of these provisions from the PSA, reorganizing content related to school climate within one consolidated section addressing "Safe Schools," has a certain logic. In PSA, this content was spread throughout the legislation, appearing in various locations throughout, and likely this was partially the result of how PSA had been amended over the years since its initial proclamation. Bill 64's reorganization, bringing together these provisions under one section on "Safe Schools," makes it easier to locate this content and recognize how the raft of provisions fit together. However, it also does confine the notion of "safety" in the broader bill to one specific section, and links 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects inherently to being at risk of

[44] Granted, given the standing of legislation, it is difficult to change and requires a formal legislative amendment process to update in future, which may be reason enough to exclude explicit listing of protected characteristics, as enumerated in human rights codes; however, there is a missed opportunity to explicitly name characteristics that foster inclusion, ensure they are clearly flagged for inclusion, and provide clear language the explains what diversity means, while also leaving interpretive adaptability through Manitoba's *The Human Rights Code*.

victimization and bullying. The discursive implication here constitutes subject positionalities for 2SLGBTQIA+ students in a deficit position of requiring inclusion only when it comes to being "unsafe" or experiencing negative conduct directed toward them. Student activities and clubs are facilitated only in the context of their linkage to preventing bullying and promoting safety, restricting the respect for human diversity policy's accommodation of student clubs to be the dedicated intervention in this regard for the sole purpose of fostering safety. In other words, proactive and educative responses to discrimination regarding 2SLGBTQIA+ people are not clearly mandated or even suggested in the legislation.

Further, the "Safe Schools" section in which these stipulations are included is located within Part 7—Public Schools of Bill 64, separate from Part 12—Independent Schools and Home School Arrangements. This separation suggests that school safety, including respect for diversity policies with their explicit provisions and accommodations for 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects, is an issue for public schools—and independent schools exist at a remove. The closest the bill gets to connecting independent schools to the safe schools' provisions is: (1) in describing the registration criteria for an independent school, which includes the statement "The school site must comply with local and provincial health and safety standards" (statement 4 of s. 312); and (2) possibly when an inspector shows up at an independent school to "examine and assess the programs, operation or administration of the independent school" (ss. 322(2)(d)). However, neither of these makes explicit connections to "safe schools" or public schools provisions, and this lack of explicit inclusion means there is no guarantee that this criteria will be included as a standard part of the assessment of school operations or a school site's compliance with "health and safety standards" (which reads more as a worksite provision).

Picking up on the bill's introduction of privatization measures, the principle of parental choice in education emphasizes that independent schools are "important in providing parents and students with choice in education" (ss. 310(1)) and explaining that parents "may choose an independent school as the type of education provided to their child" (ss. 310(2); see also "Whereas" statements, discussed below). This cracks the door to privatization measures that emphasize choice and market-based factors of competition in education; but it also,

fundamentally, reinforces that choice belongs to parents, not to their child (or, more aptly, the student). The significance of the language used here is that parents are in the position to choose their *child's* education, despite the previous language emphasizing that independent schools provide parents *and students* with choice. The language shift works to infantilize students when it comes to their own agency or choice in their education, subsumed under the parent-knows-best choice of school. This shift in language between student and child appears variously throughout the bill and signals when students are being made "responsible" for their own performance and actions, and when they are children who are subjects of their parent's wishes. For 2SLGBTQIA+ students, this is potentially endangering for their wellbeing if the parent is not accepting or affirming; a parent may choose to place their 2SLGBTQIA+ child in an independent school without the protections of safe schools provisions or in schools that are religiously or normatively restrictive about "recognizing" the right of 2SLGBTQIA+ students to identify as such and to be supported, or the parent may not recognize (or may choose to deny) a student's agency within their school to act of their own accord.

"Potentially sensitive content"

The second mention of 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects is somewhat more opaque and drastically less inclusive. It requires the PEA establish a policy related to "potentially sensitive content" in schools. The newly established PEA was to develop policy related to sensitive content—defined as "content within a physical education or health education course that deals with human sexuality, substance use and abuse prevention and personal safety"(ss. 144(6))—that required parents be notified when instructional materials dealt primarily and explicitly with this content; the policy mandate also directed the PEA to provide parents with the ability to exclude students from that portion of the course "if there is a conflict between the content and the parent or child's religious, cultural or family values" (ss. 144(4)) and provide an alternate delivery of this content (ss. 144(2)). Again, we see the student/child language distinction employed, which positions the *student* as the participant in school classrooms and the *child* as falling under parental authority and decision-making—particularly when "religious, cultural or family values" are invoked. These values are often coded in opposition to 2SLGBTQIA+ rights and subjects,

particularly when paired with assertions of parental authority (e.g., anti-trans movements often employ "parental rights" and family values language under the guise of protecting children; there is a long history invoking these values to oppose queer rights activism). But this is not the least of the discursive constructions stitched into this section.

Previously, this "potentially sensitive content" directive appeared as an overarching provision in the curriculum framework for physical education/health education from 2000 (Manitoba Education; number 7, p. 8; see also fuller discussion on p. 9 and Section B, Appendix C, p. 205). Specifically, the framework emphasized that school divisions/districts must implement a planning process for delivering potentially sensitive content, which I quote at length here:

> Student learning outcomes in all five strands [of the PE/Health Education curriculum] are expected to form the basis of learning, teaching, assessment in classrooms. However, student learning outcomes in two strands, *Substance Use and Abuse Prevention* and *Human Sexuality*, as well as in the *personal safety* sub-strand, contain potentially sensitive content.
>
> Potentially sensitive content must be treated in ways that are appropriate for the local school and community context. Manitoba Education and Training recognizes that the prime responsibility for education about issues of sexuality, including AIDS, rests with the family. It is clear to parents, teachers and community health leaders that young people must have knowledge, skills, guidance, and support if they are to make responsible and health-enhancing decisions. Greater cooperation and coordination among the home, school, and public health systems will contribute to the health and well-being of students.
>
> In the strands that include potentially sensitive content, school divisions/districts will need to engage in a planning process (including parental involvement in discussions) to determine divisional/district policy. (Manitoba Education and Training, 2000, p. 205)

The planning process stipulates that the content must be delivered in ways that are "appropriate to the local school and community context" and defers to the family as having primary responsibility about "issues of sexuality, including AIDS"—which in 2000 was a thinly veiled allusion to homosexuality and laden with risk connotations. However, it also acknowledges that youth "must have knowledge, skills, guidance, and support if they are to make responsible and health-enhancing decisions" and calls for cooperation and coordination among the home, school, and public health systems to accomplish this task. Earlier in the framework, the idea that potentially sensitive content relies on values developed through various formative institutions:

> While the home, peers, church, school, and community are primary sources of values, the media, including the World Wide Web, movies, and videos, provide a mixed and confusing array of values, beliefs, and choices for children, youth, and adults. The communication age has brought new challenges to schools, parents, families, and communities as they help students to deal with contentious issues locally and/or globally. As well, a number of significant and disturbing social trends concern parents and educators, including increased teenage sexual activity, increases in teenage pregnancy, use and abuse of substances, and other health-compromising behaviours. It is important for schools, parents, families, and communities to work together to ensure students have the knowledge and skills to make informed and responsible choices now and for the future. (p. 9)

The characterization of human sexuality in this framework conveys a clear message that sexuality is a matter of increasingly "contentious" issues characterized by "disturbing social trends," including increased sexual activity among youth; the proliferation of messaging among these publics provide a "mixed and confusing" array of values and understandings.

These messages are dated, at best, and it is disturbing enough that they persist in the curriculum framework. There have been significant changes in social attitudes toward sexuality, including the advancement of human rights legislation, marriage equality, and advancements in sexuality education that bring values of

consent, frank discussions regarding sex, include safer sex technologies (including PrEP and HIV viral suppression), and emphasize the importance of reducing stigma related to sexual orientation and sex itself. The effect of this kind of policy is that it enforces a highly normative notion of sexuality (bordering on moralistic), that its proper discussion should be linked with reproductive conversations, should be properly informed by traditional institutions of home, church, and community; additional information about these values is characterized as confusing, producing "disturbing" trends, and threatening the health of youth. Further, it links sexuality to substance use and issues of personal safety—all of which, to be clear, ought to be discussed openly and seriously with students, particularly if students are not receiving opportunities to have open discussions outside of school at home.

In bringing "potentially sensitive content" into education legislation, Bill 64 not only neglected the ways in which sexuality education has changed, but doubles down on the socially conservative aspects of the (dated) framework. Moving this directive from its location in the health education curriculum framework into the legislation, giving it the force of law, constitutes a substantial shift toward legislated curricular influence that infringes on the professional scope of educators, and it fixes sensitive content in the policy landscape. The bill removes the recognition of shared responsibility—coordinated, cooperative responsibility shared between the home, school, and public health system—in providing knowledge and building youth's capacity to make informed decisions. Instead, Bill 64 retains the mandate that parents be notified, states that an alternative delivery option be provided, and couches the whole section under the authority of the PEA with the mandate to "consult with each school community council in the regional catchment area" (ss. 144(2)(a)). I discuss the creation of School Community Councils (SCCs) below in more detail, but, for now, it is worth providing the brief clarification that parents of current students comprise SCCs at each school—which means that school policies must be created with the direct input of the parents populating the SCCs, that is, parents with the time, resources, and motivation to volunteer for a place on the council. This reinforces a heightened influence for those parents who have the ability to serve on SCCs to have influence over what content is considered appropriate and deliverable.

It also appears to mean that the different schools or educational regions may maintain different policies regarding sensitive content across the province, each informed by the myriad of SCCs within that area—some of which would enforce socially conservative understandings about what sexuality entails and how content is delivered.

The "potentially sensitive content" clause also links to one of the only places in the official Hansard record of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba that addressed the implications of the bill for 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects. MLA Uzoma Asagwara[45] (Union Station), now Deputy Premier and Minister of Health, Seniors, and Long-term Care, stated:

> What this government calls sensitive content means raising awareness about Indigenous history, about the effects of colonization, overdose awareness, anti-racism education, or lessons on human sexuality, gender identity and consent.(…) The minister's approach did absolutely nothing but sow anxiety amongst teachers, who are rightly concerned that Bill 64 is a regressive approach to inhibit their ability to teach inclusive lessons. Instead of using this opportunity to actually work towards a more progressive curriculum, this act reinforces the Province's past approach to sensitive content in schools. (Asagwara, 2021, pp. 1814–1815)

Asagwara points to further ramifications of including a "potentially sensitive content" clause in the legislation—the potential for sensitive content to be read more broadly than it is defined. While the definition provided in the legislation specifically points to human sexuality, substance use, and personal safety in the context of health education instruction, teachers may not be likely to look to those specifics for making the distinction in delivering their content, may simply steer clear of any potentially contentious content (whether related to sexuality or the

[45] It is worth noting that Asagwara entered this observation into the official Hansard record as an MLA who had an established history of thinking about and working to redress 2SLGBTQIA+ and race-based oppressions; Asagwara is a Black, non-binary person, who prior to serving as an MLA contributed to the founding and organizing of QPOC (Queer People of Colour) Winnipeg, a community-based organization that creates events and holds space for "queer and trans identified Black, Indigenous & People of Colour."

health curriculum), or may recognize that those who lodge complaints against them and their instruction will not likely be making those distinctions.[46] Given that sensitive content is linked so closely to input from parents, the possibility exists that content might be deemed sensitive beyond the definition, as has become increasingly apparent in recent "parental rights" agitations, anti-trans demonstrations and policy incursions, and anti-Indigenous and white supremacist reactions to progressive curricular content. As Asagwara points out, mandating a policy regarding instructional delivery of "potentially sensitive content" hinders teachers in providing inclusive lessons and instruction by sowing apprehension about what kind of content is restricted—adding uncertainty to teachers' lesson planning by forcing them to anticipate what might be perceived to be sensitive content, neglecting progressive or inclusive conversations about gender or sexuality in other areas of curriculum (e.g., language arts texts), undermining teachers' ability to engage in ad hoc inclusions of 2SLGBTQIA+ content in the classroom through teachable moments, and potentially opening teachers up to complaints—and when parents must be notified regarding it. It also establishes a precedent that curricular content is open to contestation based on the views of parents' or community members' views.

Similar to the ways in which the respect for human diversity policies and GSA provision confine 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects to the limited scope of safety and anti-harassment, casting 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects as always potentially at risk of victimization, the potentially sensitive content clause casts 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects as "sensitive content" and limits the visibility of 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects in the curriculum. Effectively, it denotes 2SLGBTQIA+ people and any discussion of them as "sensitive content" to which parents may legitimately object. A further discursive consideration of this demarcation of 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects as "sensitive content"

[46] Bill 64 included extensive language regarding oversight of teacher performance. Specifically, these sections deal with complaints about a teacher's competency or character, which mirrors language in PSA, and included clauses related to termination of teacher employment (ss. 106ff) and Ministerial powers to suspend or cancel certifications "for any cause that the minister considers sufficient" (ss. 24(3)). This constitutes a rather authoritarian ability to rescind professional certification based on complaints about a teacher's perceived competency or character, which may seriously endanger teachers willing to provide 2SLGBTQIA+-inclusive content in the context of socially, culturally, or religiously conservative communities—especially with SCCs' ability to participate in hiring and performance evaluation recommendations regarding teachers and principals at the school level.

allows for the further insight that not only are 2SLGBTQIA+ people potentially objectionable but that they are themselves sensitive, their sensibilities too delicate, because they are in need of the protections afforded by safe schools initiatives; *that* is where they rightly belong, in a category of special protective provisions, not in everyday classroom discussions. Section 144 essentially communicates that parents have a right to oversight of their child regarding 2SLGBTQIA+-related content in the classroom and when it will appear, and a right to limit the ways that sexuality is discussed in classrooms. This, I suggest, creates a conceptual conflict in supporting respect for diversity, except where respectful inclusion (i.e., safe from harassment) is concerned; respect becomes merely a touchpoint of enforcing right behaviour, countering harmful behaviour directed toward individuals, but not a relevant consideration in educational content, classroom material, or broader school cultures.

There is one final aspect of this clause that I want to highlight related to how Bill 64 introduces sensitive content, which implicates the previous curriculum framework's reasoning and language. As I described above, Section 144 uses the same phrasing—"potentially sensitive content"—as the 2000 curriculum framework in mandating the PEA's development of regional policies, invoking the curriculum framework's language and framing of the concept. Part of a policy problematization approach involves thinking about how the problem is framed and probing how previous policy "solutions" work to inform present conceptualizations—especially when previous policy language is employed, as it is here. Use of the same phrasing in Bill 64 suggests that the PEA's development of the policy should rightly look to how the previous policy and planning process worked, specific language used, concepts employed, etc., in developing the "new" policy. This citationality effect of policy is part of what reifies policy discourses over time, establishes normative approaches, and naturalizes previous understandings—all of which poses a barrier to substantive change to support equity. I would suggest that it is not an accident that the bill mirrors this language and invokes previous policy instantiations and interpretations, but rather a deliberate move to restrict content and reinforce normative approaches to (exclude) 2SLGBTQIA+ content, sexuality, gender, and relationships in schools.

Purpose of Education

While the entirety of Bill 64 constitutes the broader policy discourse comprising education, one of the coded themes in my analysis surfaced the importance of attending to how the bill worked to overtly construct the discourse of education itself, its aims and goals, what it is intended to accomplish, how it should be understood, and what subjects are constituted by it. This theme effectively speaks to the purpose of education, which may be regarded as an overt engagement with the *value* of education as it figures as a problem in need of a policy solution. Based on its articulation of the purpose of education, Bill 64 furnishes the education system with the needed inputs and interventions to accomplish this purpose, to position the system to be the "most improved." Through its specific provisions and clauses, Bill 64 implicitly alters the context of education in Manitoba by shifting understandings about the values, purposes, priorities, and organization of the education system through its discursive treatment of various issues, priorities, and organizational aspects of schooling; this is the implicit discourse embedded in the legislation. However, the bill also includes content that works more explicitly to shift understandings of education itself. My discussion of this theme is situated predominantly in the bill's "Whereas" statements, which echo in specific sections and locations within the bill, as well as in the education review and BEST strategy, which contain certain resonances and re-deployments of these discourses.

"WHEREAS" Education Is…

At the beginning of legislated statutes, there often appear a series of statements that set the stage for the specific policy provisions to follow. These introductory statements precede a piece of legislation and use the term "Whereas" to designate the given nature of the public value or understanding of the social problem to be addressed by the legislation; they are intended to act as prefatory statements naming common understandings or shared values underwriting the policy. Following these statements, legislation invokes the monarchic authority that brings the legislation the lawful force of the Crown: "THEREFORE HER[47] MAJESTY, by and with the advice

[47] This quotation is from Bill 64 and reflects the gender pronoun of the British monarch at the time; when monarchs change, the pronoun would change with them.

and consent of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, enacts as follows:". "Whereas" might be read as "in consideration that" or "given that," such that these statements take the general form: *Given that we understand education to be this; and given that students and educators have certain rights and responsibilities; the following legislation is enacted…*. These Whereas statements act as foundational principles upon which the legislation is based and receives its sanction. In essence, these statements explain the reason and backing for the legislation and represent the most direct discursive construction of education, its value, and by extension the policy problem and its constructed solution.

Analyzing Bill 64's Whereas statements facilitates an analysis of discourses that were purposefully mobilized to support the bill, establishing its groundwork and approach. I reproduce the Whereas statements in their entirety below in a side-by-side comparison of PSA alongside Bill 64's statements to demonstrate where specific changes were made (Figure 5.1). In the lefthand column, the PSA Whereas statements are listed, with coded numbering to identify the original position of that statement in the PSA (i.e., PSA.1 is the first Whereas statement in PSA). In the righthand column, the Whereas statements from Bill 64 are listed with a similar coded numbering (i.e., 64.1 is the first statement in Bill 64). I use Bill 64's ordering of statements to organize the table (which moves PSA.7 earlier and PSA.6 later in the list). Where statements could be directly compared between the two pieces of legislation, they are produced side by side; new or changed language is highlighted in gray to make comparisons more easily between the two. Finally, any PSA statements added to or removed from 64 are noted; where no previous PSA statement exists that addresses a new statement in 64, it is noted that "no prior analogous statement" existed. PSA included 10 statements and Bill 64 contained 13 statements.

The Public Schools Act (PSA) [2020]	**Bill 64 (*The Education Modernization Act*)** (64)
[PSA.1] WHEREAS a strong public school system is a fundamental element of a democratic society;	[64.1] WHEREAS a strong education system is a fundamental element of a democratic and civil society;
[PSA.2] AND WHEREAS the purpose of the public school system is to serve the best educational interests of students;	[64.2] AND WHEREAS the purpose of the education system is to serve the educational best interests of the child by supporting the discovery and development of the child's talents and abilities and fostering a love of lifelong learning;
[PSA.3] AND WHEREAS the public school system should contribute to the development of students' talents and abilities;	
No prior analogous statement	[64.3] AND WHEREAS the public school system plays an essential role in providing an education to all Manitobans that enables them to become literate, skilled, engaged, ethical, creative and critical thinkers;
No prior analogous statement	[64.4] AND WHEREAS students are entitled to learn in a welcoming environment that respects diversity and nurtures a sense of belonging;
[PSA.7] AND WHEREAS parents have a right and a responsibility to be knowledgeable about and participate in the education of their children;	[64.5] AND WHEREAS parents have the right and the responsibility to be knowledgeable about and take an active role in the education of their children and the option to choose the type of education for their children — namely, public school, independent school or home school arrangement;
[PSA.4] AND WHEREAS public schools should contribute to the development of a fair, compassionate, healthy and prosperous society;	[64.6] AND WHEREAS the philosophy of inclusion is a foundational principle of the education system in Manitoba and an inclusive system takes into account the diverse needs and interests of the people of Manitoba and contributes to the development of a fair, compassionate, healthy and prosperous society;
[PSA.5] AND WHEREAS the public school system must take into account the diverse needs and interests of the people of Manitoba;	
No prior analogous statement	[64.7] AND WHEREAS students need to develop competencies for today and the future and be prepared for a smooth transition from high school education to advanced education or entry into the workforce;
[PSA.8] AND WHEREAS public schools require skilled and committed staff in order to be effective;	[64.8] AND WHEREAS the education system requires knowledgeable, skilled and committed educators in order to be effective;
[PSA.9] AND WHEREAS it is in the public interest to further harmonious relations between teachers and their employers through a process of collective bargaining consistent with the principle that resources must be managed efficiently and effectively;	[64.9] AND WHEREAS it is in the public interest to further harmonious relations between teachers and their employer through a process of collective bargaining consistent with the principle that resources must be managed efficiently and effectively;

[PSA.10] AND WHEREAS the Province of Manitoba and school divisions and districts share responsibility for the financing of the public schools;	*Removed from 64*
No prior analogous statement	[64.10] AND WHEREAS the Government of Manitoba believes in and is committed to an education system that honours the rights guaranteed by the Constitution of Canada in respect of minority language education as supported by the francophone school division;
No prior analogous statement	[64.11] AND WHEREAS the Government of Manitoba is committed to encouraging all partners in the education system to work together to advance reconciliation and ensure the educational success of Indigenous students;
[PSA.6] AND WHEREAS democratic local school divisions and districts play an important role in providing public education that is responsive to local needs and conditions;	[64.12] AND WHEREAS parental and community engagement in school planning plays an important role in providing public education that is responsive to local needs and conditions;
No prior analogous statement	[64.13] AND WHEREAS education is a shared responsibility and requires collaboration, engagement and empowerment of all partners in the education system to ensure that all students are provided with effective learning opportunities and supports necessary to achieve success;

Figure 5.1: Side-by-Side Comparison of PSA and Bill 64 WHEREAS Statements

It is worth stating the obvious, that changes to these Whereas statements are intentional—and their effects and provisions in the bill are not incidental. In their articulation of the values and understandings underwriting the policy to follow, these statements have discursive force in structuring education and are backed by the institutional power of the state. I would argue these are uninterrogated values, presented as "given" understandings regarding education itself, that work to construct the *problem* of education—setting the stage for and implying the policy solution. They mobilize social, cultural, economic, and political discourses regarding education and work to construct not only what can be thought—or perhaps, *should* be considered valid ways of thinking—about education, but establish the groundwork for what can be said about it and who has a voice. They exert a normativizing force on the policy and develop constitutive understandings of the social and the educational; they have material effects in constituting subjects and even structuring the spaces of schooling, its governance, its organization.

The challenge in talking about these statements lies in their accrued meaning and application. Small wording changes take on larger significance, building over the course of the 13 statements and in the policy that follows. For example, the large-scale replacement of "public school system" with "education system" language (except in 64.3) appears to be merely a semantic change in updating language from the titular *The Public Schools Act* to *The Education Act* language that Bill 64 aimed to enact—but this shift takes on significance in light of 64.5 where the education system is explained in the context of parental choice in the system between public, independent, or home schooling.[48] This recasting of the system as encompassing choice can then be read back on 64.3, where "public school system" phrasing is retained, to frame 64.3 as applying specifically to one aspect of the broader education system and, consequently, not applying to independent schools or home school arrangements; this value is only applicable to one portion of the system, playing "an essential role" but not a necessarily definitive role that would be applicable to all types of schooling.

Further, new statements in 64.11 and 64.13 introduce the language of "partners in the education system," invoking marketized language that echoes business interests (which becomes glaringly apparent when comparing how PSA uses partner language in, e.g., PSA s. 37 usage of "partner" language in relation to pecuniary interests that also carried over to s. 291 of Bill 64). This introduction of partners-in-education language is clarified early in Bill 64 in section 2, listing partners in education as "parents, students, the minister, the provincial education authority, the francophone school board and division and its school committees, the provincial advisory council on education, school community councils, directors of education, parental engagement officers and principals, teachers and school staff." Notable here is that parents are listed first,

[48] Section 3 of Bill 64 to follow states succinctly the import of this value in a subsection on "parental choice": "A parent may choose the type of education that is to be provided to the parent's child." The explanation in subsection 1(3) on "education system – delivery" explains that the following types of education are delivered in Manitoba: "(a) a public school education; (b) an independent school education; (c) a home school arrangement." The form of subsection 1(3) makes it easy to amend later, as the list form provides an easy insertion point that could be utilized to supplement the existing system with additional "types" of education offered, which may change the nature of the system through typology and expands the potential for privatization initiatives.

followed by students and those that work in educational governance roles, with principals, teachers, and school staff appearing last. The ordering of the Whereas statements carries discursive significance, although it does not have legislative import and functions largely to construct "given" understandings of prioritized positionalities in relation to education; however, that discursive significance does emphasize prioritized subjects in education. That is, the ordering of statements works to emphasize the importance of certain values or actors. For instance, parents are given a certain primacy in the new discursive working of the education system—through choice, through their governance role on SCCs and the provincial advisory council (PAC), through their authority over their child's education. This furnishes parents with an authoritative role in educational governance and in directing their child's education, shifting further the roles and subjectivities of actors in educational governance, in the role of educators, in who and what we understand the "student" to be, including their agency in learning and their central role in education.[49] But this parent-partner language also introduces possibilities for the privatized interests in education through "choice" language. It is crucial to recognize that these Whereas statements do not necessarily represent widespread values or even conventional values of education in Manitoba—and this is the crux of my point. Rather, they are doing discursive work to shift particular understandings of education in how they frame what education is meant to be, and they do so in ways that may obfuscate the introduction of certain values and layer meaning in ways that crack the door for further changes or creating opportunities to change the landscape of education in the province.

There are locations where, specifically, new statements are introduced (e.g., 64.7 linking education directly to future education and employment) or where small but substantive changes are made (e.g., 64.5 emphasizing parents have *the* right to take *an active role and choose the type* of education their child receives,

[49] 64.2 amalgamates PSA.2 and PSA.3, but changes the language of "student" to that of "child." It also shifts from "best educational interests" (PSA.2) to "educational best interests" (64.2), which is a slight change but one that works to emphasize the educational nature of the child's best interests, taking on a paternalistic flavour. In contrast, PSA.2 states the purpose is to serve the best educational interests of the student, placing emphasis on *best education* in the interests of the students.

shifting from PSA.7 where parents have *a* right to *participate* in the education of their child), that change expectations of the education system, what its purpose is, and who has a role in it. The introduction of wholly new statements (i.e., 64.3, 64.4, 64.7, 64.10, 64.11, and 64.13) and the removal of one statement (i.e., PSA.10) are significant changes that signal discursive shifts in the articulation of education and how it ought to be understood for the purpose of large-scale reform. Several of these new statements forward laudable values that were previously not articulated in the PSA—for example, naming education as enabling development of "literate, skilled, engaged, ethical, creative and critical thinkers" (64.3), respecting diversity and sense of belonging (64.4), protecting French minority language rights installed in the Constitution (64.10), and forwarding reconciliation efforts and supporting Indigenous student success (64.11). However, these values are couched in the context of the policy provisions of Bill 64 to follow (and in the BEST education strategy that was consistently indexed as its application plan).

Two of these statements in particular exemplify the limitations of Bill 64 in forwarding these laudable values even as they introduce them: 64.4 affirms the importance of students learning "in a welcoming environment that respects diversity and nurtures a sense of belonging," and 64.11 names a government commitment to "encouraging all partners in the education system to work together to advance reconciliation and ensure the educational success of Indigenous students." Both of these statements affirm educational equity in certain ways and, importantly, include some specifics about what it looks like and entails; however, neither is particularly well supported in the remainder of the policy. Aside from the "respect for human diversity" policy section (discussed above), the word "diversity" only appears in one other location in the bill—not in reference to curricular/programmatic content or supporting diversity in schools, but in reference to the governance structure of education, specifically, in making appointments to the PEA board, under a subsection on board expertise (ss. 41(4)). That is, appointments to the board must have regard for (a) the need to ensure "each member has the knowledge, skills and expertise in an area relevant to the needs of the board," that (b) the board as a whole "represents a sufficient range of expertise and experience to carry out its responsibilities effectively," and finally

(c) that the "the board as a whole represents the diversity of the people of Manitoba and the varied talents, perspectives and ideas of people with different backgrounds and experiences." I discuss the PEA again below, but suffice it for now to note the following: First, this reference does not provide specifics about diversity, rehearsing the articulation of "diversity" as merely any deviation from the dominant, unnamed social norms (i.e., white, straight, cisgender, man, not disabled, not experiencing poverty); this is a common critique of diversity initiatives, that they affirm the central, dominant norm and work to naturalize that norm by constructing diversity as any difference from that undifferentiated "normal" state. Second, the PEA board consists of "at least 6 but no more than 10" appointed persons (s. 41(1)), limiting its representational potential.

As for 64.11, we again find a paucity of support in the legislation to back this statement, as well as a notable hedging of the strong language of the government's commitment to reconciliation through their use of the word "encouraging" in the phrasing of being "committed to encouraging all partners." The commitment the government articulates here does not take the form of a mandate or material supports, but an exhortative role in encouraging others to do that work.[50] The construction of this statement and use of "all partners" language makes this even more baffling—encouraging "all partners in the education system to work together to advance reconciliation"—because partners include, by the definition in section 2, government actors, who presumably are the ones encouraging this collaborative work: the minister and appointed board of the PEA, as well as the parental governance structure of the SCCs and PAC, and those who are engaged in the frontline educational activities (i.e., students, teachers, principals). As it stands, the language of encouragement works to undermine this commitment and relegate it to the status of a suggestion or recommendation for undertaking reconciliation

[50] This is even more interesting in light of the fact that the education department was near completion of an Indigenous education policy framework, *Mamàhtawisisin: The Wonder We Are Born With*, which had been under development since 2015 and released in 2022. Given the substantial work undertaken to develop this policy framework, including specific strategies and actions to be employed, a hedged commitment to reconciliation in 64.11 seems to be at cross-purposes with the policy framework. Specifically, the policy statement in *Mamàhtawisin* states, "Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning commits to work across the system and alongside caregivers, families, communities, and educational partners to embed equity, collaboration, shared responsibility, and accountability into an Indigenous-inclusive education system" (p. 8).

work; it effectively divests the government of responsibility for reconciliation work itself, and reserves its role to that of oversight and direction of the frontline actors, which is a common strategy in the bill. Accountability both proliferates and narrows[51], and responsibility is largely defined in accountability terms as being answerable for actions taken (or not) in relation to how students are performing or succeeding. Further, there is little in the actual legislation to furnish support for reconciliation in specific ways. The word "Indigenous" appears nowhere else, nor does Métis or Inuit. "First Nations" appears twice in relation to oversight measures regulating students, and particularly in furnishing the minister's ability to take formal actions in relation to schools operated by First Nations. Subsection 28(1) describes the powers of the minster in assigning a "Manitoba education number" to, among others, "a student who is enrolled in a school operated by a First Nation, if the school is approved by the minister." In subsection 30(2), the minister may request personal information and personal health information from a First Nation about an enrolled student (subject to certain limitations set out in 30(3), which essentially detail that any information requests must relate to monitoring educational operations). Both instances relate to oversight of education and the administrative functioning of the school system. Notably, they do not relate to formal content or furnish the purposes identified in 64.11; they relate to assigning numbers to track students and track student achievement, and the ability of government to access information related to educational achievement, effectiveness of programming, eligibility for funding, conducting research and analysis, and so on. This effectively brings First Nations schools and students under the governance and authority of the formal education system, specifically in terms of monitoring, tracking, and oversight. It positions First Nations' schools as needing oversight, connecting the significance of schooling only to the specific administrative functioning of producing the recognizably valid output of "educational success" for Indigenous students; other forms of

[51] I discuss this in more detail in the following section on Organization and Governance, subsection on Governance Subjects and Accountability; however, it is worth noting that removal of the democratically elected school board trustee positions acts to remove formal *public* accountability, as centralization of authority to whom educators are accountable accrues around the minister and the appointed PEA board, but also proliferates through parental involvement in SCCs and the PAC.

"success" or holistic wellbeing or ways of knowing take a secondary position here and, without any mention or provision in the legislation, are invisibilized.

It should be acknowledged that these specific provisions regarding First Nations' schools appear within broader provisions regarding all students—that is, First Nations students and schooling are not an exception here and are not receiving different treatment than other students and schools. This, however, is precisely the problem because it elides difference and specific instances for which "diversity" might be usefully provisioned and substantively supported. Naming Indigenous students and their success in 64.11 works to highlight the deficit narratives surrounding many Indigenous students, using the language of "closing the achievement gap" between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students (e.g., BEST strategy, 2021, pp. 6, 13, 16) but neglecting specific responsibility for the colonial structures of the state and education systems that contribute to these harms, differential achievements, and lack of achievement. Discursively, Indigenous identity is the only difference marking this achievement gap, which constructs the problem as one of Indigenous identity—not settler colonialism, historical marginalization, poverty, epistemicide, state oppression, or other forms of systemic oppression. Only including two mentions of First Nations in the remainder of the legislation works to discursively confine inclusion to these purposes and provisions, assimilating First Nations schools and students within the educational legislation, effectively subsuming regard for Indigenous students and success within the colonial system provisioned by the education legislation and neglecting historical and ongoing impacts of that system as constitutive elements of the exclusion.[52]

[52] There is much more that should be said here, and my discussion is necessarily limited. I would point to Ellen Bees's (2022) thesis project, *Manitoba Education Reforms, White Settler Discourses, and the Marginalization of Indigenous Perspectives*, as offering a deeper analysis of Bill 64 and education reform efforts to consider impacts for Indigenous students, learning, and ways of knowing. Specifically, Bees identifies the dominance of neoliberal understandings of learning and achievement in the education reform effort, which works to marginalize Indigenous perspectives and instrumentalize Indigenous learning, superficially integrate Indigenous content and perspectives, and ultimately reinforce white settler colonialism and marginalize Indigenous perspectives.

These strategies are played out throughout Bill 64 and in the adjacent reform documents; wherever diversity, inclusion, equity, Indigenous education, or characteristics of difference are named, they are treated as part of an assimilative naming of difference in order to dismiss it and bring it into alignment within the existing system in an effort to form "neutral actors"—or what might be called an educational neutrality. Difference is enlisted as part of a system that constitutes subject positions as only abstractly different—diverse, divergent from the assumed norm, deviating from the standard—in ways that are deemed irrelevant to educational achievement, or as being relevant only insofar as they are instrumentally named to bring them into the fold. Achievement is linked to academic outcomes, raising test scores, and return on investment. In and of themselves, these are not irrelevant concerns for an education system and, crucially, academic achievement is a key aspect of education; however, they are not the only goals of schools or the education system, nor are they a necessarily accurate reflection of learning or the social, psychological, relational, educational outcomes that schools develop and that inform educational attainment. For example, Manitoba Education's *Framework for Learning* is based on *mino-pimatisiwin* (Cree for "The Good Life"), and explains that learners should be placed at the centre and "requires focusing all talents, efforts, and resources on improving learner success. Learner success will look different for every child, but it always means they are prepared to reach their full potential and live Mino-Pimatisiwin *(The Good Life)*…" (Manitoba Education, Framework for Learning, 2024). Divorced from other forms of achievement and a regard for the ways that social inequity contributes to academic achievement discursively positions achievement in Bill 64 as a standalone measure of a monolithic student subjectivity. In other words, the student is predominantly constituted within an undifferentiated norm, a neutral placeholder within the education system, a "partner" whose purpose is to achieve and by whose achievement the success of the system is measured along the single, undifferentiated axis of academic performance. Context or specific student characteristics are not named in relation to supportive material resources, policy provisions, or curricular content; difference is named as a way to assimilate students into the undifferentiated norm (which is "unmarked" by dominant conceptualization of whiteness, maleness, cisgender, heterosexual, etc.). Neglecting to

address the various social and economic factors that may contribute to lower achievement essentially elides those differences as irrelevant. Numerous editorials and postings regarding Bill 64 point this out, most often in relation to poverty (e.g., Bettner of ProtectEdMB cited in Macintosh, August 21, 2021; Henderson, 2021; Macintosh, 12 June 2021; Wiens, 2021) but also in relation to race, Indigeneity, 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects, and other social factors (e.g., Braul, 2021; Ennab, May 7, 2021; Janzen, June 29, 2021; Macintosh, March 30, 2021; Macintosh, April 3, 2021; Reimer & Brown, 2021; Rural Voices United, 2021; Sinclair, 2021; Winnipeg Free Press, April 10, 2021). These concerns, along with other reservations related to the need for the bill's proposed large-scale changes and the elimination of school boards, were largely dismissed as the concerns of a "vocal minority"[53] by government actors (Froese, June 14, 2021)—despite language in 64.3 and 64.6 naming the education system as related to all Manitobans and as taking into account the "diverse needs and interests of the people of Manitoba."

Rather, the important factor, as stated repeatedly by the minister and by government in relation to this education reform effort, was to deal with the high spending per capita and low rankings of student performance. This rationale was continually invoked by the minister, including in the "Message from the Minister" prefacing the *Better Education Starts Today: Putting Students First* (BEST, 2021) education strategy that was released concurrent with the bill:

> Our system is at a critical point. Manitoba's education system has some of the highest spending per student, yet our students are at or near the bottom of national and international rankings. Per capita, we have the highest number of school divisions and trustees across all provinces. There are 37 duplicative bureaucracies across Manitoba built on an inconsistent funding formula

[53] This dismissal of issues was based on the notion that these were originating from a "vocal minority," even though this was clearly not the case and seemed to merely catalyze collective resistance efforts (Winnipeg Free Press, July 19, 2021). But it is worth noting that these issues related to "minority" concerns and, as such, were readily dismissed because they were assumed to belong only to those marginalized interests, as only vocalized by those "minority" voices; the assumption carried by the dismissal of "vocal minority" opponents of the bill more centrally communicated that "minority" interests were irrelevant to the bill and, by extension, in education itself.

> reliant on education property taxes. For too long, "local voice" has focussed on setting tax rates and repetitive collective bargaining.
>
> We need a provincial system that is consistent, efficient and focused on student success—built from the bottom up versus top down. (Minister Cullen cited in Manitoba Education, 2021)

This rationale effectively constitutes the education system as succeeding when it is "efficient," fiscally streamlined, and successful by the standards of national and international rankings on standardized tests. Standardized testing has certain limitations, not least of which is its (inaccurate) reputation as an absolute, objective measure of student achievement; but it also sets standards for student outcomes that are presumed to be held commonly across regions, singularly representative of "success," as the standard against which learning may accurately be gauged. This, of course, neglects other learning outcomes, as well as the importance of recognizing contextual factors in student learning (e.g., Macintosh, 2019, March 19). However, it also reinforces the neoliberal fixation on data to evidence success and demonstrate efficiency in return on investment.

The notion of student achievement recurs throughout the bill, linked with accountability measures and stitched into the mandates and responsibilities of various subject positions—from the PEA's accountability to parents and the minister, to the regional directors' work with schools and SCCs, to SCCs' oversight of school performance. The language commonly mirrors what appears in section 55 regarding PEA's duties and powers in conducting "assessments of the effectiveness of educational programming and student achievement of learning outcomes" (see also ss. 39(1) on the PEA's mandate; ss. 70(2) regarding regional directors' roles working with schools and SCCs; ss. 72 regarding the role of PAC; ss. 84(3) on SCCs' role in advising school principals; ss. 104(1) on teachers' duty to "monitor the effectiveness of teaching strategies by analysing student achievement of learning outcomes"). These measures of accountability are linked with the efficacy of teaching in producing student achievement and, further, are connected directly to spending early in the bill through a mandated accountability agreement between the minister and the PEA, stipulating that this accountability agreement must include an array of financial reporting requirements and, notably, "balanced scorecard" reporting (statement 5 of

ss. 16(3)). The appearance of the balanced scorecard is in itself notable, as it discursively constructs a performance metric that links financial spending to various operational aspects. According to the Balanced Scorecard Institute (2024), balanced scorecard reporting, briefly, is a performance metric used to examine an organization across four categories to manage objectives and track performance measures; the four perspectives consider the financial (financial performance and effective use of resources), customer/stakeholder (customer value and satisfaction), internal processes (efficiency and quality), and organizational capacity (human capital, infrastructure, technology, culture to facilitate increased performance). This emphasis on a specific corporatized mode of reporting tied to accountability measures places a heavy emphasis on the financial, and it mobilizes corporatized and consumer-based language that effectively constitutes endogenous privatization measures (Ball & Youdell, 2007), mirroring public education operations on those of private corporate processes—as well as cracking the door on future privatization measures.

64.7 adds another layer to this understanding of education's purpose by directly connecting education to employment and entry into the workforce. This is not new in education, and linkages to employment and training gained significant traction through the 1990s in Manitoba's education system; however, the introduction of employment in "Whereas" statements signals a notable shift in "given" understandings of education, in the discourse of education's value, by linking education's value instrumentally to the economic. As 64.7 describes, students "need to develop competencies for today and for the future" in order to be properly equipped for "a smooth transition from high school education to advanced education or entry into the workforce." Here, the future is linked with employment, effectively positioning education as having a functional instrumentality for employment as its only value in the future, as being connected only with economic performance and in the constitution of future workers; the future exists in education, and for students, primarily for these economic reasons, as the rationale for education itself. Other documents, including the very title of the Commission's report—*Our Children's Success: Manitoba's Future*—and the BEST education strategy, reinforce this notion in how they invoke the future. For instance, Education Minister Cullen's opening message in BEST invokes children

as the future, and education as working to ensure "our most valuable assets—our children—have the opportunity to succeed as future leaders in the Province" (2021, p. 3). Even the reference to children as "assets" constitutes children in economic and financial terminology. The third pillar of BEST's strategy goes on to identify the importance of "Future-Ready Students" and frames the pillar as follows: "Our schools are key to lifelong success by engaging students in learning, fostering innovation and creativity, as well as supporting transitions while in school and into adulthood. Pathways to further education and employment must reflect student and employer needs" (p. 17). The key to the future is turning our "assets" into employable adults, which is explained more directly later in that section in terms of the labour market: "Evolving labour markets and the demand for a highly skilled workforce will require Manitoba to re-evaluate how we prepare students for the future of work" (p. 19). Even "lifelong learning" is subsumed under this future-looking instrumentality by the echoes between Whereas statement 64.2—describing the education system as serving the "educational best interests of the child" in service of "fostering a love of lifelong learning"—and the BEST's references to "lifelong success" in employment terms (pp. 9, 17). The functionalist emphasis on employment in BEST's third pillar on "Future-Ready Students" emphasizes building "pathways to post-secondary education, training, and employment" (p. 19), effectively constituting lifelong learning as perpetually linked to labour markets. In the BEST strategy's Appendix A on lessons learned during COVID-19, the economic appears in a different way, but one that again reiterates the economic role of schools. This time the reference to the economy emphasizes education's importance for *current* economic functioning: "The pandemic has reminded us of the important economic role schools play, not only in educating the future workforce, but also in enabling parents and caregivers to work" (p. 25). Here, the framing of education's role in the economy is not only in preparing students for the future but in acting as present-day childminding to ensure parents and caregivers can go to work. Similarly, the Commission's education review report (Manness & MacKinnon, 2020) speaks of the "high expectations" employers have of the education system "in preparing a well-educated and trained workforce that is contributing positively to the economy of the province," linking education and training directly to strong literacy and numeracy skills, with science, technology,

engineering, arts and math (STEAM) being "of special interest to future employers" (p. 101). Educational content—literacy, numeracy, STEAM—all shift to a functional role in preparing students for employment.

The employment connection is reinforced in the bill itself as well. The PEA's mandate reiterates education's connection to the workforce (ss. 39(1)). Making this direct connection creates an explicit rationale between education and performance as a functional outcome for the economy—advanced education furthers certification and eventual entry into the workforce—positioning education as a having a functional, instrumentalist quality for the economic[54]. The arrangement of departments for the Province of Manitoba bear this out in the shifting titles of ministerial appointments, overlapping education with training, skills development, and economic development: Minister of Education and Training (2016–2019), Minister of Education (2019–2022), Minister of Economic Development and Training (2019–2021), Minister of Advanced Education, Skills, and Immigration (2021–2022), Minister of Advanced Education and Training (2022–2024), Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning (2022–2024). These overlapping and shifting ministerial portfolios consistently link governmental responsibility within domains of governance between education, training, and employment.

As a result of these discourses, students are framed as future economic actors and education is justified as preparing them to be workers, as human capital in development; their time in schools is framed in terms of their future value to society as workers contributing positively to the economy. Student achievement and success, in these terms, constitute students who are future-ready to enter the workforce and as potential beneficiaries of "lifelong success"; education's purpose is to facilitate that process. This regard for the economy is not entirely irrelevant for education, but it does shift education discourses in a number of ways to reinforce individualistic participation, emphasize responsibilization of students for their academic performance and by extension make individuals responsible for future economic status, relegate the future to one defined purely in

[54] According to governmentality, this provides a ready justification for government's direct action in and through education, linking rationale for social welfare provision (i.e., education) directly to economic production and enhancement as the rationale for government action (Foucault, 2008).

terms of employability and one's abilities as an economic actor, and sidestep systemic inequality by emphasizing notions of merit, success, and achievement in relation to socioeconomic status. In short, education is instrumentalized and knowledge becomes a commodity. Along with the shallow treatment of diversity and inclusion measures in the bill and supporting documents, this reification of economic discourse overlooks contributing systemic oppressions, or enrolls difference as irrelevant to or in service to the economic (e.g., Duggan's 2003 conceptualization of homonormativity's emergence in neoliberalism), and situates education inextricably in the realm of the economic.

The final Whereas statement pulls together a number of these discursive positionings in stating, "education is a shared responsibility and requires collaboration, engagement and empowerment of all partners in the education system to ensure that all students are provided effective learning opportunities and supports necessary to achieve success" (64.13). The ultimate goal of the final statement is framed around the shared responsibility of partners to collaborate and engage toward the common purpose of student success: that is, for all partners to be empowered to provide students with *opportunity* and the necessary supports to *achieve success*. The reappearance of partner language here, newly introduced to the realm of education by the bill, reinforces shifted discourses regarding educational actors; the collaboration, engagement, and empowerment is directed toward all actors for the purpose of providing students with the opportunity to succeed. While it appears that students occupy the central location and focus of education, the statement's construction relegates them to a passive role. Students are positioned here as objects to be acted upon, lacking real agency or having substance beyond their role to perform; they are contributors, one partner among others, that factor in the overall performance of the education system, and whose output (in the form of academic achievement) is the standard by which the success of the whole is measured. In other words, the student's role is to acquire knowledge in such a way that the "inputs" of the collaborative energies of educational partners are demonstrated to be effective, efficient, successful. The moving parts, the agentic actors, are the parents, members of the PEA, the SCCs and PAC, and the educators. This becomes especially clear in section 4 of the bill

in which parental participation and student participation are outlined. Parents act as "the primary guide and decision-maker" regarding their child's education (ss. 4(1)(a)) and take "an active role in their child's educational success" (ss. 4(1)(b)). Students, however, as a partner in education are not described as having a role in "success" but rather a role as compliant actors; they attend school "punctually and ready to learn and actively engage in and diligently pursue their education" (ss. 4(2)(a)). The remainder of their participation hinges on behaviour: ensuring their conduct contributes to a "safe, caring and inclusive learning environment" (ss. (b)), respecting the rights of others (ss. (c)), complying with school rules and policies (ss. (d)), and positively contributing to their school environment (ss. (e)). Broadly, this enforces the notion that students are acted upon within schools and in the process of education; their role is to comply, show up on time, not to cause disruption, and to work diligently—and success naturally follows if the rest of the partners are performing their roles correctly. It also allows for the responsibility for unsafe or disrespectful behaviour to be placed on the shoulders of students—their behaviour and conduct—as their role is to contribute to a safe environment and respect the rights of others. Alongside the appearance of language describing the "child" in 64.2, 64.5, and section 3 and 4 of the bill in relation to parental choice and participation, students are disempowered and relegated to passive receivers of educational content in the system.

Finally, there was one Whereas statement regarding school funding that was removed from Bill 64. PSA.10 stated that "the Province of Manitoba and school divisions and districts share responsibility for the financing of public schools." This removal signals a notable shift in education discourse regarding financial responsibility for *public* education, especially given the government's repeated justification for reform that Manitoba spends among the most on education compared with other provinces and "sees our students achieve some of the lowest results" (Cullen cited in MacLean, March 15, 2021). It is also notable because the content of the bill, as discussed above, introduced financial accountability at the highest level of the PEA through balanced scorecard reporting. Bill 64 provided no analogous Whereas statement that addressed—or even mentioned—funding of schools or where responsibility for funding education resides. Concurrent with Bill 64, the PC

government introduced Bill 71, *The Education Property Tax Reduction Act*, that was essentially designed to reduce property taxes through a system of rebates; these reductions were specifically aimed at school taxes, or the mill rates on property taxes set by school boards for the purposes of raising funds to adequately fund schools, which had previously already been capped by government in an attempt to manage taxation. Bill 71 passed in the spring session (while 64 was designated by the NDP Opposition to be held over to the fall sitting) and effectively undermined a significant source of funding (and school board autonomy for meeting their financial needs) by progressively reducing education property tax; the collected taxes were "rebated" by government by mailing cheques to property owners and putting a stoppage on landlords' annual rent increases. This tax-reduction strategy was a familiar move for the PC government, and it even factored in their first term win in 2016 to form the 41st Manitoba Legislature when they faced off with NDP incumbent government over a key electoral issue regarding a 1% raise in Provincial Sales Tax (the PC government set about reducing it once they took office back to 7%). The common refrain citing austerity measures for public spending marked the PC's time in government, including in their justification for the public sector wage freezes (Bill 28 in 2017). Bill 71 exemplified this agenda and took aim at education specifically, setting out to reduce taxation for the sake of austerity without a clear alternate position or adequate funding formula in place. The rationale was based on the forecasted savings that Bill 64 would accomplish; the bill itself was touted as reducing funding and investing the savings back into schools by eliminating funded trustee positions, reducing the redundant structures of 37 school boards and divisional administrations throughout the province, and streamlining governance structures—a promise that appeared to lack clear, demonstrative evidence but was repeatedly invoked. Between Bill 64 and Bill 71, government promised to develop a new funding formula, something that was sorely needed in Manitoba to address the outdated funding model and related inequitable funding based on property taxes; however, given that Bill 71 passed and Bill 64 didn't, the government was left at a loss in establishing their funding formula and had to run a deficit to follow through on the school tax rebates while also ensuring funding for schools. It is not entirely clear, even if Bill 64 had passed, how a new funding formula would have been conceived or implemented

that would not have resulted in a similar situation. Much more could be said regarding this, but for my purpose here it is mainly worth noting that the removal of this Whereas statement essentially removed the shared understanding of education as a public spending responsibility, shared between the Province of Manitoba and the local school board authorities (or what would become the PEA and regional catchment areas in Bill 64). Instead, the removal of this statement effectively removed public responsibility for education funding, opening up a clear avenue to introduce private interests or shift the ground for how adequate funding for schools would be realized. Given the repeated overspending rationale for Bill 64, this constitutes a notable groundshift for education and public spending support.

Education discourses constituting 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects

The discursive treatments of education in Bill 64's Whereas statements exert a normatively structuring influence on the bill by creating understandings of education's purpose and through the constitution of educational subjects. The intertextual connections within the bill and across the BEST education strategy, public discourse, and Commission review bear out these discourses and reinforce their normativizing effects. While the Whereas statements are intended to reflect "given" or common understandings about education and its role in society, shifts in language and the framing of education work to effectively reinforce and naturalize normativizing understandings about what education is, who has a voice in it, who is acted upon and what kind of agency they have, and what its ultimate purpose should be. I predominantly focused on these Whereas statements to identify these discourses and explain their implications in setting the stage for the legislation; however, I also set out to identify how these discourses linked to other locations in the bill itself and played out in other legislation, media and public response, and in the adjacent reform documents. My strategy intentionally attempted to demonstrate the discursive effects of these statements and how they took on constitutive importance beyond the statements themselves, reaching into broader education strategies, understandings of education, and for those in whom authority was localized to have a voice in education. The predominance of privatization language—choice, linkages to employment, partners—and references to academic achievement divorced from

student agency, substantive recognitions of diversity, material supports for equity, and funding responsibility effectively undermine the notion of a *public* education system. Students are constituted into an undifferentiated subject position, passive recipients of education—with parents having "choice" over their child's education and gaining the right to act in governance roles related to education itself, and with other partners' actions and efficacy being measured against students' success as passive recipients of education. The education system effectively becomes a structure of inputs—based on amount of spending, an educator's ability to effectively create measurable knowledge in students, administrators' compliance with SCC and PAC recommendations—and outputs, localized around the notion of students' performance and having "the most improved performance in Canada" (BEST, 2021, p. 4). However, despite the appearance of language naming the importance of diversity, a welcoming educational environment, the foundational principle of inclusion, and efforts toward reconciliation, the bill itself neglects to provide meaningful recognition of the impacts of marginalization and systemic oppressions that undermine educational outcomes and effectively works to assimilate all students into the position of receiving education in ways that can be evidenced, proven, and that enable them to be successful in economic markets. In short, the bill forwards an assimilative educational agenda that seeks to treat students as neutral actors on equal footing, passive recipients of knowledge that show up on an even playing field, whose role is simply to achieve without substantive recognition of differential barriers or contributory factors related to success (as constituted on the bill's terms); their futures, and the future of Manitoba (which is cast primarily in economic terms), are contingent on this success. As a result, there is a systemic reproduction of existing oppressions throughout the bill and education strategy that play out in how education is normativized, regulated, organized, and in who is empowered to act and how they may do so.

These discourses exert normativizing pressure on all students to comply and conform—and for 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects particularly, they do so by reinforcing the historical culture of silence related to 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects in education. This culture of silence and invisibilization has particular impacts for 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects, as the presumed identity is cis-heterosexuality and the least disruptive educational

approach is one in which 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects are not mentioned or most safely avoided; by making 2SLGBTQIA+ identities invisible, or as constituting them as irrelevant to the "valid" purposes of student achievement and future economic action to which they are already subject in future, they are subsumed in and pressured to conform to the unmarked subject position of the student, a position stripped of substantive difference or recognition of possible compounding oppressions. Within the bill's regulatory discourses, this situates 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects as having little agency, aside from the prescriptive role set out for students in subsection 4(b) to attend ready to learn and comply with school policies; their queer subjectivity is removed and they are constituted within the undifferentiated category of the student as an object to be acted upon, to take in learning and "succeed" in ways that validate the system, prove the efficacy of an unchallenged system, and validate the successful oversight of its governance actors. Students are subjects under the authority of parental choice and the governance model laid out, and they are crucially accepted in the education system only when they succeed by the standard measures of success laid out; their queerness is beyond the realm of relevance for academic achievement. The generic enlistment of 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects, as well as the bill's treatment of "diversity" and Indigenous students, functions as a simple naming of difference to bring diversity into inclusive logics that leave norms of who the student is unchallenged, unquestioned, and seemingly irrelevant to education itself; diversity and difference are not something to be learned about but rather something to be massaged into normative shape to be intelligible in an unchanged hegemonic system where learning involves passive intake of information and subsequent reproduction of it through academic performance to ensure they are future-ready. This is a shallow treatment of diversity and mainly rhetorical in nature, and it has compounding effects across axes of intersectionality. Not only are 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects neglected based on the singular axes of sexuality and/or gender, but differences of racialization, class and socioeconomic status, Indigeneity, and disability are similarly effaced across student subjectivities in the discursive investment in functionalist education.

As other research suggests, generic approaches to 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion do not work; rather, specific inclusion of 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects is required in order for there to be recognition of and support for 2SLGBTQIA+

subjects. Even with the bill's inclusion of specific mentions of GSAs and the respect for human diversity policy (s. 138), the discursive rendering of GSAs and diversity as problems of safety casts 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects as inherently at-risk and as primarily requiring shelter from problematic, individual-level harassment, rather than positioning the problems of queerphobia and transphobia as being rooted in discriminatory attitudes and behaviours requiring systemic address or educative interventions. The logic goes that but for the problematic harassment 2SLGBTQIA+ students experience, there is nothing wrong with the educational cultures they experience or content they encounter, as the "proper" content of schools should focus on the instrumentalist goal of building skills and knowledge for future workforce participation. The sensitive content clause (s. 144) reinforces the marginalization of 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects, as sexuality is framed as being inherently problematic and potentially corruptible content matter, as being something that should be relegated to discrete, optional portions of curriculum that parents should rightly be concerned about and that students are not suited to encounter without shielding; the autonomy of students to have their own interest and say in the matter is comprehensively undermined. By requiring content related to human sexuality to be disclosed to parents or guardians—who are named as having primary responsibility over their child's education and what content they ought to receive—2SLGBTQIA+ subjects are constituted as sensitive content that needs to be carefully managed. The effect of these discourses in acknowledging diversity and inclusion, coupled with section 138 and 144, establishes 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects as problems, as inherently problematic, and as being in need of management through silencing and a treatment of diversity that seeks to erase difference in favour of a neutral subject position—that is, a cis-heteronormative one.

Simply put, the effect of the bill's educational discourses on 2SLGTBQIA+ subjects is to coerce alignment with heteronormative ways of being in schools or, at best, to advance a homonormative mode of being that works to push 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects into approximations of heterosexuality and cis-gender intelligibility, assimilate as best as possible to leave established relational, gender, and sexual social norms unchallenged. The conformity required via homonormativity works to assimilate 2SLGBTQIA+ people into normative approximations

of sexually and relationally dominant social configurations—as well as reifying white supremacy, capitalism, colonialism, sexism—such that queerness is sapped of its revolutionary potential, its transformative import, its potentiality to think across intersectionality, its transgressive social rupturing, its inherent oppositionality and resistance to norms and normativizing pressures. Rather, homonormativity works to efface 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects through a hyperfixation on neoliberal individualism, through a transformation of the inherent challenge posed by queer subjects to cis-heteronormative culture into a simple matter of rights-based identity politics, a matter of receiving human rights protections, the right to marry or to parent, the right not to be unjustly dismissed from employment. As long as 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects do not challenge the established order—the existing social, political, economic, cultural, colonial, educational systems and their realities of white supremacy, ableism, racism, colonialism, capitalism—then 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects can be included; their complicity as beneficiaries of those systems is all that is required. This, in short, is the power of Bill 64's educational discourses. While the language of the bill does name diversity and inclusion, it does so by effectively erasing substantive understandings of difference by constituting, manufacturing, inventing a monolithic student subjectivity that is "neutral" and, therefore, aligned with dominant norms. Effectively, the bill's logics mobilize an understanding of difference where the naming of "diversity" does the work of inclusion, while also allowing for the erasure of specific oppressions or naming characteristics of difference for material reparation. As long as students comply—conform and assimilate, align with the performance metrics set out, approximate the educational standards and validated knowledge affirmed across the broader systems—then they can be included in the education system because they *become* compliant within it.

Organization and Governance

In this final section on Bill 64's text, I explain how the bill's proposed re-organization of the governance structure of the education system was laid out and some implications for 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects. Following my discussion in the previous two sections, which set out to identify discourses explicitly dealing with 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects and impacts of education discourses themselves, I draw on the insights and connections I developed to

trace their pathways through governance; some of the previously discussed material already addressed implications of these governance structures and explained actors' roles within that structure, and it serves here as productive groundwork in thinking through the overall re-organization of educational governance in the bill. Indeed, the dominance of governance-related issues in the bill produced one of the most expansive platforms of resistance to Bill 64 focused on the organizational and governance changes proposed by the bill. At its core, and even in the governmental justifications for the bill, Bill 64 foregrounded re-organization of the public education system as a way of addressing the posited shortcomings of the present system. The "top-heavy" organization of the current system, with its 37 divisions and redundant administration at the divisional and board levels across them, was touted as a waste of public funds and as failing to produce adequate student achievement. To resolve these problems, the bill proposed consolidating 37 divisions into 15 regional catchment areas, replacing democratically elected school boards and trustee positions with an appointed Provincial Education Authority (PEA) that would act as the sole employer of all education system employees and set directives for education, and establishing School Community Councils (SCCs) at every school to represent local school interests and from which one representative would be forwarded for each district to serve on the Provincial Advisory Council (PAC). However, it was never clearly or fully explained how these changes would lower spending or satisfactorily raise student performance, and predominantly the government relied on communication strategies that implied greater efficiency in spending and self-evident improvements would naturally follow—that money would be saved and funding otherwise spent on educational administration would end up in the classroom. As one of the dominant interventions of Bill 64, it is useful to track this proposed re-organization and how a changed governance structure in the education system would impact 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects. In this section, I briefly trace the proposed changes to the governance of education to identify how the overall organization would change, and then I consider the subject positions constituted through this re-organization and attempt to track accountability structures, including funding, through the system; I close by considering the overall impact of this re-organization on 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects.

Governance and the re-organization of education

Bill 64's proposed re-organization of the education system's governance structure is detailed throughout the bill and, as such, requires some explanation to make clear. To aid in this effort and facilitate my own thinking through of the governance pathways in the education system, I created two diagrams depicting the current governance structure under the PSA (Figure 5.2) and the proposed governance structure of Bill 64 (Figure 5.3). These two figures attempt to trace governance of the education system through each piece of legislation and reveal where accountability connections exist.

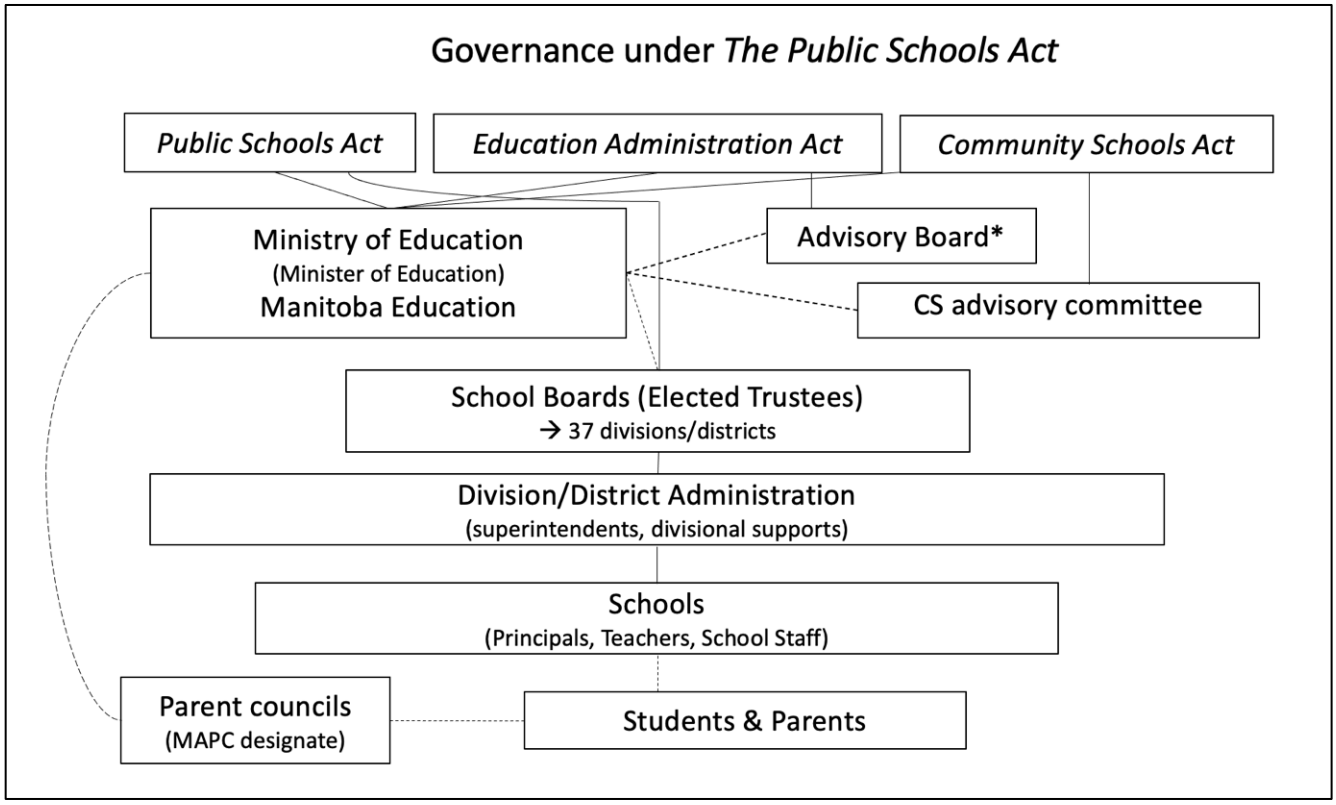


Figure 5.2: Governance in PSA

The current system, under the PSA and *The Education Administration Act* (EAA), delegates authority for delivery of public education as outlined in the PSA to elected school boards. While boards' duties (what "every board shall" do) and responsibilities (what "a school board may" do) are outlined in the PSA (MSBA, 2023, p. 3), their primary function is to set policies for their school division, including the administration of funding.

Divisional superintendents and administrators are employed by the board to execute these policies throughout schools on a day-to-day basis (MSBA, 2023).[55] School trustees are elected positions, often held in conjunction with municipal elections, and they are intended to represent the local interests and voices of their constituents. As school trustees are elected to school boards, their authority is held corporately as a board (i.e., trustees as individuals have no authority to act alone) and is exercised through their collective decision-making to manage education in their division. Board meetings and decision-making are held in meetings open to the public and on the public record, ensuring open and accountable processes. The Minister of Education, similarly, is answerable to the electorate and is elected to Manitoba's legislative assembly, although their appointment to the education portfolio is largely decided by the Premier. The Minister maintains overall control of the education system, as detailed in the EAA, and their responsibilities and duties are outlined in the EAA and PSA. The Minister is provided certain mechanisms to perform their role and direct school boards in governance of education, including the power to introduce legislative amendments, exercise governmental budgetary control in divisional allocations, administer regulations regarding educational attainment such as diploma criteria, and the general power of providing directives to boards. The Commission Review report describes the relationship between the Minister and boards as one of "horizontal accountability," with boards being accountable to their electorate and "to comply with directions from the Minister" (Manness & MacKinnon, p. 120). Within the bounds of the PSA and EAA, school boards oversee public schools' educational programming in their division and, ultimately, are responsible for policy at the divisional level. Each division employs teachers, principals, and school staff for the purpose of running schools and doing the frontline work of education with students. Principals and teachers are directly employed by divisions and, during the period in which Bill 64 was tabled[56], they bargained through locals

[55] The Manitoba School Boards Association (MSBA) is a voluntary organization of public school boards in the province and works to support the work of elected trustees and public education (MSBA, 2023).

[56] The separate collective agreement bargaining across the 37 locals ended in 2024, when the first collective agreement representing all teachers in the province was ratified following a significant collective bargaining process initiated by the previous sitting PC government in 2018 (as described in the previous chapter and recorded by Manness & MacKinnon, 2020, p. 123); the conclusion of this collective bargaining occurred under the NDP government, elected in October 2023. This

representing each division's educator employees under the broader teacher association The Manitoba Teachers' Society (MTS).

Less formalized stakeholder standing under the PSA is also recognized in the form of parent/guardian groups and advisory councils. Parental and guardianship involvement in students' education is not insubstantial under the current system, and it takes a variety of forms, from individual involvement of parents/guardians with their children's schools and teachers to more formalized parent and school councils and home-and-school associations. Until 2024, the Manitoba Association of Parent Councils (MAPC) acted as the province's official parent association[57], with the exception of the francophone school division (DSFM), and was "recognized as the representative of school-based parent groups, including parent advisory councils and parent councils" (EAA, s. 4.1(1)) and given standing to advise the Minister (in EAA, s. 4.2, "The minister may refer to MAPC a matter relating to parent involvement in schools. MAPC is to consider the matter and report to the minister its findings or recommendations"). There are also two advisory councils established within the education system. Under the EAA (ss. 10–17), an Advisory Council is established that may make recommendations on religious exercises and patriotic observances in schools, recommendations and assessments of curricula, and assess educational policy to advise the minister (s. 16). The Advisory Council is composed of representatives outlined in subsection 11(1), including the deputy minister (or designate), the Director of Administration, the Director of Program Development, the chair of MTS's Professional Development Committee, and between 21 and 26 persons appointed by the Lieutenant Governor chosen from nominees of groups/organizations listed in the EAA and the

single collective agreement consolidated the 37 independent collective agreements into one province-wide agreement (Macintosh, August 27, 2024), with the francophone agreement receiving a vote of support in October 2024 (Macintosh, October 11, 2024), to standardize pay and working conditions.

[57] In October 2024, MAPC announced that it would be shutting down its operations due to a lack of funding and the increasing complexity of parents' issues in executing its mandate. During Bill 64, MAPC organized parents to challenge the bill and, according to Executive Director Brenda Brazeau, this resulted in government officials contacting the organization to remind them that the bulk of their funding comes from Manitoba Education; numerous parents critiqued MAPC's ability to act as an effective lobbyist with their main funder, leading to MAPC declining to renew its funding contract with Manitoba Education in March 2024 and the eventual shuttering of the organization for lack of funds (Macintosh, October 1, 2024).

remainder appointed from outside the education department and the listed groups/organizations; the listed organizations and the number of representatives from each include one field representative, one representative from community colleges, one school superintendent nominated from Manitoba Association of School Superintendents, three members of MTS, four school trustees of MSBA, and one representative nominated from the Senate of University of Manitoba, one from Brandon University, and one from University of Winnipeg. The other advisory committee is established in *The Community Schools Act*, which established "the implementation of the community school philosophy and model" (s. 2) and created a community schools unit and deputy minister's committee within the education department. The Community Schools Advisory Committee is based on ministerial appointments and includes at least nine persons "chosen from a list of persons nominated by the advisory councils of schools that have been designated as participating community schools" (ss. 12(3)); their mandate is to advise the Minister, the committee, and the coordinator about matters "relating to the community schools program and network including providing assistance in identifying services, programs and activities that may achieve the aims of the community school philosophy and model" (s. 12(2)).

Bill 64's proposed organizational reforms would have forwarded a significant change to these governance structures and the positions of actors within the system (see Figure 5.3). As these changes were embedded within the bill, it is useful to consider a more straightforward explanation of the new governance model, to which we might follow the Minister's advice in frequent gestures toward looking to the *Better Education Starts Today* (BEST) strategy as explaining Bill 64. The BEST strategy included an appendix providing an overview of the new governance model (Manitoba Education, 2021, pp. 31–32), explaining some of the changes and clarifying roles within the new structure. In this explanation, the bill is described as bringing "significant, needed changes to the education system," which would incorporate *The Public Schools Act*, *The Education Administration Act*, and *The Community Schools Act* into a single piece of legislation, *The Education Act*. This *Education Act* would replace the PSA, "which is over 100 years old" (p. 31) and is described as "requir[ing] a rewrite to achieve the transformation proposed for the education system" (p. 31). The overview then emphasizes that this transformed "modernized

education system" would have "strong parental involvement at the school level and more student and parental engagement in the design and oversight" overall. Effectively, this empowering of parent voices prioritizes parents as a key part of the "solution" to the problem of education, while simultaneously conflating student voices with those of their parents. This plays out in the remainder of the appendix, which goes on to describe changes in four sections in the following order: More Parental Engagement and School Community Councils, Provincial Education Authority, DSFM (that is, the province-wide francophone school division), and Parental Advisory Council on Education (pp. 31–32). Parents' role (which, according to ss. 5(3), includes those in the position of "a legal guardian")[58] is given significant attention in this description and given formal standing in the governance structure through School Community Councils (SCCs) and the Provincial Advisory Council (PAC), which I unpack in more detail below; however, before I turn to that task, I want to outline a number of other governance changes to provide a more robust picture of this new structure.

[58] Section 5 of Bill 64 is dedicated to definitions within the Act, although interestingly the definition of "parent" is set out separate from other terms. The bulk of definitions appear in 5(1) and define of other key actors in the education system, including the terms teacher, public school, mature student, legal guardian (which is guardianship under *The Child and Family Services Act*), common-law partner, and family. "Parent" stands on its own, alongside a definition of "the Act" as being inclusive of regulations made under the Act. This seems an odd choice and confers a certain exceptionality to the term, or at least segregates it from the three pages of definitions appearing immediately beforehand, obfuscating what parental status may include, the role of adoptive parents or the variety of ways that guardianship may occur, and ultimately reifying a biological imperative as determinant of parental status.

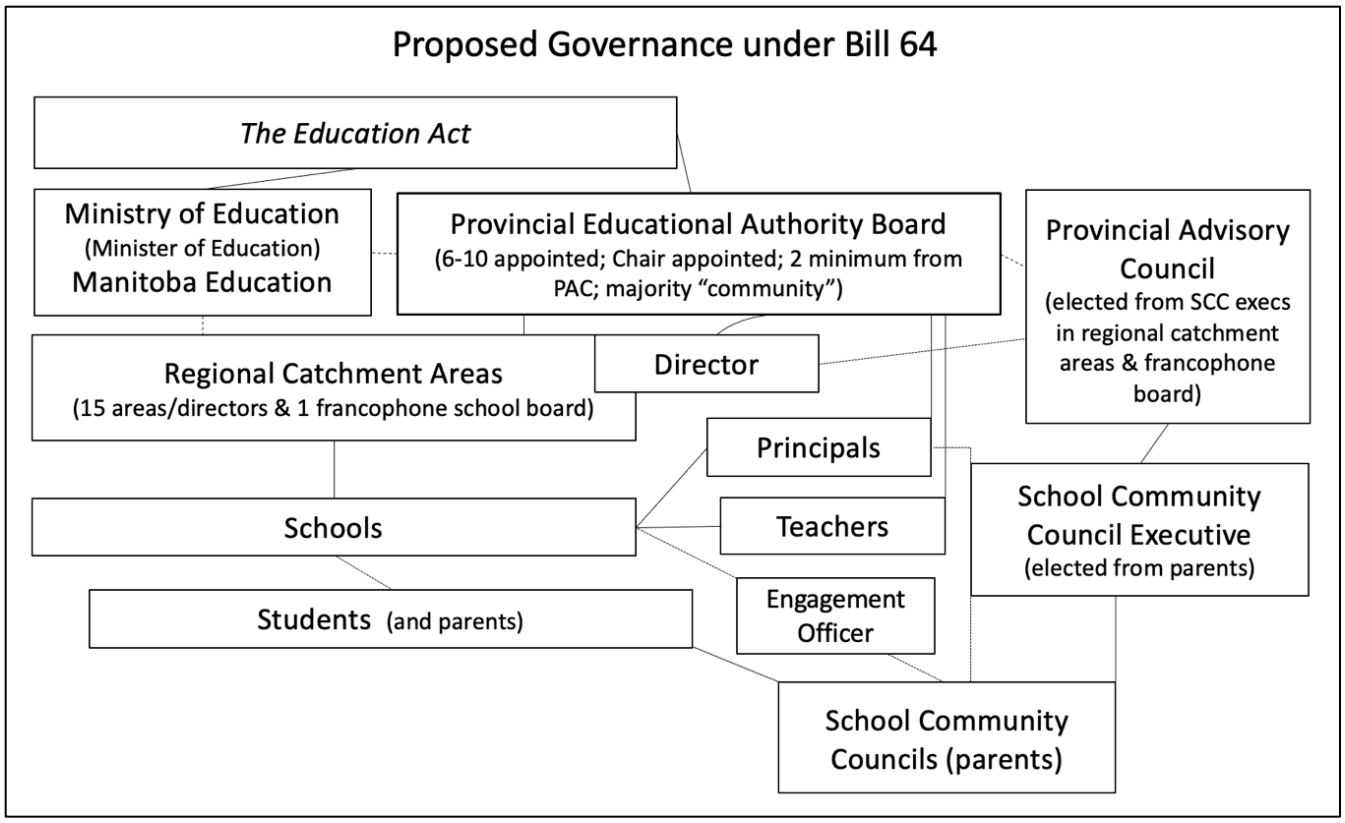


Figure 5.3: Governance in Bill 64

Bill 64 aimed to eliminate elected school boards entirely, except for elected trustee positions for the francophone school board (DSFM), and consolidate the 36 English boards into 15 regions with Directors for each. The retention of DSFM as an elected board was explained in BEST as a recognition of French-language rights, as protected by the Charter (described as a recognition of the obligation to "protect minority language rights," p. 31, as well as in Whereas 64.10), and I suspect it was also a recognition of the historical importance of the Manitoba Schools Question of the 1890s and intentionally exempted from elimination to avoid a similar divisive controversy. However, the elimination of elected school trustee positions across English divisions proved to be controversial enough, leading to significant public opposition and even furnishing several municipalities, towns and cities, and local governments with a reason to pass resolutions officially opposing Bill 64 (e.g., in a post on their website, MSBA listed roughly 30 municipalities and towns/cities, including City of Winnipeg, that passed similar resolutions based on the premise that eliminating elected school boards undermined local interests; see

Laychuk, July 17, 2021; Macintosh, July 15, 2021). In place of the established governance model giving school boards authority to deliver public education, the PEA was to be established as a corporation (s. 37) with six to ten appointed positions[59], the majority of whom would be "community members" (i.e., as per ss. 41(6), a person who is not a member of the parent-comprised PAC), at least two members who were parents with positions on PAC, and an appointed chairperson (s. 41); members were to be appointed for a period of up to three years with the possibility of re-appointment for more than one term, but they may not serve longer than 10 consecutive years (s. 42). The PEA mandate included the delivery or provision of educational programming to meet the needs of students, assessing and reporting on the delivery of educational programming and "student achievement of learning outcomes," and the provision of services to support "the efficient administration and operation" of schools (s. 39). The bill also noted that the PEA was to carry out its mandate in accordance with the Minister's established "objectives and priorities for the education system in the province" (s. 14 gives the minister this power and ss. 39(2) identifies it as PEA responsibility), including a provision for the PEA to enter into an accountability agreement with the Minister. The PEA would also appoint a CEO, subject to the Minister's approval, to carry out the work of the PEA (s. 50). The PEA would act as a single educational employer for teachers, principals, directors, and all education employees in the province. Part of this re-positioning of the PEA as the single employer for public schools in the province included the removal of principals and vice-principals from The Manitoba Teachers' Society as members of the collective bargaining unit (although the Minister said principals could establish their own union), as well as the in-process bargaining for a single collective agreement province-wide initiated in 2018 (which concluded in August 2024). Finally, Manitoba Education, the department effectively supporting public education in the province, would be re-positioned. As BEST explained it:

[59] Appointments to the PEA board are made, as described in section 41, by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. However, the Lieutenant Governor is an apolitical office and does not get involved in any political activity or intervene in day-to-day issues or decisions of government ministries (Lieutenant Governor of Manitoba, 2024). The term "Lieutenant Governor in Council," as it appears in legislation, refers to the Lieutenant Governor acting on the advice of the Executive Council or Cabinet, so when Cabinet, or the ministry in question, makes a decision and it has been approved by the Lieutenant Governor, it is said to have been made by the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

> With this future state in mind, Manitoba Education will no longer include direct service delivery. Instead, the department will focus on oversight of the education system, including responsibility for policy, planning, accountability, and funding. The department is already engaged in a process of internal transformation, adjusting roles and responsibilities towards our future state. (BEST, 2021, p. 32)

Governance subjects and accountability

Overall, the re-organization of the education system worked broadly to enact a number of general trends with various effects throughout the system—including, instrumentally, a discursive shifting of the subject positions for educational actors, including who has a voice and how they are empowered to act. There is a clear move toward centralization in education at the upper levels of education governance—through the consolidation of education legislation, the amalgamation of 37 divisions into 15 regions and 1 francophone board, the move toward a single education employer in the PEA with an appointed CEO, the change of authority in education delivery to designate the PEA with appointed (rather than elected) positions, and the powers of the minister in making appointments and setting educational objectives and priorities. Additionally, the move to shift the department of Manitoba Education away from direct service delivery into the role of a governance oversight body removes a direct support for education delivery[60]. The effects of this centralization would consolidate control in the Minister's office and in the PEA for setting educational objectives and priorities and in the administration of education in the province. The amalgamation of divisions into regional groupings—with

[60] While this may seem a rather innocuous change, it makes the department easier to control by limiting their ability to take action, make recommendations, or interfere with direction setting. One example of this is particularly salient and reported in the *Winnipeg Free Press* (Clarke, January 26, 2024). In June 2023, during New Brunswick's infamous revision of Policy 713, which required educators to obtain parental permission to use student name and self-identified pronouns, the deputy minister at Manitoba Education "directed staff to conduct a jurisdictional scan of parents' 'right to know' in other provinces"; this request preceded the provincial election that ended up featuring the Progressive Conservative party's key plank of "parental rights" (the trend, already described above, has pervaded the political landscape with notable policy amendments occurring in Saskatchewan and Alberta). Through a FIPPA request, Clarke obtained a copy of the four-page briefing note, which provided a clear recommendation that student pronoun and name changes should be respected in schools and current guidelines should, in fact, be enhanced to ensure students are supported in schools.

directors of education in each regional catchment area directly answerable to the PEA—further emphasizes this centralization trend.

These changes do not align with the recommendations of the Commission review, both in terms of eliminating school boards in favour of a centralized PEA and the consolidation of regions. Rather, the review called for a consolidation of boards "into six to eight regional boards with boards consisting of five to seven trustees, the majority of whom would be appointed and the others elected" (recommendation 68 in Imperative #10: Enhance the Effectiveness of Governance, Administrative, and Funding Structures; Manness & MacKinnon, 2020, p. 124). This Commission recommendation was supported by others recommending clarification of roles and responsibilities in the K–12 education system (notably, parents were not included in this list; recommendation 69, p. 128) and developing criteria and competencies for school board members (recommendation 70, p. 128). Bill 64 instead eliminated elected trustee positions outright[61] (save for DSFM) and installed the PEA with appointed board membership, increasing ministerial control over educational governance. Additionally, while the PSA previously included a section describing trustee code of conduct, which included respecting others with differing opinions and acting with integrity (PSA, s. 35.1), Bill 64 did not include a code of conduct for the PEA, despite its similar function to school boards; instead, the bill included a description of the "expertise" required by the PEA board and the need for the board to represent "the diversity of the people of Manitoba" (ss. 41(4)).[62] The closest Bill 64 comes to addressing board conduct is in section 49, related to board

[61] Along with this change, there was to be a change to the MSBA itself from the association of school boards, which acts to support trustees and in a public education advocacy role regarding education; instead, Bill 64 would have amended *The Manitoba School Boards Association Act* to change the association to The Manitoba School Benefits Administration Corporation (with an eponymous renaming of that Act; s. 373). The new Manitoba School Benefits Administration Corporation would have responsibility to provide a pension plan and a group insurance and benefits plan for all non-teacher employees of the PEA. Their previous purpose—supporting trustees in their duties, engaging in research on educational policy, promoting and advancing the cause of education, and acting as public advocates regarding education—would be repealed and the association would become a purely administrative body.

[62] This "diversity" of the people is not explained or detailed in the legislation, meaning that it may be interpreted in different ways, such as diversity of identity-based personal characteristics or diversity of views, values, or opinions. It is also not explained what expertise entails in 41(4), beyond the board members individually having "the knowledge, skills and expertise in an area relevant to the needs of the board" and the board as a whole having "a sufficient range of expertise and experience to carry out its responsibilities effectively."

meetings being open to the public, and the responsibility of the chair for "maintaining the order and proper conduct and decorum of the meeting," with the authority to remove a person (other than another board member) from the meeting for "improper conduct."

With this centralization at the upper end of educational governance, there were also moves to shift professional standing of educators and empower parents with formalized structures at the local level. While there was a strong move toward centralized authority in delivery of education at the upper level of governance, at the level of local schools there was an opposite move to diffuse accountability and introduce formalized SCCs with elected executives comprising school parents. This represents a proliferation of accountability at the local level, with parents gaining a formally sanctioned avenue to act in a governance capacity with the power to review principals' decisions, student achievement, and educators' performance. Given this level of oversight and input into virtually all aspects of decision-making at the local school level (s. 84), coupled with the regional PAC member's mandate to meet with the regional director of education every three months to provide feedback and make recommendations on behalf of SCCs within the region (s. 82), the role of parents in governance was vastly increased and took on formal standing. With the ability to recommend performance reviews of teachers and have input in hiring decisions, parents at the local level would effectively be able to assert challenges directly against teachers, school staff, and principals whose decisions they may disagree with—including those related to 2SLGBTQIA+-supportive policies, curricula, or initiatives in schools, among any number of others related to social equity-deserving topics, pedagogical approaches, and professional teaching practice (e.g., teaching the "new math"). This had the potential to conflate competency with character, which are the two provided grounds for complaints against a teacher (s. 106). At the same time, the removal of principals and vice-principals from the provincial teachers' union altered principals' position in schools to take on a more managerial capacity as school administrator (ss. 95(3) and 221(2)), setting up a divide between the principal and teachers/school staff—though principals would still have to be a certified teacher (ss. 95(2)). Effectively, this removed protections for principals but also prompted a shift in accountability between principals and teachers, opening the way for clashes with

"management" when parents raised challenges or when controversy arose. In short, this level of input from parents is enormous and, given the structure of SCCs and their elected executives forming the pool from which PAC members would be elected (feeding directly to the upper level of governance in advising the minister and PEA, and from which at least two PEA members would be selected), this structure would empower parent voices at both the local and the provincial level. It is worth noting that the bill did not include directive or instruction that SCCs be mindful of professional practice, require training or be provided information about governance roles, or be answerable to legislation, PEA, or the ministerial priorities or directives.

With the role of parents formalized in educational governance at both the local school level and in the PEA and PAC at the province-wide level, parental voices take on an outsized role. Along with the conflation of student interests with those of their parents—or the collapsing of student interests under the authority of parents, who also have the ability to challenge principals on their decision-making and school-level education delivery—parents are given a certain primacy in educational governance. The bill itself bears this out as well, repeatedly placing parents *first* in the line of "partners" of education, followed immediately by "students" or "their child," and teachers appearing last (e.g., s. 2). The BEST report's appendix on the new governance structure reinforces this prioritization. While the legislation rather clearly separates governance (as the responsibility of the minister and the minister's department, the PEA board, and the elected board of DSFM; ss. 1(1)) from "local participation" (as involving SCCs, the PAC, parent appointments to the PEA board, and parent school committees in DSFM; ss. 1(2)), the BEST appendix groups them together under the name of "the new governance model"—conflating governance at the upper level with local participation. Further, the appendix discursively emphasizes the role of parents by placing them both first and last in its overview of education governance, with an explanation describing "the importance of local voice" in education as necessitating an "increase in parental and community involvement" (p. 31); in recognition of this, Bill 64 replaces "informal parent councils" with a SCC at every school, each with an elected SCC executive. The emphasis on local voice is not incidental, particularly given the MSBA's Local Voices Local Choices campaign targeting the detrimental

impacts of eliminating elected positions and diminishment of representational choice in school governance. The move to position parents as supplying these local voices in lieu of elected trustee positions raises questions about how SCCs would fulfill this role in the absence of dedicated resources or training in governance and decision-making (or, as one MSBA Local Voices post described it, as exerting uninformed influence on "trained education professionals' expertise"). Membership on SCCs is automatic and encompasses all parents of "a child enrolled in a public school," including the right to vote in the election of an executive council for the SCC (s. 85). The role of SCCs is to "advise the school principal on school matters, including the needs of the community it serves and strategies for improving student achievement and well-being. All parents and caregivers of that school community will be members and they will elect an executive to work with the principal on matters impacting the school community" (p. 31). The bill's language describes an extensive list of areas involved in the SCC's role in "advising the principal on school matters" (ss. 84(3)) including: how the school meets the needs of the community (ss. 84(3)(a)), assessing the effectiveness of educational programming at the school (b), analyzing student achievement of learning outcomes and determine areas and timelines for improvement (c), make recommendations respecting the hiring of teachers and other school staff (d), make recommendations respecting the need to evaluate the performance of any person employed at the school (e), review budgets and monthly spending (f), review and make recommendations respecting changes in programs and activities at the school (g), review and make recommendations for short- and long-term priorities for the school plan (h), make recommendations regarding student transportation (i), review and analyze the use of suspensions and expulsions as disciplinary tools (j), review and make recommendations about the policies implemented at the school (k), review and assist the principal in developing a code of conduct and emergency response plan for the school (l), and encourage the involvement of other parents (m)—as well as any other duties set out in the regulations.

This is an enormous scope of input—particularly for parent volunteers, even if they are those "elected" to the SCC executive by the broader SCC membership—touching on every aspect of school governance from

hiring to spending to student and educator oversight, and it introduces a heightened level of answerability to parents. Given their role, it is worth considering which parents would stand for election to the SCC executive; it would likely be those parents with the time and motivation to do so, which raises a number of questions and potential concerns about the resources necessary to have sufficient time to volunteer for such a position and what might act as motivators. While we might optimistically hope that it would be a diverse cross-section of the school community, I think this would be unlikely. Rather, I suspect those standing for election would be those with enough resources, or who were wealthy enough, to have time to dedicate to the substantial workload of serving on the executive and advising the principal, and those who have sufficient motivation to insert themselves in school governance to advocate for certain interests, such as those who oppose educational directions prioritized by educators, have social causes or concerns they want to ensure are represented, or feel strongly their child's interests require their involvement. Taken together, there is a potentially socially dominant representation (across class and political ideology, along with intersections of race, gender, and sexuality positionalities) prioritized in the creation of SCCs and, depending on the community interests represented by the SCC, a potential social conservativism to exclude or marginalize non-dominant interests. Counter to this understanding, the BEST report describes the creation of SCCs as "requir[ing] a renewed emphasis on engaging parents and communities so that they are reflective of the diversity of schools" (BEST, p. 31).

Beyond this, SCCs also assume the status of experts in the educational governance structure in reviewing principals' decisions, assessing educational programming and student achievement, making recommendations about hiring and evaluating educators' performances, and reviewing and making recommendations about school policies and codes of conduct: "Parents can contribute expertise to assist in meeting the needs of students, families and their communities" (s. 93). As a result, principals are placed in a position of being answerable to parental expertise—which without formal accountability to education legislation or professional practice opens the way for opinions regarding how educators operate—for every aspect of their work, not only in terms of the decisions they make being reviewed, and having to respond to recommendations raised, by parents but also in

terms of a proliferation of accountability spread out across the parents' interests within each SCC. The bill also stipulates that the principal would be supported by a "parental engagement officer" (s. 88) to liaise with SCCs and support their involvement, necessitating the allocation of a school employee's time and duties to accommodate this work. At minimum, this diverts attention and resources away from students, the classroom, and education activities, while also amplifying SCC input to a level requiring personnel and official responsiveness. The implications of this structure are myriad and have the potential to undermine the ability of schools to effectively perform their duties.

Bill 64 further prioritizes SCCs' role in educational governance by using them as the basis for elections in selecting the SCC executive at each school, from which there would be an election of one member of all the regional SCC executives to represent the region with a seat on the PAC. The PAC, in turn, feeds the PEA through the appointment of at least two PAC members to the PEA. As SCCs are de facto populated by parents of current students, and the PAC similarly filled with parents of current students, there is a significant narrowing of who is able to have a voice in educational governance—even leaving aside the multiple levels of election processes to be undertaken in accordance with the bill's regulations (the process was not described beyond a reference to the regulation, which presumably would have been developed if Bill 64 had passed). Under the PSA, elected school trustee positions are open electoral processes, meaning that non-parents and parents of former students were eligible. Between the establishment of SCCs and the PAC, with their restriction to parents of current students, and the appointment structure of the PEA board, there are serious limitations to who is able to serve in educational governance. In other words, there is an embedded assumption about who has a stake in education and who ought to have a voice. This largely precludes anyone who is not a parent of a current student—and presumes that people who are not parents of current students have no stake in education or what happens to students in the education system, and should not have a say in its governance.[63] This is a profound move away

[63] At the risk of belabouring the point, the emphasis on parents of current students excludes extended familial relations and non-biological kinship, as well as suggesting that education of current students ought to (properly) belong to parents and

from the democratic electoral process regarding school trustee positions. There are potential repercussions of this beyond the immediate governance of schools, as school trustee positions are often used as initial entry points for many politicians as their first run at elected office. Bill 64's change would necessitate that a substantial portion of the education system's governance model would be reserved for parents, increasing their ability to have a voice and influence education delivery (which hearkens back to my discussion of Whereas statements earlier and, specifically, the change from "a right" in PSA.7 Whereas statement to "the right" in 64.5). However, there is a further implication here, which Braul (2021) observed, regarding disproportionate representation on the PAC. Based on census data, Braul explains that the province's demographic breakdown places the majority of racialized people—or, using census language, "visible minorities"— in Winnipeg (with roughly 63% the province's BIPOC located in Winnipeg, combining 89% "visible minorities" and 38% of the Indigenous population; she also points out that there was no data on the province's 2SLGBTQIA+ population but that it is likely higher in Winnipeg than elsewhere). Given the redrawn boundaries in creating the regional catchment areas, grouping all of Winnipeg into one region and the remainder of the province sharing the remaining 14 regions (with DSFM operating as before, running schools throughout the province)[64], the potential skew of representation on PAC toward the rural would likely lead to underrepresentation of BIPOC majority localized in Winnipeg[65]; it raises the crucial question of how one representative from Winnipeg could "represent" the considerable diversity of the

---

under parental oversight. 2SLGBTQIA+ parents of current students and supportive parents of current 2SLGBTQIA+ students would be able to engage in these structures, although almost certainly in minority numbers; however, there are undoubtedly 2SLGBTQIA+ students who may not have the support of their parents and, given the recent swell of "parental rights" activism, there is the potential to further amplify voices of those who do not understand, feel threatened by, or otherwise resist 2SLGBTQIA+-supportive decisions to affirm youth in schools and through education.

[64] Braul (2021) provides a breakdown of the number of students, based on 2019 enrollment, that would populate the new regions. Winnipeg would have 100,388, followed by Frontier/Kelsey/Flin Flon/Mystery Lake with 12,280, Brandon with 9,004, Hanover with 8,218, and the remaining fourteen regional catchment areas each having under 7,000 students (the smallest being Evergreen/Lakeshore with 2,489).

[65] This skew towards the rural also functions to amplify regions where the PC voter base is located, which is predominately outside the city. While the charge is often brought that Winnipeg's metrocentric interests overshadow those of rural Manitoba, this would effectively enact the reverse. Alongside this, given the challenges often faced by 2SLGBTQIA+ people in rural areas, particularly historically, this would create a vulnerability gap in governance that may hinder the ability of educators to provide support and 2SLGBTQIA+ people (and their allies) to draw on supports from official policy provisions when needed.

city. Further, with two members of the PEA board being selected from the PAC, there is little reason to expect the diversity of parent interests could be represented in that process.

Ultimately, the governance structure's emphasis on parents as representing local voices would create a fractured system at the local level with its profusion of accountability, its resulting demands and directives, that would interfere with the centralized educational directives of the PEA—at least at first glance. Given the first-and-last emphasis on parents' place in governance, it is likely that the PEA would take a responsively tepid stance with a low risk of controversy on issues related to social equity, diversity, and inclusion in favour of the type of "neutral" approaches that the bill itself employs. As I described in the previous sections, this "neutrality" emphasizes achievement and efficiency apart from other considerations—apart from the impact of social oppressions, material conditions, or identity-based characteristics—and actually works to reinforce dominant and status quo approaches that silence and invisibilize equity-deserving groups; rather, the neutral approach emphasizes a bland equality that seeks to treat everyone the same, regardless of any other considerations that may reinforce already existing social and material privileges. The PEA's mandate, as described above and in section 39 of the bill, employs this type of neutral language by emphasizing the PEA's role in the delivery or provision of educational programming, assessing and reporting on effectiveness of programming and student achievement, and the efficient administration and operation of public schools. Again, this language mobilizes neoliberal discourses of efficiency and links effectiveness to student achievement, particularly in the requirement for the PEA to enter into an accountability agreement with the minister that includes "balanced scorecard" reporting (ss. 16(3)). In essence, these pose structural, systemic limitations on educational programming by reinforcing a singular focus on educational programming that is financially efficient and evidenced by student achievement—as cited consistently by the Minister as the rationale for Bill 64 in naming Manitoba as having among the highest per student spending and among the lowest test scores. Discursively, this positions students as passive recipients of education, neutral actors undifferentiated by any measure outside of their ability to achieve and prove that through raised test scores; the relevant input to accomplish this goal is efficient spending

with built in accountability measures for these two criteria. Changes to the governance structure and organization of the education system rely on the notion that organizational changes that reduce redundant bureaucratic administration will automatically result in improvements to education itself. The logic here connects a reduction in administrative spending to a direct benefit for the frontline classroom, where the savings afforded by efficiency would be directed. Effectively, governance is transformed into a collapsed circuit of lower spending with the promise of better education, while simultaneously undermining professional practice of teachers and principals at the school level (e.g., the consistent listing of principals and teachers appearing last in educational partners). This fixation on fiscal austerity was not new for the standing PC government, including legislation to limit public sector wage increases and undermine collective bargaining abilities of public employees (in Bill 28 of 2017). In education, earlier Ministerial directives limiting mill rates set by school boards and the passing of the concurrent Bill 71 rebating people's education property tax imposed restrictions on how much money could be directed toward schools, with the promise of a renewed funding formula that was not tied to property taxes to ensure adequate funding for public schools. This mainly reduced the amount of money and resources that could be raised and dedicated to schools, while neglecting the development of a clear strategy to supplement the funding gap. Even if Bill 64 had passed, it is unclear how this difference would have been made up, to what extent the money saved on reducing the "duplicative bureaucracies" would solve that problem (Cullen cited in BEST, p. 3), or where additional funds would come from. Given my earlier discussion of funding and privatization discourses introduced in Bill 64, it would seem likely that private interests in education would have begun to expand. Altogether, the newly introduced governance model would create subject positions that were inherently limited through their accountability to these directives and to actively solicited voices of parents at both the local school and provincial governance level. Simply put, the governance model would reinforce "neutral" provisions and approaches to education that emphasize spending and student achievement, while neglecting substantive focus on social equity, including 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects, that would contribute to more robust student achievement in attending to social and educational inequity.

Governance of 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects

The proposed re-organization of Manitoba's education system and its governance structures would have significantly shifted how decision-making about education delivery operated but also changed the subject positions of educational actors, from principals and directors to parents and students. In tracing these changes in the previous section, I have attempted to explain what these changes were and establish what their impacts might have been to identify the points at which governance and accountability shifted. Bill 64's proposed re-organization of the education system was one of the dominant discourses, which I referred to at the outset, and as such requires some extrapolation and discussion to track its potential impacts for 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects. Tracking governance re-organization requires looking not only at the overall structure but a focus on how subject positions would have changed (or how subjects were constituted and constrained in relation to Bill 64) and, by extension, the discursive implications regarding who was empowered to act and have a voice—and to speculate somewhat on how those voices could be used within the system. Some of these governance changes were easier to trace than others, and I have attempted to identify those clearly above, or at least set the stage to clarify the discursive logic in play. This was something of a game of "what if?" in speculating what might happen based on past and current trends, how these changes had been implemented elsewhere, and applying general trends and discourses identified in my analysis above and across the related documents (BEST strategy, the education review, etc). For example, given the recent surge in anti-trans and "parental rights" movements, the change in governance emphasizing the role of parental involvement through SCCs and the PAC would have introduced a significant point of contestation at both the school and provincial levels, conferring validity to parents' potential objections to gender-affirming education. Similarly, we can observe the impacts of eliminating elected school trustee positions in Atlantic provinces during preceding reforms; notably, the removal of trustee positions did not offer any efficiencies or benefit the school system, leading to a reversal of the decision and reinstituting trustee elections (e.g., as the province of Prince Edward Island did; see McCracken & Rogers, 2021). Drawing on these

types of data, I follow the governance strands in Bill 64 to, briefly, clarify how the re-organization of educational governance might have impacted to 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects.

There were limited locations in the bill where 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects were explicitly included and, as such, the work of reading them in, or seeking out how they might be interpolated or referenced in their explicit absence, is required. As I described in the first section of this chapter on 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects, 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects appeared in relation to "respect for human diversity" policies, along with the related GSA provision, and in relation to potentially sensitive content in the curriculum. The effect of these inclusions discursively underwrites the rest of the bill, relegating 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects to exclusionary positions apart from the regular curricular content of the classroom, as potentially disruptive content and identities that pose a threat in learning about them, and in casting 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects as being perpetually at risk of harm (and as deserving basic protections from this individual-level problem). Along with these overt references, we can look to the patterns of educational discourses established by the bill (in the Whereas statements) to see what education itself is constituted to be, what content is considered appropriate, what role students have, and what a successful system entails. As described above, education is inherently linked to future employability and learning the requisite skills, with students mainly relegated to the position of absorbing information and developing "competencies" (Whereas 64.7) through which they can academically perform it in appropriately measurable ways to affirm the education system's functionality. Despite rhetorical nods to the "philosophy of inclusion" as a foundational educational principle (Whereas 64.6) and students' entitlement "to learn in a welcoming environment that respects diversity" (Whereas 64.4), the bill does little to furnish these concepts with actual educational provisions; the student takes on a neutral position reflective of an undifferentiated norm. Diversity is not delineated, except where it deviates from the norm, and it is not acknowledged the basic ways in which difference may impact academic performance (e.g., the well documented effect of poverty on student attainment). Additionally, student success is cast in purely academic terms, neglecting the ways that education may work toward social inclusion, greater equity, expanded critical thinking, substantive inclusion and

recognition of difference—less academically "measurable" hallmarks of successful education. Drawing upon previous literature, other research regarding 2SLGBTQIA+-supportive education provide additional insights that may be useful, such as the importance of 2SLGBTQIA+-specific policy, the limitations of considering safety for 2SLGBTQIA+ students only in terms of individually problematic behaviour, the importance of curricular inclusion, and a need to recognize the power of normativity beyond single-axes of difference and the intertwined nature of oppression. Drawing upon these insights, there are a number of observations we can make about the governance of 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects in Bill 64.

First, due to the virtual silence regarding 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects, there is an invisibilization of 2SLGBTQIA+ students and content in the education system; when they are named, their difference is constructed as a risk, either in terms of making them targets or a threat to the cis-heterosexuality of other students. The bill enacts this strategy in a number of ways, such as for Indigenous students or in invoking the term "diversity," to enlist difference in an assimilative effort to dismiss it. In other words, difference is continually framed as a problem of participating in the education system, and the significance of naming it is an attempt to acknowledge differential achievement but leave the core system unchallenged, as reifying that education works as it is except for those who don't correctly fit within it; in short, this strategy results in the exclusion of difference through the attempt to merely incorporate it in the closest possible approximation to the dominant norm. Incumbent upon 2SLGBTQIA+ students is the limited role of diminishing themselves to accomplish their compliant role as a partner in education (ss. 4(2)): to attend school punctually and ready to learn diligently, ensure their conduct contributes to an inclusive and welcoming environment that maintains respectful and responsible behaviours, respect the rights of others, and comply with school rules and policies. The paternalistic quality to these prescriptive behaviours limits their ability to embody their identities and constrains their active engagement in learning by essentially enforcing the requirement that they act as a non-disruptive presence, even when that "disruption" is situated around problematic, discriminatory, or exclusionary circumstances targeting them. Not only does this limit students' own ability to advocate for themselves in schools, but it opens the possibility that

their conduct in doing so could open them to sanction for being disruptive. This neglects the potential for education and educators to play a role in transforming educational spaces for 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects in working to address problematic or discriminatory behaviours through proactive educative strategies and interventions. For some 2SLGBTQIA+ students, particularly those in unsupportive homes or communities, schools may be one of the only locations where they receive positive messages about 2SLGBTQIA+ people or experience support, which this legislation inhibits.

Similar patterns play out across the proposed governance model. Parents are given primacy in decision-making regarding their child's education (s. 3 and ss. 4(1)) and given dedicated rights (s. 94), whereas students receive no such rights (besides as an "individual" with the right to attend school in s. 6, and the obligation to do so if they are of age in s. 7). This effectively conflates students' interests with those of their parent, as well as removing autonomy from students in their education and infantilizing them as "child" until they reach the age of 18 and may exercise parental rights for themselves (s. 329); this is particularly troubling for 2SLGBTQIA+ students with non-supportive parents and the rise of "parental rights" movements. Not only are 2SLGBTQIA+ students left to fend for themselves in this situation, but the instantiation of SCCs at individual schools further empowers non-supportive parents to enforce moralizing opinions at the operational level.[66] While 2SLGBTQIA+ parents and parents who are supportive of their 2SLGBTQIA+ children can act as strong allies in supporting students and working with schools to advocate for educational supports, their role under Bill 64's proposed governance would potentially be undermined and/or bring them into more direct conflict with other parents who oppose 2SLGBTQIA+ people. The role of SCCs in having a voice with principals, regional directors, and even in the PAC opens up ground for increased conflict and contradictory input at all levels; the result of these discordant voices

[66] SCCs also effectively bring parents together and would provide an easy location to organize petitions for religious instruction in schools (s. 133) and religious exercises (s. 134). The bar for religious instruction is particularly low, requiring only 25 signatures to introduce religious instruction up to 2.5 hours each week during school hours. While not all religious instruction is anti-2SLGBTQIA+, there are certainly some religious adherents that marginalize 2SLGBTQIA+ people and no stipulations included in the bill to prevent such occurrences.

has a strong potential to result in less socially progressive initiatives and end up reinforcing status quo normativity as a "neutral" middle ground. Parental expertise is given a place of priority through SCCs and the PAC, though the lack of detailing about what expertise entails, coupled with the broad range of areas that SCCs would have input into principals' decisions and school operations, create a muddled picture of what parent expertise may contribute beyond what educators' professional experience brings. Given the stipulation that SCCs could make recommendations to initiate performance reviews, have input into hiring, assessing the effectiveness of educational programming, and reviewing school budgets, parents' voices were empowered to provide input directly into operational decisions; however, it is not clear how expertise might be separated from or held in tension with parental opinions.

At the upper level of educational governance, education decision-making centralizes and is populated by appointed positions. Largely, the minister retains authority for education through their directives and determination of priorities, but also through their ability to make appointments to the PEA board. While the requirement for appointments to the PEA board to represent the diversity of Manitobans appears to ensure a degree of representational diversity, there is no articulation of what diversity it refers to here. As such, the familiar strategy is again employed with diversity standing in as a discursive device to gesture toward difference but undermine its ability to introduce or provision substantive change; diversity takes on a neutral definitional quality lacking in specifics, leaving dominant norms in a central position unchallenged and uninterrogated, retaining authoritative dominance, and constructing difference as noteworthy only insofar as it deviates from the norm and may be interpolated by it. Without clear criteria delineating what "diversity" would look like for the PEA appointments, as we see in other legislation identifying where members will be selected (e.g., from which organization potential members are to be selected), the mandate to have representational diversity takes on an undefined quality; further, with 2 members of the 6 to 10 to be selected from the PAC (which are already limited in their representational capacity, as I described above), the weight given to parent representation is already unbalanced. Outside of formal roles of education professionals—directors of education, principals, teachers—

this is one of the only locations where non-parents might be able to engage in educational governance activities. Notably, professional educators' decision-making capacities (whether governance related or operational) are largely defined throughout the bill by their accountability to non-professionals, either through accountability agreements, the requirement to attend to the input of parents or parent representatives, or through their answerability for student performance. The dissolution of elected school boards (except for DSFM) undercuts one of the key avenues through which 2SLGBTQIA+-supportive advancements have historically been made. For instance, with decentralized governance through school boards, individual divisions have been able to engage in activities that have supported 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects and provided much-needed institutional backing through policy and educational provisions; Winnipeg School Division's introduction of anti-homophobia training in 2000 is a prime example of this (Taylor, 2008). Centralizing authority in the PEA and proliferating other avenues and sources of input into governance effectively undercuts the education system's ability to introduce these types of changes that, over time, come to be recognized as essential in mitigating harms to 2SLGBTQIA+ students and countering widespread oppression, and that have been taken up more widely. While the PEA would be positioned to make such changes, and depending on the Minister of Education's directives may be accountable to do so, parental voices are effectively positioned to oppose or redirect such efforts—at the school level with their direct input into principals' decision-making and teachers' performance, at the regional level with directors of education, and in the PAC at the provincial level advising the minister and PEA. The discursive construction of education as being predominantly concerned with academic performance and fiscal responsibility further limit what proper educational governance should focus on and what areas it should concern itself with, positioning 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects as outside the realm of relevant consideration except where their difference must be assimilated into the system.

CHAPTER 6: Interviews about Bill 64: Education Reform and Perspectives on 2SLGBTQIA+ Subjects

In this chapter, I discuss findings from interviews with educators, school system stakeholders, and individuals who were actively engaged in public discourse regarding Bill 64, what the reform effort involved, and what educational equity looks like for 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects. I am deeply grateful for the time participants made to speak with me and for sharing information, their critical thinking and insights, and the efforts they made in responding to Bill 64, which were, in every case, reflections of the significant time and energy they spent during the period when Bill 64 was tabled. It is worth noting, as all the participants did during our interviews, that Bill 64 was introduced during a period of extreme social turmoil as the COVID-19 pandemic stretched across the globe and wrought upheavals in local education systems and communities. Educators, in many ways, were placed in the most extreme positions on the front lines in mediating the effects of the pandemic, being made responsible for the wellbeing and continued education of children and youth, and having to respond to the demands of adapting to modified education delivery through cancelled schooling, online/virtual classrooms and blended delivery—all while attending to the specific situations of students' families, illnesses at home and across their school communities, on top of the various demands on their professional practice. The impacts of the pandemic on educators were enormous and, at such a challenging time, Bill 64 was introduced proposing significant changes to the education system's organization, changed professional roles and responsibilities, and shifted governance and accountability roles. Working in these continually changing daily circumstances—being responsive to ever-changing public health orders, the demands of shifting teaching practices, the changing directives from Manitoba Education, and the needs required to care for themselves and their families—many continued their efforts throughout the day and into their evenings, weekends, and vacations to keep abreast of daily developments regarding Bill 64, have conversations with colleagues and parents, and engage in efforts to speak about the bill publicly and grapple with what changes were in store for public education in the province. This demonstrated commitment to education and their roles and responsibilities in relation to it speaks to the

profound depth of investment on the part of so many people throughout Manitoba's education system—whether formally (as teachers, administrators, or professionals) or informally (as parents or guardians, members of collectives, or in crafting social media responses or editorials)—to public schooling and educational equity. These efforts were exhausting, disheartening, and continued to play on their minds through the ongoing impacts of Bill 64's legacy—and many spoke about the challenges of this period. However, participants also spoke about feelings of empowerment in being able to respond to the bill, of collective connection in reaching out and finding collaborators in efforts to speak about the bill and education more broadly, and of accomplishment in considering what they learned during the process and the effective response they mounted opposing what they considered threatening legislation for public education. Truly one of the most enjoyable aspects of this project was being able to sit down and have conversations with educators, school system stakeholders, and those actively engaged in thinking about Bill 64 and what education involves.

The interviews and, more specifically, the people with whom I had the privilege of speaking were incredibly thoughtful about Bill 64 and the education system broadly. They spoke in passionate and articulate ways about their visions of education, their connections to education and belief in its importance, and their understandings of equity for 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects and other marginalized groups within formal education. While I predominantly focus on themes related to the education reform effort represented by Bill 64, the public response to the bill, and impacts on educational equity for 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects, my conversations with participants were incredibly rich, inspiring in many other ways, and offered insights beyond what I am able to cover here. The discussion that follows and my analysis have necessarily focused on areas directly related to my framing of the research, research questions, and goal of bringing insights and perspectives of the interviewees to the surface in gaining insight into the role of policy in education reform and its impacts for 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects.

Data collection: Interview participants and analysis

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants between November 2022 and April 2023, during which an iterative targeted recruitment strategy was employed to recruit participants as expert

informants on the bill. Directed invitations were extended to (1) those working in formal roles in the education system, including educators, administrators, and policymakers; and (2) people who participated in public discourse regarding the bill, including their participation in social media campaigns, collective organizing, or editorial or academic writing on the bill. In total, 12 participants were recruited in 11 interview sessions. The interview framework (see Appendix A) focused on three general areas: participants' understanding of Bill 64, their reflections on the bill and responses to it, and their insights about 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects in the context of the education reform effort. An aggregate profile of participant's identities is presented in Figure 3.1 (above) and a more robust description of each participant in Appendix B (Interview Participant Profiles); a brief snapshot of participants, providing their name and roles in relation to the education system, is provided below for easy reference (see Figure 6.1). Interviews were recorded and transcribed to create transcripts for analysis. (See Methodology above for a full description of interview methods and analysis.)

Participant name	Role
Brian	Superintendent (urban division)
Chantal	Member of Red for Ed MB Teacher
CM	Social media campaign (@64onBill64) Teacher Parent
Ellen	Teacher MEd thesis research focused on Bill 64
Greg	Senior leadership, Faculty of Education in a Manitoban university
James	President, The Manitoba Teachers' Society
Josh	Executive Director, Manitoba School Boards Association
Kevin	Member of Rural Voices United Parent
Lisa	Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA)
Luanne	Member of Parents for Public Education Teacher Parent
Matt	Assistant Superintendent (urban division)
Pamela	Divisional administrator (rural division)

Figure 6.1: Participant names and role

What was particularly interesting in this study and in considering education reform of this type, which focuses on organizational change in the education system, is that subject positions were poised to change as a result of the policy reform. As such, interview participants were straddling subjectivities in relation to the policy—or, to put it another way, subject positions were in flux as discursive subjectivities were changing through the reforming of policy. This played itself out in a number of ways. First, most participants occupied multiple subject positions in relation to the policy, as teachers and parents, resulting in participants being able to speak from discrete subject positions (as constituted by and through the policy) simultaneously, but also between subject positions that were undergoing change through the reform (from the present to the proposed/anticipated). In other words, as a result of the proposed changes in Bill 64, subject positions were undergoing changes by virtue of the roles, responsibilities, and discursive constructions of their various positions. For instance, parents were grappling with the notion that not only would they be parenting their children but also would take on a governance role through School Community Councils (SCCs), and they invested effort in trying to understand how their positions and responsibilities would change as a result—what these governance responsibilities would entail, the changing demands on their time and energy, and whether their changed role would be beneficial to their children, other students, and educators. They occupied their current subject position, as constituted in the current system by *The Public Schools Act* (PSA), as well as anticipating, forecasting, trying on, and responding from their anticipated subject position, their new subjectivities to be formed under Bill 64. This resulted in participants providing insights from multiple positions and temporalities (anticipated futures that did not come to pass), as well as insights from their roles in education systems.

Results

At the outset of each interview, I asked participants to summarize Bill 64 and explain what it was about in their own words. Participants mainly focused on issues of governance, describing the bill as an attempt to re-organize how educational governance was structured and explaining their understanding that the bill was

focused on control of the system, increasing accountability measures, and centralizing educational authority; one of the main means of achieving this control, as several participants explained, was through increased control of funding and financial administration in the education system. This general understanding pervaded interviews and returned throughout our conversations, often being linked to equity—both the idea of equitable funding but also to providing education in equitable ways to meet the needs of diverse student populations. Participants often noted that the governmental rationale for the bill placed the focus on overspending in education and a supposedly failing system in terms of student achievement; however, participants resisted this characterization of Manitoba's education system and emphasized that underfunding, including the governmental restriction previously placed on school boards to limit their ability to set and increase educational property tax, was a key factor responsible for challenges in the system. The shifting of blame onto educators for what governmental actors deemed to be "poor performance" was a mischaracterization and more reflective of a persistent, obsessive focus on austerity, limiting spending in the education system, restricting board authority to raise funds using the only means they had (property tax), and as a contributing factor in the devaluation of educators as professionals and in public misunderstanding about how education operates in Manitoba. However, despite speaking cogently about these themes of governance, centralization, and austerity, several participants also noted they had a difficult time understanding the "true" overall goal of Bill 64. Ostensibly, the Education Review findings were touted as providing the rationale for the proposed legislation, but participants did not find this convincing and noted that the review recommendations were not aligned with what the legislation proposed. On top of this, participants generally reflected that the government, and the Minister of Education in particular, were unable to speak convincingly or informatively about the bill itself, about what the proposed changes would actually entail when enacted, or how the changes would address the purported problems with the education system. Further, participants described the bill as anti-democratic in its removal of elected school board trustees and centralization of authority through appointed positions under the Minister's discretion. Despite all this, participants were generally supportive of the idea of educational reform and they often spoke passionately

about the need for it. While there was a general feeling that Bill 64's proposed changes would have been harmful to education, participants were not opposed in principle to change regarding educational policy, governance, or education in the province. Participants' perspectives and reflections on the bill aligned closely with my own analysis of Bill 64, its policyscape (in chapter 4) and the text itself (in chapter 5).

I offer this high-level summary of the interview data at the outset of the results section to provide some grounding for my discussion of three themes I focus on in the remainder of this chapter, as these general trends in the interviews often factored into and across the data in various ways. I would also note that these interviews were helpful in refining my own thinking about the larger context of Bill 64, others' experiences and perceptions of the period in which the bill was tabled and during the period when public discourse proliferated, as well as the larger processes of education reform. While I could spend significant time explaining these general narrative trends in the data, I aim to focus on three themes that relate more directly to my research objectives and use these broader trends to situate the specific thematic elements of the interviews. The goal is to bring additional perspectives and understandings of participants to the surface in thinking about the bill, responses to education reform, and implications for 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects. In the following pages, I provide results based in three themes that emerged from my interview data:

- Limitations to 2SLGBTQIA+ Inclusion
- Collective Organizing and Response Efforts
- The Need for Reform

In the following pages, I introduce each theme and explain it briefly in conceptual terms. Alongside each theme, I present quotations from participants that exemplify how participants spoke about the theme and demonstrate tensions or alternate perspectives on it. Following the reporting of the thematic results, I provide a brief discussion of the findings.

Limitations to 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion

The first theme focuses on participants' perspectives on 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion in Bill 64. While Bill 64 primarily focused on making structural changes to the governance of education in Manitoba, there were a number of locations in the bill that explicitly mentioned or alluded to 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion or exclusion. Participants spoke about these locations and the tensions that arose for them in relation to these places, and they specifically spoke about the limitations of inclusion or the potential conflicts for 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects as a result of those inclusions or in the proposed governance structures of education. Participants consistently identified two locations in the legislation where 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects were referenced in the bill (as I discussed at length above): the GSA provision and respect for human diversity language (in s. 138), and the potentially sensitive content clause (s. 144). As Lisa explained in our interview, one of these, the GSA provision, explicitly mentions 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects, while the other, the sensitive content stipulation, is less visible but related:

> I see two places [in which 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects appear]. One, …the specific example of GSAs is used as one of the things that if students lobby for it, they should be allowed to have it. Right? So if they beg for their human rights to be respected, we should do it. That's mentioned. And the other place where it's invisible, but in my opinion, it's mentioned—and I did do some media on this at that time—there's a segment... I might not get the wording exactly right, but they talk about, in the bill, about sensitive topics. I think that's what the language was. Content—sensitive content.

Not advancing equity in the policy on respect for human diversity and GSA provision (s. 138): Participants recognized that the GSA provision in the respect for human diversity policy mandate was not new material introduced in Bill 64, but rather was carried forward from the PSA (initially introduced in the 2013 amendment Bill 18, Safe and Caring Schools). However, participants explained that there was a missed opportunity in the Bill 64 legislation to further provisions for 2SLGBTQIA+ students. The following quotation from my interview with Ellen illustrates this clearly:

> But yeah, the fact that they specifically mention [that] schools should accommodate gay-straight alliances [was positive]. They should accommodate focusing on groups and activities that promote gender equity, anti-racism, you know, all of those things. I don't like the language they use for it. Like, they should be—"accommodate" is just such a passive way of saying [it, that] they accommodate if somebody comes up and asks them, but I think they could use some stronger language there….
>
> I think for the human diversity policy, I really would prefer to see stronger language for that. Not "accommodate," because that just—I don't know, that word rubs me the wrong way. I think that there needs to be stronger language that, you know, that the human diversity policy needs to make sure that we're protecting students, that we're averting censorship of books that have 2SLGBTQ+ kids and authors, and that type of thing. I think there needs to be some more specifics than what's currently in there because they say there needs to be a respect for human diversity policy, but don't actually say what that should look like. And I think there needs to be a little bit more meat to that, otherwise you have some divisions that are maybe going to kind of skirt the issue a little bit…. Yeah, and just like, better language than we can "accommodate gay-straight alliances," right? Because that's just saying, like, "we allow that to happen"…. There needs to be stronger language so that you can tell that the province is actively supporting it, rather than just permitting it….
>
> If they're using language like accommodate, that's very passive language, right? And just permitting, not necessarily advocating for it…

Similarly, Lisa explained how the language of accommodation was not proactive and missed an opportunity to go beyond responsive interventions for 2SLGBTQIA+ students:

> But the language of accommodate, it makes it sound like there's nothing proactive, there is nothing in the bill that says, "school should be a safe and welcoming place for queer kids. School

> should be a safe and welcoming place for Indigenous kids." No, no, but we will—we do need to strive to *accommodate* things that students bring forward. And I mean, on one hand, there's value to that, because [as] I've just said, they're autonomous thinking human beings. But on the other hand, shouldn't they get to show up at school on day one and it's [already] a safe and welcoming place where they are not othered? Where they're not like, "oh, I need to find a little group to get together so that we can go to the administration and beg them to allow us to meet so we can actually express our humanity and be safe"? I know that [provision] was a build on Bill 18 from 2013, so I'm sure you're well aware of all of that history, you know—because at this point, schools are required already to provide that [accommodation]. Bill 64 was an opportunity missed to go well beyond that, to say more than "students should be allowed to have this if they come and ask for it."

As Greg succinctly stated when we discussed how those pieces were carried forward and included in Bill 64: “But [the bill] didn’t advance it in any way. So what does that say? What does lack of advancing an idea beyond what was already in policy since 2012—what does that lack actually mean?” Given how conversations had evolved in the intervening decade, as Greg speculated, it suggests they either were afraid of taking it further or they didn’t know how to:

> It's one thing to say that there's a provision for the establishment of GSAs, and it's one thing to say that our schools need to be inclusive and more diverse. But, you know, what is it exactly? What kind of direction? Or what kind of support can we provide folks in schools to actually move beyond the words to actual deeds? Actions, concrete actions, for making schools more safe environments. Move beyond the rhetoric, in other words. There's always this loosely coupled relationship between what schools say they do, what the government says they're doing, [and] what it's actually doing, what is actually happening, right? And I think acknowledging that that's a reality.

Generally, carrying forward the GSA provision and maintaining the respect for human diversity policies in schools were regarded as positive things—even while participants noted they were not progressive and that there were missed opportunities to expand provisions to proactively create safer schools that were welcoming of 2SLGBTQIA+ students.

Exclusion through "potentially sensitive content" (s. 144): Although Section 144 does not explicitly name 2SLGBTQIA+ identities, they are discursively linked through language referring to "human sexuality" (as I explain in more detail in chapter 5). Lisa spent some time in our interview grappling with how "sensitive content" might be interpreted:

> That is a really big umbrella, right? I mean, I do know that there's, parents already sign permission forms for the so-called "Family Life Education," starts at a fairly young age. It is, you know, encompasses both science as well as social studies and all kinds of things that kids need to know about in terms of different families…. The intention is—I don't know if every teacher does it right every time—but the intention is that kids know that some kids have two moms, and like that kind of stuff, right? And that being gay or lesbian or queer or non-binary or trans is normal, like all of that. Although none of that is in the curriculum, right? So like, here's an example of where some education can be modernized, is that that health curriculum hasn't been rewritten—I'm gonna make up a time, but I'm gonna say probably 20 years or more[67]….
>
> How does something like this [get] interpreted? What is sensitive content? It wasn't even defined. So it can be anything that someone's not comfortable with. Right? So what if the

[67] At the time of the interview, the relevant curriculum overview document was *Kindergarten to Senior 4 Physical Education/Health: Manitoba Curriculum Framework of Outcomes for Active Healthy Lifestyles*, developed in 2000 by Manitoba Education and Training. Additional curriculum documents were published in the following years to support this framework and focused on supporting the implementation of human sexuality learning outcomes at different grade levels (e.g., *Human Sexuality: A Resource for Kindergarten to Grade 8 Physical Education/ Health Education* in 2005, *Human Sexuality: A Resource for Senior 1 and Senior 2* [grade 9 and 10] *Physical Education/Health Education* in 2005); subsequent curricular resources reiterated the "potentially sensitive content" language and provisions.

> teacher is a lesbian, happens to mention they got married last week, or reference their partner in the classroom, as might happen by any heterosexual teacher at any time. Have they now just introduced queer marriage to a child who that his parents want to protect them from "sensitive content"? So it was, there was nothing there about what it was about. But for me, what I read into that was clear…. And I think it was very dangerous, because what if somebody decided reconciliation and colonialism was sensitive content? What if they decided that to talk about racism or—like anything…. Who would get to define that? Are we now back to this Provincial [Education] Authority Board deciding what is sensitive? So even the existence of queer kids and genderqueer kids in schools, to be treated as if their very existence and the realities of their lives can potentially be filtered out because they're insensitive to somebody.

As Lisa explains, the notion of sensitive content does not include specific criteria about which relationships or identities might be considered sensitive or in what contexts, and this lack of specificity has the potential to be read in other ways along ideological grounds. While the legislation did mirror the curriculum framework language that identified "potentially sensitive content" as being related to learning outcomes in the curricular strands of human sexuality, substance use and abuse prevention, and personal safety, Lisa makes the point that a lesbian teacher's mere mention of getting married to her partner might be interpreted as a violation of this clause, and that apprehension about what constitutes sensitive content, its interpretive quality, opens up other areas to challenges of violating sensitive content concerns—particularly those where oppression and social inequity have been enacted through sexual violence or resulted in substance use, such as colonization.

Luanne spoke at greater length about the impacts of the sensitive content language:

> [During the collective organizing of Parents for Public Education,] there were certain topics that we talked about that we've never talked about together. So one of the ones that I raised in all of these meetings with parents was that the sensitive topics, curriculum, around lesbian and gay sexuality, gender identity, trans issues was going to—but mostly about sexual orientation, seems

to be the language that was in the sensitive topics curriculum and guidelines in Manitoba—it would be taken out of the guidelines of the education department into the legislation itself. Into the law. So this, sneaking that in, something which at the moment is a guideline that school divisions can choose to ignore or not. It is a guideline, the curriculum—it's not in any form of law that you have to address it [2SLGBTQIA+ identities] as a sensitive topic—was going to be in the legislation. That gay and lesbian sexuality would be a sensitive topic that must be, that the community must be involved in and agree on, by law, whether or not it can be talked about. And even though it may be something that was new to a cisgender, straight family, we were on the same page in the sense that our lives were going to be controlled at this legislative level. And it allowed us to come together across differences in ways that I haven't... I didn't expect. And that was great to see. Some other people did work around poverty and racism and Indigenous education in the [bill]….

You asked the question about the effect of Bill 64 on 2SLGBTQIA+ students, and I just want to emphasize again for your study, that the sensitive issues was going to be taken out of a guideline [and put] into legislation. And this didn't get enough press. I don't think it's why Bill 64 was defeated. But it was, it would have been unbelievably—it would have been like what's starting to happen in Florida, right now. Don't say gay... Is that what it's called? The "don't say gay" bill. It would have—it was like the "don't say gay" bill in Manitoba, hidden in all of that stuff. And it would have meant "don't say gay or lesbian in schools by law"…. That, I mean, it's not the only reason I fought—I would have fought Bill 64 even if that wasn't in it. But of course it was in it, like we've said, because there were attacks on people who are poor, people from rural Manitoba, people who were immigrants, people were Indigenous, people who were racialized, women... So that's how I see the intersectionality between queer issues and women's issues, and the intersectionality of all forms of oppression around Bill 64. So definitely, if you have other

> questions about the queer issues.... They didn't need to write much. They just needed to write enough in the Bill to start moving forward. And I wouldn't—if it had passed, I wouldn't be surprised if we had "don't say gay" policy for our schools' libraries a year later….
>
> Yeah, you could see them after Bill 64 then repealing Bill 18. So it would make logical sense, right? You can't have GSAs in schools if you're not allowed, if it's a sensitive topic, right?

Luanne identifies the significance of the change in moving "potentially sensitive content" from a curriculum guideline into legislation, giving it the force of law. The impact of that change, as Luanne speculated, could have wide-ranging consequences that limited the ability of educators to address 2SLGBTQIA+ content and the needs of students, and would potentially conflict with the GSA provision and other inclusive education measures. This was not only a regressive move, doubling down on the curricular guideline from 20 years ago, but it also signaled that social attitudes had not (and prescriptively *should* not) change regarding sexuality.

Governance complications: Participants also noted that larger changes to governance structures had the potential to create conflicts and limit inclusion of 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects. James explained this dynamic particularly in relation to parents' new roles on School Community Councils and the weight those voices could carry:

> I can't think of any ways in which Bill 64 was seen as advocacy for the 2SLGBTQ+ community. I would actually argue the other way around that I think—I see areas where we would definitely be moving in the opposite direction…. So the connection to Bill 64, the idea of parents taking on a larger governance role in schools, which was a facet of Bill 64, meant that, you know, you'd have concerns. Are we going to see parents come in and say "we don't want a GSA, so get rid of it"? And we live in a society where we are more prone to step up and use our voices in defiance of something as opposed to in support of something…. So in other words, I don't think you're gonna hear—we were concerned that we wouldn't hear from the parent community in support of GSAs. We were going to hear from the parent communities of "I don't want any of that

> happening in this school." And that's obviously a concern. You know, we've already alluded to the sensitive topics material. There is nothing in Bill 64 that I saw that supported concepts like: Schools need to be safe places. Schools need to be welcoming communities. Education needs to occur free of biases. You know, and I think a lot of parents don't understand how important it is to write math problems that don't involve mom and dad…. I would say it's sort of the systemic heterosexuality bias that we have in our world…

Chantal took a broader perspective and recognized that the centralization of education authority created interlocks with oppressive institutions:

> My digging into it [began with] the sensitive content stuff. Which then led me to the authoritarianism and centralization of power, which was huge. And then from there, the residence piece—attacking Indigenous students, and using the word "residence," like literally while radar is uncovering murdered Indigenous children outside of residential schools. And so, those three, like—it's not three separate [things], they're all three connected. But the attacking of already marginalized kids in our province, and then further attacking them [through the bill]. 2SLGBTQ+ kids with the sensitive content. And women and girls with that sensitive content—attacking sexual education that women and girls benefit from most, and boys and men and all genders benefit from that education. That learning is proven to reduce sexual assault when there's sexual education learning, and so attacking students [through those clauses] who are already in defensive positions in our school systems, that we know that administrators and teachers and school staff and parents and community members are putting so much work into making schools safer places for these kids who are... it's not even just "historically marginalized" because it's in the present—it's now—but like rooted in our histories as well. But this bill was just meant to be a barrier to that work of making schools safer places, and institutionalizing the ability for a centralized authority to make those decisions unilaterally. And that centralization of

> power, that really resonated also with people who hadn't really been thinking about historically marginalized students. There were people who [recognized] "they're going to take my schools away; they're just going to get rid of them. They're going to take away our transportation, they're going to take away our buses." There was something for everyone to be worried about in this bill. My hope too was to show that the forces in power, that it really is us versus them.

These impacts played out in other ways through the re-organization of educational governance. CM noted that the consolidation of divisions into 15 regions, which included making Winnipeg one region, would present challenges to how diversity would be represented across the province:

> It failed on so many fronts in terms of considering equity, where you would have one area that was looking at [one rural region] with 800 students, and yet the area of the City of Winnipeg would have one person overseeing it with more than half of the students in the entire province… I couldn't possibly understand how anyone would think that that would provide equitable voice….
>
> Half—more than half—of the students of the province, more than half of the teachers of the province, and a lot of diversity is centralized within Winnipeg just as a result of it being such a major centre in the province. So it created an impossibility for marginalized groups to be heard. So that was a significant concern and threat with Bill 64 that needed to be, to have a light shone on it to the public.

CM connected the diverse student and teaching population centred in Winnipeg with the practical limit constructed by the proposed representation on SCC Executives, PAC, and potentially the PEA—much in the same way Braul (2021) observed in their discussion of the regional changes in educational administration.

Pamela questioned more directly how advisory committees—particularly a student advisory committee, which was an initiative announced by the PC government midway through the Bill 64 conversations—would address representational diversity:

> I know there was talk about a student group. And so the ask for the student advisory group was rural, was urban, was different grades, was... people of colour, was Indigenous—self-identified as Indigenous. I'm not sure that there was any language even in [recruitment for] the Student Advisory Council that would lend itself to "we would like to have someone from our 2SLBGTQ community." If it was, it did not stick out because I can remember reading through this [advisory committee recruitment material]—and I think if there was a place that you could have had probably the best voice, that would have been it. And I don't remember there being anything in terms of "how do we ensure that?" Now, someone may have identified through their application process, and that may not be something that anybody knows about, and maybe they were chosen for that reason. But again, then it was an indirect or an indirect benefit, it was a residual, as opposed to a targeted, "we need to have this voice on our [committee]"….
>
> I don't know that through all the Bill 64, they had sort of the student advisory group, they had, they had different groups of folks that were looking at stuff and the whole who-was-invited-to-the-party was a really closed process…. You could send in an expression of interest for whatever these things were. But then the kinds of things they asked you in your expression of interest did not lend at all to any identifiers, I don't think, other than: what's your role? What's your school division? And how might you contribute to the conversation of insert-topic-here? I think it's always sort of been identified that [they] want to have a balance from all divisions. I don't believe they made any mention of balance of gender. I don't think they made any mention of balance of race, or sexual orientation—like, I don't think that any of that played into it.

While the bill itself named representation of the diversity of the province as a consideration in making appointments to PEA (ss. 41(4)(c)) and a priority for advisory committees (as Pamela explains above), the application and selection process did little to encourage or even surface the potential for identifying and

ensuring 2SLGBTQIA+ diversity along those lines. In an earlier section of the interview, when discussing the education review process, Pamela put a finer point on the importance of this:

> I think that the stakeholders who were either chosen to have voice or who chose to give voice, again, were not a representative group across the board. Sometimes the people that are hard at work don't have time…. Which again makes me wonder about any marginalized group of folks or any group of folks that are either underrepresented, or—I don't want to say "not invested," but not recognized as an engaged stakeholder. And I think as an education system, we want to make sure that we've tried really hard to include all voices. And even when we try to include all voices, we don't hit the mark. So if you've started from a stance of "meh, we're just going to let people come up and whoever wants to..."—then you're not going to hear them all. What have we done to go seek out the voices of people that you—and that was my question: What have you done to seek out the voices of people who are not interested in coming to talk to you?

These quotations demonstrate the connections between the bill's governance changes and their impacts on 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion efforts; the potential structural disadvantages levied against systemically marginalized groups through governance changes amplify possible points of contestation that pose real barriers to equity or that perpetuate inequity outright. In addition to their resonances with the overarching themes about the bill's purpose and rationale (as I described at the beginning of the results section), this theme solidifies the connection between systemic inequities reified by the re-organization of the education system's governance and the implicit obstacles to 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion.

Intersectional inclusions: Throughout the interviews, participants also consistently introduced other equity topics and demonstrated how the bill could be viewed through an intersectional lens. Participants would pivot from talking about 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects into another area of equity or inclusion, or make connections between marginalized groups among student populations. I came to think of these moments as *intersectional equity* when participants leapfrogged ideas and made parallel connections between minoritized groups, or

explained how certain pieces of policy connected and exerted oppressive influence across subjects. I set out to surface these connections in this research, but I had not anticipated participants would make them so clearly and consistently; as a result, I found these moments somewhat unexpected but welcome. This trend reflected a deeper thinking on the part of many participants about how they thought about educational equity and the role of schools.

For instance, in addition to the instances already included in Luanne's, Chantal's, Ellen's, Pamela's, and Lisa's interviews above, there were plenty of additional examples across the interviews. When asked about how future reforms might support 2SLGBTQIA+ students or content, Brian spoke about the importance of addressing achievement gaps for Indigenous students and the role of poverty, saying "to me the two things go together." Matt spoke about how austerity and retrenchment played into privatization initiatives and, specifically, how the impacts of austerity measures hit marginalized groups hardest because there is no option to pay for private services, like schools or clinics; rather, there needs to be "an investment in that notion of 'public'…. If we're wanting to ensure that all kids have the opportunity for high-quality schools that bring everybody together, where we create empathetic communities, then you have to fund it properly, you have to fund it equitably." Greg similarly spoke about the impacts of child poverty rates on student achievement. Chantal spoke further about the impacts of capitalism, colonialism, poverty and food security for children, and income disparities. Kevin talked about immigration and newcomers in his rural community, its importance in community sustainability, and how diversity was vital in rural areas, including 2SLGBTQIA+ people even when that might be challenging or be initially resisted. Lisa described experiences from her time as a school trustee in Winnipeg School Division, naming Indigenous education, poverty, food security, racism, and the importance of mental health and wellbeing. CM spoke about reduction of funding and the resulting reduction in student services, EAs, speech therapists, EAL specialists, clinical services, and supports for newcomer students and their families.

Ellen drew some more direct parallels between her thesis work on how Indigenous education was treated in the education reform effort and the neutering of "diversity":

> And they [government through the reform documents] tended to talk a lot about diversity, right, but diversity in a fairly colorblind way where it wasn't really particularly defined and wasn't even always necessarily linked to race. But I can see this also being connected with 2SLGBTQ+ people, because they're talking about diversity, but they won't actually necessarily name what that diversity is and that kind of undercuts what it is that they're talking about. So like, everything's portrayed fairly heteronormatively, but they're not actually calling out what it is that they're concerned about when they want diverse representation that represents the community. They don't say what exactly that means, right. And I think they should, and I think that should be something that is explicitly stated so that, you know, so that it's, it's like... I think I said in my presentation like Zeus Leonardo talks about colorblindness in policy, basically, since it says to people without saying [it] that racism isn't important. Well, I think it's the same way, right? If you're not actually explicitly talking about how queer people are affected by this policy—or why we need diverse representation or that type of thing, and you're not explicitly talking about them—then that's basically saying that they're not something that needs our direct attention… I see that as a connection. I think I saw... I know I talked a little bit about interest convergence, and I can see that that might also be a little bit in there, right? Like how critical race theorists talk about racialized people, but [that could also] more broadly mean marginalized groups really only make progress when it's in the best interest of those people who are in charge…

In making these connections explicitly, Ellen demonstrates how insights on oppression and marginalization play out in substantive and interlocking ways.

These pivots between 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects and equity-deserving groups and in thinking across marginalization demonstrate that participants were thinking about equity more broadly, and they were often making links in ways that suggest intersectional thinking about equity itself. James made this more directly and linked it to particular modes of thinking and acting in education:

> You don't have to worry that you need to connect with every equity-seeking group. But you do need to understand that you can't be a part of the problem; you got to be a part of the solution. And when we live in a world that's so impacted by, you know, systemic racism, and I'll say systemic biases, you need to be hyper-aware of what you're doing, so that you're not adding to that systemic racism or systemic bias or systemic whatever….
>
> Your questions are specific to the LGBTQ community. It absolutely needs to be a part for them, but it doesn't matter what the equity-seeking group is; it's got to be part of that structure. Therefore, we go back to change; therefore, we go back to "we can't just keep going the way we're going and say it's okay." It has to be part of that change. It has to be change at the curricular level. It has to be change at the PD level. But it also, you know, just as legislation created GSAs, it's got to be changes at the legislative level.

However, legislative changes addressing equity were not a primary focus of Bill 64, as Pamela observed, connecting exclusion and the move toward centralization: "I don't think that inclusion was one of the aims of Bill 64. I think that exclusion [was], and centralized only-those-invited-to-the- party would be in control of what was going on." CM also observed a similar threat to inclusion in Bill 64:

> We talked about how equity wasn't a focal point of Bill 64. And there were threats to how curriculum would be put forward that would impact the wellbeing of our 2SLGBTQIA+ students, and that was something that was, of course, a serious concern. We know the statistics and the mental health concerns with those students. And having another piece added that could impact them and their wellbeing in our education system was just something that was unimaginable and unacceptable. So there was lots of discourse around that piece, I feel, from folks who are better spoken in that particular area. But in in my writing, I tried to find those voices to elevate what they were putting forward. Again, because protecting our students' wellbeing is what we do as teachers. Creating opportunities for our society to get better, to become more inclusive, more

> respectful, more... all of the positive adjectives there. That's what we're striving towards in the work that we do in our classrooms, in helping people be seen, helping people feel valued and a part of our communities. And so there were vestiges of what were sitting quietly dormant within Bill 64 that people shone a light on and said "this is dangerous, and this is why." I think that was one of the important pieces that needed to get highlighted with Bill 64. For people to understand that there were lots of quietly nefarious pieces to Bill 64 that the public needed to know about. So that's what we tried to do.

As CM explains, equity wasn't a focal point in Bill 64 and, in fact, there were "quietly nefarious pieces" to it that worked to undermine inclusion. CM alludes here to the need to share this information about the bill and her own commitment to doing so in her social media engagements, trying to amplify the voices of others and ensure that the overarching impacts to equity and inclusion were understood regarding the bill—a topic I address in the next theme.

Overall, the broader theme of 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion and its limitations surfaced a number of tensions in how participants saw 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects represented in Bill 64 and the bill's implicit limitations in treating them. While some inclusions were more positive, such as the respect for human diversity policy mandate and GSA provision, they were still limited in what they were able to provide for 2SLGBTQIA+ students and were carried forward from the previous legislation; mainly, these provisions focused on accommodation measures that treated 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects as exceptional, not a part of everyday school life, and as needing special accommodation to be included. Other 2SLGBTQIA+ connections were less positive and less visible, such as the potentially sensitive content clause, which did not explicitly name 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects but discursively constituted them as sensitive, unfit for inclusion in regular classroom content. Finally, participants demonstrated understandings of inclusion in intersectional ways, often moving from topics directly related to 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion/exclusion into discussions about poverty and SES, Indigenous education, racism, colonialism, mental health, and so on.

Collective organizing and response efforts

The second theme describes participants' perspectives on and involvement in collective organizing and resistance efforts in response to Bill 64. As I described in my policyscape analysis above (in Chapter 4), these resistance campaigns constituted a wide-ranging public response in opposition to Bill 64, enacted a number of strategies, and constituted a key aspect of public engagement with the bill that contributed to its eventual withdrawal. During recruitment, I specifically directed efforts to enlist participants who had participated in collective organizing in creating public dialogue and forming responses to Bill 64 because I recognized the uniqueness of these efforts—how widespread they were, how concerted and unrelenting their efforts, and how they acted as expressions of the constitutive subjectivities formed in response to the policy discourses and even worked to forge alliances across the political spectrum. These aspects of collective response to the bill, which factored into the efforts of even "isolated" actors who responded through single-actor initiatives (such as Concerned Manitoban's individually operated social media account, or those who wrote editorials for mainstream newsmedia), created a collective response representing an engagement with the policy process. In my final participant sample, there were eight participants who I spoke with explicitly about their involvement in public discourse and the collective response to Bill 64—three through their profession role or affiliation with organizations that mounted public campaigns (such as MTS's "Slam the Door on 64 / Combattre 64" campaign, MSBA's "Local Voices, Local Choices" campaigns, or the NDP's official opposition efforts), and five who chose to join, participate in, or contribute to public campaigns or collective organizing outside of or in addition to their formal professional roles (such as Concerned Manitoban's "64 days on Bill 64" social media account, RedforEdManitoba's collective organizing, Rural Voices United, Parents for Public Education, or Protect Public Education).

In contrast to the first one, the theme of collective organizing and response efforts emerged in less discrete (or separable) ways, which reflected how participants explained different motivations for getting

involved, their experiences in responding to Bill 64, and the strategic objectives of their engagements. In other words, participants articulated their reasons for involvement, what they did, and how they went about it in entangled ways that blended these features into broader narratives about building collectives and/or responding to the bill. Looking over the various sections in which participants described their involvement in collective organizing, I observed several characteristics that resonated across participants' experiences and that contributed to the coherence of a larger collective response effort—one which worked to form (unintentionally) a larger "collective" among everyone resisting Bill 64 through public discourse. Given how participants explained their involvement, the various features of their collective organizing were not discrete pieces within their narratives; rather, participants often described their motivations alongside their aims, their tactics alongside their roles, their larger organizing efforts alongside the importance of working with others or amplifying the efforts of others, and so on. Before I introduce specific quotations to demonstrate this theme, I briefly explain several facets of this theme (or the subthemes that constitute it):

- **Motivations or reasons for getting involved in public discourse or in collective organizing**: In some cases, participants explained that they felt compelled to do so, either due to their personal political commitments or because they felt it was important to ensure their voices were heard. In other cases, participants occupied positions in which response was expected (such as MTS or MSBA in representing members' interests and their organizational mandates to contribute to public discourse regarding education) or they felt they were positioned in ways that offered unique insights or needed skills/contributions.
- **Collaboration and co-creating responses**: Participants described a number of ways that they participated in collaborating and developing collective responses, even when working in relative isolation. They would draw from the postings of other individuals or groups, read editorials and news coverage, consult the bill itself and accompanying BEST education strategy, and listen to parents or colleagues. These efforts at collaboration involved amplifying the voices of others, sharing information

and coordinating response efforts through shared workloads (e.g., one person would craft message, another write the text, another collect signatures or disseminate messaging), and leveraging spontaneous alignments and strategic synchronizations with others.

- **Educative role**: Participants explained their response efforts often involved an educative role in helping others to understand how the education system currently worked (and what the proposed changes would mean) and how to engage in activism to effectively respond to public policy. In some cases, participants explained that educating others within their collective was a key factor in collaborating and coordinating their efforts, while others explained that their primary purpose was to share information with or foster greater understanding among the wider public (through public forums, meetings, panels, or discussions).
- **Empowerment through collective response**: Several participants explained the sense of agency and empowerment achieved through collective resistance efforts, particularly with the withdrawal of Bill 64. While participants noted the autocratic character of the bill and, specifically, its undermining of democracy through the elimination of elected positions in educational governance roles, collective responses and public discourse became an avenue in which people could voice concerns, express opposition or questions, and ultimately feel a sense of agency in mounting an effective movement to oppose the bill.

While these subthemes were not shared among all participants equally, they recurred frequently across participant interviews when the topic of public discourse and resistance efforts to the bill were addressed. Notably, as I mentioned above, these topics were often entangled with one another through participant narratives and, as such, they appeared in different configurations in longer passages in the interviews.

As Josh described in a longer passage, MSBA's "Local Voices, Local Choices" campaign was initiated in 2018 in anticipation of the education review process to begin building awareness about the education system, and the campaign transformed into a location for public discourse regarding Bill 64:

So the earlier phases of the campaign—and again, not focusing on protectionism and digging heels in so that there would be no change—was really based on communicating the strengths of what we have, so that people were aware of what the system looks like, different local programs, services, and supports that are… offered locally that exist by virtue of what their local school board has done…. We promoted the fact that we have the largest and most equitably representative, democratically elected institution, given the fact that we have half of trustees being women, which is a huge achievement and accomplishment in any democratic process. We focused on what people wanted for their education system…. How many people want larger administrative units through amalgamation? How many people want to keep their local school board? How many believe that the provincial government ought to exercise sole and unilateral authority over education? How many people have no opinion? How many people believe that it's a democratic and fundamental right to elect your school trustee?....

And then when it came time for Bill 64 to be revealed, we built on all of that preliminary work to say, "well, here's what the bill represents, and here's where we are, and they're so far away".... But I have to say that it became very difficult to mount such a campaign amidst an ongoing pandemic response effort that called upon the undivided attention of almost everybody in public education, including the association itself. You'll see that under Bill 64, the association was also to be dissolved and different functions assigned to different entities. So that became a huge question in parallel to all of this, because on top of Bill 64, the advocacy effort, public education, the pandemic effort, there was a third wave, which was what would happen to MSBA in the future…. Because of the relationships that had been built, and the different messages that were sent out, a lot of our partners came to the rescue when it came to joining with us in the fight against Bill 64. So you have the municipal resolutions; you have the letters from the Indigenous political organizations supporting the maintenance of the system as it is; you had

letters from the different partners that we have at the national level defending school boards. The Manitoba Teachers' Society defended school boards. So, and as it turned out, when it came to the government's messaging, it was more than evident that those messages were not finding resonance with the public…. And every time they would come out with a message, we would come out with a message that would also inform the public about what that involved. And again, it wasn't about conducting a war or countering the message, it was about clarifying things, which is our mandate as an association. It actually says we are to raise awareness amongst the public about educational issues that concern them. So when Minister Cullen was appointed to be the minister, and alleged that we were part of a vocal minority, meant to dismiss all of the concerns that were being raised, they fundamentally miscalculated the fact that this was not a minority…. The majority wanted to preserve their local school board. They may have been in favour towards larger administrative units, especially in some regions of the province. Had they done that, then maybe the response that they received would have been far different than it was. But I think part of the issue here [is that it] did not represent an alignment with the interests of the community writ large…..

At the end of the day, the only thing that we did was we provided a [lawn] sign that some people used, out of multiple signs being floated by different organizations to speak to different pieces, most of them just focused on withdrawing the bill itself. And then part of the other piece that I guess was a barometer of public opinion, was the fact that we focused on creating a "Sign up for 64" campaign—sub-campaign—under Local Voices, Local Choices. Because whether the people wanted to speak in favor of it or against it, we wanted people to sign up to speak to that bill. And so what you ended up having as a result of that was a very clear indication from the province that this was the largest public campaign, in terms of people wanting to get involved, in modern history. No other bill had that many people registered to speak to it [during the

> committee phase of the legislative process]…. Which tells you the impact that these campaigns had, including ours, in generating public awareness and making people want to be a part of this dialogue. So whether they were a vocal minority in the end, according to the government, I don't think that's quite the case when you see all of the efforts that people made during that entire summer; when most people are away on vacation, the campaign was stronger and stronger and stronger…. If you look at the Free Press archives from that period, just as kind of the flagship newspaper in the province, you can see that week after week after week, it was constant op eds about 64. And it wasn't the same thing; it was different aspects of 64 that people were focused on.

In this quotation, Josh describes how MSBA's Local Voices, Local Choices campaign evolved over time but was rooted in MSBA's mandate to "raise awareness amongst the public about educational issues that concern them." A key aspect of this mandate necessitated their strategic development of an awareness raising campaign that involved providing information about how the education system operates, amplifying the views and opinions of the public regarding education, and clarifying what aspects of the system Bill 64 aimed at reforming. Through that process, a collaborative movement formed with other stakeholders and the general public, which included amplifying the voices of the "vocal minority" (that, in fact, comprised the majority, as Josh noted) and promoting engagement with the bill. Throughout, Josh weaves the various subthemes together, demonstrating the imbricated nature and interdependent characteristics comprising collective organizing and response—that is, adopting an educative role involved motivations related to providing information to the public, MSBA's organizational mandate, and surfacing public engagements, while also building on collaborative responses that amplified the efforts of other campaigns and promoted response; this, vitally, recognized the importance of democratic voice necessary to the public policy process, one of the key issues Josh articulated as being at stake in Bill 64. Josh culminated his previous comments with a summary that speaks to the efficacy and sense of empowerment resulting from the process:

> It ended up being a very effective campaign. But it really came together because of the grassroots commitment to making it a success; that it wasn't about an organization trying to be protective of its interests. This was what we hoped for, which would be that if school boards were to have any standing in this province after or before Bill 64, it would be because of broad community support, not because we want them to be protected.

James reflected on a similar topic in relation to MTS's response to Bill 64, explaining the spontaneous resonances in the collective responses:

> And the one thing that I would say, and I said this to a national audience a couple of weeks ago when we were actually talking about our Bill 64 advocacy work, is that there was no coordination. We did not sit down with education partners and say, "What are you going to say? Because this is what we're going to say." But organically, we all ended up talking about exactly the same things. And I always put that down to the fact that the legislation was so bad, the shortcomings were so obvious in it, that anybody with any knowledge at all of the system, automatically reached the same conclusions. And I'd go back to… we had no voices within our community of teachers say, "well, getting rid of school trustees would probably be a good thing for the school system." Nobody said that. It was very organic. Certainly, to a certain degree, we all came at it from a different point, we all emphasized different things. So, as I said, we talked about those sensitive materials and opting out. We talked about the potential loss of language programs, because they could be unique to school divisions. MSBA, for instance, emphasized other areas and I think talked about local taxation and that sort of thing. But at the end of the day, there's so many areas that we just agreed on.

In this quotation, James explains there was no deliberate coordination of responses between stakeholders. Rather, different organizations and individuals took different approaches in crafting their responses and chose

different areas to focus their engagements. However, the coherence of the collective responses, as James observed it, emerged from agreement about various implications of the bill.

Participants who were not affiliated with professional organizations demonstrated similar patterns in public response and in the coordination of efforts. Kevin, a member of Rural Voices United, describes how the collective formed and what areas motivated their efforts and public messaging:

> It was somewhat spontaneous. But, I mean, you get back all the way up to the education consultations [for the education review] back in 2019 where it was pretty much all the same people attending those meetings. Not at a quiet time of the year either, mind you. I believe the one was in the middle of summer or fall that we attended in Brandon, and we were busy and shut things down on the farm to go because [we could see] there was a lot of rumours and rumblings and stuff out there, so we felt it was important to participate. And, I mean, you go forward into where you started seeing, hearing more concrete information on what was going to be contained in the bill, and then to see it, the bill itself—the division was, at that time, already on top of it and providing some information to some people, and they had some consultation meetings, or some information meetings, whatever you want to call it, just Zoom calls. And anybody that was kind of familiar with it, that attended, they basically said, "Send out a list and who would be willing to assist if we were going to move forward with an organization like Rural Voices United." And so that's more or less how it started…. There wasn't really anything special. I mean, there was pretty good connections, personal connections, amongst the people…. It coalesced around six or eight people, four or five real hardcore members, for sure, that were willing to go to the wall for it, and some really creative people and that made the world of difference. It's not just, "oh, well, we should write letters to our MLA, and then that's it." It's the 20 or 30 other ideas that boiled to the surface after some of the discussions that we had as a group…. I don't know if I would call it "organic" necessarily, but it was just enough like-minded

> people at some of those first information sessions that the division provided that, yeah, gave everybody the kick in the butt to get moving on something….
>
> We have a number of really small schools in our division, and that's where the majority of the support came from, or the strongest support came from, from members from those communities with those small schools and they were the ones that were most concerned about losing what they had. It was interesting how it worked that way, but looking back at, I'm not surprised that that's the way it worked. I think those are the people, they realized what they had the most to lose….
>
> If you want to get into discussing some more specifics on why we were opposed… the centralization of power was obviously significant, but I think the thing that really got everybody's hair on the on the back of their neck standing up was the plan to remove the moratorium on [school] closures and the limits on bus rides. From our perspective, because we have so many small schools in our division, you could see the writing on the wall…. But you still keep going back to every time something gets centralized, it rarely ever works out good and certainly not for rural areas. They always become the last ones, the afterthought, all the time. So I think that just those three—the removal of the school boards and the moratorium on the school closures and the busing limits—were the three that really, really catalyzed the pushback from our area.

As Kevin described, the formation of the collective Rural Voices United involved a number of factors that included those who felt they had the most to lose, recognition of how centralization would affect rural areas (and the ways centralization had impacted them historically), and people who were already invested in their educational communities. Centralization also carried a degree of threat for educational delivery, depending on the decisions made by centralized authority and their education mandates, as Brian noted, describing particularly how government changes could impact the types of educational directives imposed across the province.

At other points in the interview, Kevin made it clear that the viability of rural communities is linked, in many ways, with education and the presence of a local school, which helps to explain the response in these areas. For instance, “we see it from all kinds of little communities in rural Manitoba, as soon as you lose the school, your town is finished. I don't know many communities that are thriving without a school.” The awareness that schools are connected to community livelihood helped prompt the mobilization of public responses in opposition to Bill 64 in rural areas, such as Rural Voices United; these responses played a key role in the opposition effort because they emerged from PC strongholds and areas where elections favoured PC candidates (Kevin: “rightly or wrongly, it's Conservative and it's always going to be Conservative”). Other participants, including Pamela and James, noted that this was a key factor in the success of the opposition campaign, as it communicated to the PC-led government that the bill was alienating their voting base. For Kevin, rural opposition to the bill was not surprising, but the wider opposition efforts were:

> That was something that was strange to us too. I mean, we expected pretty strong opposition in rural areas, because we knew those issues. We didn't expect to see the opposition in places like Winkler and Brandon and Winnipeg. Like, that didn't compute to us. But there was other reasons for those people to be opposed, and they made sense too…. It was heartwarming. It was really nice to see that many people come together. It's just it's too bad it has to be about something negative, right? It'd be nicer if it was about something positive…

Luanne, who worked with Parents for Public Education, spoke about the importance of fostering conversations and activism that worked to build coalitionary understandings about why different reasons for opposition were important and could be built:

> We had families and parents and from all walks of life. Literally, I had meetings with grandmothers from Western Manitoba, who were talking to me about meeting with their church group, because they were concerned about their children who were teachers not ever getting a job, and that public education would collapse. They were concerned about their grandchildren.

> And they would go to their prayer groups and say, "Well, how can I talk about this?" And I would talk about being a lesbian mother with my children. With the opportunity to bring people together from such diverse positions, while we were so isolated was just kind of remarkable. And this didn't just happen in Manitoba, because if you wanted to broaden your research and look at so many grassroots parents' groups that formed during the pandemic was out of this world…. And these grassroots groups of families and parents and children and community members were just so unique….
>
> So someone who was maybe homophobic could come together with me around the queer issues, and I would come to them around the rural busing issue, and they'd be, like, "Well, how can we be together on this? And we are." And it just broke down so many [divisions]—

What Luanne describes here exemplifies the possibilities that could be—and in some cases *were*—realized during Bill 64 and the response efforts. The advocacy and opposition work created opportunities to break down political and social divisions between specific reasons for opposition and across the groups and individuals involved in these efforts; it created a shared purpose that recognized the validity of opposition that took various forms. As Kevin observed, this felt surprising in some ways but was also explicable and felt "heartwarming," empowering in a sense of building coalitionary collective opposition—even if it was about "something negative."

However, Luanne's explanation goes further to exemplify a key aspect in the type of organizing that Parents for Public Education did and, specifically, recognizes that the timing of the bill was crucial in the type of conversations and responses that were possible:

> First of all, it's always important to discuss in Manitoba that Bill 64 came—was introduced right at the beginning of a global pandemic. And when schools were in lockdown, and communities were in lockdown in schools and parents were at home with their children dealing with a once-in-a-century, for them, pandemic. Now myself, on the other hand, having gone through the AIDS epidemic, and also the SARS-1 pandemic or epidemic in Toronto, I had already experienced

dealing with public health issues and public institutions and institutional pressures regarding health. And I was very aware that we were being abused in a similar way, during the pandemic in 2020. And there's often an opportunity in those times for organizations or people in power to take advantage of the crisis, and to push through—when people are at their weakest or taking care of their life, to push through regressive political reforms. And that's what I felt was happening with Bill 64. We didn't have the time, as parents and teachers to—they thought we wouldn't have the time to respond to this… So as soon as I saw it, the legislation, after the—I guess two years before the pandemic, there had been discussions with the community about what they wanted to see in terms of educational reform [during the education review]. But a lot of what was in that consultation was not in the bill when it was prepared. In fact, the Bill was, as Naomi Klein says [in *The Shock Doctrine*], this opportunity [to] use the crisis to just rip, literally rip apart public education as quickly as possible while nobody was looking. That was my opinion. And, therefore, I, as a teacher and as a parent, made it something that I wanted to get as many people involved with as possible. We started Parents for Public Education as parents who were responding to funding for schools during the pandemic. Also, a huge concern that in our province, there had been millions, hundreds of millions of dollars provided by the federal government, and it was being pushed aside by our provincial government and not directed towards pandemic crisis funding. So our first letter to the provincial government, three of us—three mothers with children at home—sat together at our kitchen tables on Zoom, and we started our first letter about… the province not spending the allocated federal money in the fall of 2020 for schools. And that letter created a lot of traction. We got about a thousand parents responding to that particular letter to the Premier. And then, on the heels of that letter, the legislation was tabled at the end of that fall for Bill 64… We kept our group organizing—we used social media from the isolation of our homes, but connecting to each other through social media

> and on Zoom, to talk about what was pending. And when the legislation came out, the proposed legislation in March 2021, we were one of those grassroots organizations that came together, like I said, in a pandemic and at this time. I often talked to other parents about my experiences with the AIDS crisis and with SARS-1 to talk about what I started this interview with, this idea that during these times of crisis, really regressive things can happen to people. And that from my experience, I was—if they thought we could do nothing—I knew we could do something because I'd been part of movements that had taken decades or years. And they would look at me, "Why are you hopeful? You think something can change? You think this can make a difference?" And I guess, I know deep down what those connections feel like when you're... Public health. AIDS. Being queer. Being a teacher, education, parents. It just kind of all came together for me.

Luanne describes the beginning of Parents for Public Education and notes the importance of both timing and of activism in responding to it. It is worth emphasizing that when Bill 64 was first introduced, there was little hope that the legislation would not be passed; it had been introduced during a time of great social upheaval by a majority government who had a track record of passing unpopular legislation that eroded public services—meaning that they could pass Bill 64 with the majority seats they held in Manitoba's Legislative Assembly. However, as Luanne explains, her history of activism and collective organizing gave her insights into what was happening, helping to form her opinion that periods of public health crises could be used opportunistically to introduce regressive reforms, and prompting a response even if it felt, perhaps, futile. Her recognition that activism sometimes takes years or decades of work also served to coalesce those experiences in motivating her response with Parents for Public Education—in recognizing how it all came together for her ("Public health. AIDS. Being queer. Being a teacher, education, parents"). Luanne explained the connections about she saw happening with Bill 64:

> Something that—a *huge* piece of legislation—that would replace *The Public Schools Act* and dismantle that local democratic process, but also make it completely unimaginable in terms of

> even running public education—it would lead to the collapse of public schools, and therefore a reason to privatize education, charter schools, etc. So we saw this coming, and we spent all that time during the pandemic, for the next year-and-a-half, educating and using social media, emails.... And people were already online and at home anyhow and isolated. What a mistake! The government thought it would be a good thing to do—but in fact, we all had all this time on our hands… And parents were home with their kids... We just kept talking about it. People were terrified. It was so huge, what does it mean? How can I know as a parent? I tried to help as a teacher to break it down.

As a teacher, parent, and having a longer history in political organizing, Luanne recognized she was in a key position to explain what was happening and help parents and communities understand the bigger picture through an educative role. Luanne emphasized this as a key aspect of the work Parents for Public Education did—organizing panels, connecting with other groups across the country (most of whom formed in response to the pandemic), and in building greater collective alliances and providing opportunities for people to get informed. However, as she described above, there were other aspects of this work that involved the wider membership of Parents for Public Education in writing letters, posting to social media, and engaging with newsmedia through press releases and interviews.

This highlights another key feature of forming collective responses, such as Chantal described in relation to the RedForEdMB group[68]:

> I think too—implicit in what that process of [working together involves], other folks read the whole bill, and then my role was this and that. That was the strength of us as a collective, I

[68] The group itself formed out of another local educators' group and was shaped by the international Red For Ed organization, which involved working with teachers to organize support and solidarity related to public education, educators, and funding of education; one of their key initiatives entailed educators wearing red on a certain day of the week to demonstrate solidarity in support of education. During the pandemic, RedForEdMB began organizing as a way to highlight the key role of education and demonstrate solidarity among Manitoban educators; with the introduction of Bill 64, the campaign continued with a heightened focus on responding to the bill and more directly speak to the proposed legislation.

> think…. I never would have been able to do that if there weren't folks reading the bill and having all this knowledge [and sharing work together].

In explaining how RedForEdMB operated, Chantal spoke about how group efforts were a key factor in working together to understand the bill, create responses, and empower members to contribute in different ways or in ways that aligned with their interests and abilities. This more explicitly articulates how collectives internally support one another in their advocacy efforts and why they can be useful, which both Kevin and Luanne alluded to above. This internal support is a key strength that speaks to the power of collective response—and it also works to support effective collaboration and ensure individual members' roles are clear and directed, while also contributing to the wider collective's advocacy efforts in sharing information, effective messaging, and taking on educative qualities.

In contrast to the other campaigns responding to Bill 64 that I've discussed above, CM started and operated a social media account on her own that set out to provide a new take on Bill 64 every day for 64 days:

> [My social media campaign] was 64 days on Bill 64. It almost killed me. And I was elated when the government pulled [the bill] at day 59, I think it was, so that I had a handful of days left for the summer break to actually relax. It was quite the journey. It was good to do that writing piece every day. And at the same time, it was an emotionally exhausting process as well, just given the stresses of that battle with Bill 64 and the potential damage that was there if our cause wasn't victorious….
>
> It felt offensive in so many ways to get hit with Bill 64 when we did because, as teachers, we were already gut-punched by the pandemic and all of the many pandemic measures, the impact of constantly pivoting in the system, to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our students, and at the cost of ourselves along the way. And then for the government to bring Bill 64 to the table at that time was absolutely outrageous and inconsiderate… The summer is usually our sacrosanct time to rest. But I had to change that plan for myself to try to write something every day that

> was pertinent and meaningful and impactful. Some days were more impactful than others, but I feel that in any case, the summer needed to get used for voicing things that I felt others just emotionally didn't have the time to do. So I wanted to make sure that their voices were being heard….

CM highlights, again, the timing of Bill 64 and the need for response, including her observation that such engagement required emotional energy at a time when educators and the public were already exhausted by the pandemic and public health responses. Despite these factors, CM recognized the importance of engaging in this work and regarded it as a being part of a collective effort—in referring to it as "our cause" and describing her felt obligation to ensure "that their voices were being heard." In this regard, CM's efforts were linked to the broader collective resistance efforts and, as she went on to describe, drew content from numerous places in developing responses:

> I'm someone who tries to listen to their colleagues and share their voices and concerns at every opportunity, so I really tried to channel a lot of voices from various communities in what I was putting out….
>
> I had printed copies of Bill 64. They also, at the same time, had put out the Better Education Starts Today strategy… so I was very well read on that document, very attuned to any other discourse that was happening through other media sources in local news. And trying, again, to listen to colleagues and hear what folks are saying there, so I had various sources and perspectives that I was looking at with respect to Bill 64.

Overall, these quotations describe how collective organizing and response efforts involved a number of elements, including varied motivations for their involvement, how organizing developed through those motivations and facilitated collective response efforts, and often involved an educative role both within collective groups or with the wider public and other response campaigns. They also, crucially, involved opportunities to develop coalitionary responses and alliances that crossed boundaries and fostered understanding of the

different oppositional stances to Bill 64. Through these efforts, a wider collective was formed that crossed the groups and individuals of those responding to the bill and encompassed the vast array of those with a shared cause in opposing Bill 64. As alluded to above, these collective responses contributed to a feeling of empowerment in successfully opposing the bill and seeing its withdrawal.

Luanne described this feeling in a way that highlights that sense of empowerment and also emphasizes the power of activist organizing outside of traditional politics:

> And then winning it, I think, was a whole other thing. People were just—I remember saying, "We have to do this, even if we lose. Because we have to fight it, even if it passes, so that we can keep fighting for our schools. If you just let it happen—even if it passes, we'll try to get changes. We'll try to—" You know what I mean? "We need to build our communities so that our schools don't fall apart. So we can fight for you later when your school is getting closed." People were willing to do it, even though they thought we might not win. And when we won, it just gives a sense of empowerment to so many individuals outside of a traditional political election or partisan politics, which is the kind of organizing and politics that I have always been committed to.

Luanne emphasizes here that even if the opposition efforts had failed, the work of collective organizing and building strong community coalitions was useful because it would allow for further resistance and collective responses down the line. Vitally, these coalitions worked across traditional politics or partisan politics, emphasizing the goal of centring community needs and community solidarity in response.

Greg also observed the important empowerment that emerged through collective organizing and response. Although he was not part of a formal collective response, his role in postsecondary educational administration afforded him the opportunity to speak with the education commission during the review and to organize events at universities about Bill 64.

> Educators banded together—and I thought that was one of the really good things, I think, that needs to be noted. And I even noted it in one of my addresses here, was that it really moved us

> from a state of complacency to a state of real agency. It mobilized all sorts of communities, school groups, individuals, in a way that perhaps we hadn't seen for a while. Of course, the fact that the government withdrew the bill speaks to, you could say, the power of people mobilizing in that kind of grassroots way against something they just feel is ill-conceived and badly timed.
>
> I think it is an example of what is possible when people do mobilize and do speak up. And that's not to say that everyone spoke with one voice. I'm sure there were people that spoke to the commission and were quite supportive of, you know, what was being proposed….
>
> It speaks to context, it speaks to timing, for these kneejerk kinds of structural changes to the system. It speaks to, as we said, the power of democracy. You know, it actually can work. It's not just an idealized notion of what an idealized world would look like. It can actually work, but it requires people to roll up their sleeves and band together and to make their case, to actually think through the case that they're trying to make. I think there were some positives to that whole experience.

The larger observation that Bill 64 brought about an opportunity for people to move from a state of complacency to a state of agency, one that centres the bigger notion of democratic involvement, is important. Other participants alluded to this as well, recognizing that there were opportunities for public engagement to make their voices heard beyond the traditional configuration of elected politics.

One final aspect to this theme involves the unintended or unexpected outcomes of collective organizing in response to Bill 64. Participants spoke in numerous ways about the legacy and after-effects of Bill 64, which sowed distrust among educators and the public regarding the bill and the PC government's subsequent reform strategies. However, a number of participants spoke about the outcomes of collective organizing. In some cases, these were positive, in fostering public interest in discussions about education. For instance, Ellen talked about how publics were interested in continuing discussions about education and, specifically, centring the best interests of students:

> I think Bill 64 has allowed there to be some discourse about this type of thing and about just how the education reform movement is maybe not—does not always have the best interest of communities and students and teachers in mind. And I think people are fairly receptive to some of those ideas…. I've collaborated with other people since then on things…. We've been trying to keep the discussion going, and I think there is some interest in continuing to discuss that. Even outside of our social media echo chamber, I think there's people interested in wanting to make sure that education is going in a good direction, in a direction that's good for kids. So I am seeing that, and I think Bill 64 kind of drew a lot of people together in that way, which was good to see.

The continuation of these conversations is a potentially powerful benefit to come out of Bill 64 and collective organizing in response.

However, Pamela recognized the limitations of this and even noted that the opposition efforts ended up simply reinforcing the status quo:

> People are not invested, or even aware of, what a board of trustees does. And I think that that's probably some of what the government tried to capitalize on was [that] we have an entity here who is getting paid and making decisions and—but I'm not sure anybody's going to care. Turns out some people did care…. I would question the "turns out that some people did care." I think that this army… the "down with Bill 64 army" played way better. They got the right voices, they put the right signs out, they mobilized the right people. Was it a fair representation of voices? I would go with "No." It was the voices who wanted to protect the style to which we've grown accustomed. It was the people who care about *this* [the way the current education system is set up]. I don't think it was the voice of the people.
>
> *Chris: So more of a voice of the status quo than a voice of…*
>
> A voice against power, maybe a voice against oppression, maybe a voice against centralization. A voice against all of those, you know, big machine pieces. But I'm not sure that it would have been

> an entirely informed voice in terms of the pieces that maybe needed some attention. Or to be looked at.

Pamela raises an important critical question in considering what the outcomes of the collective responses to Bill 64 entailed. In many ways, the collective opposition to Bill 64 was a voice against power, oppression, centralization—but she explained it was not necessarily a voice informed by what needed attention instead. In other words, this is a common limitation of collective response efforts that emerge as a result of an opposition to or *against* a policy effort; they come to be defined by a resistance stance, which is needed. However, as Pamela explains, there is a need for an informed perspective on what needs to be advocated *for* in sustaining collective change efforts. Throughout our interview, Pamela was clear that she felt Bill 64 would not have been good for education in Manitoba, although she also explained that she was not necessarily opposed to it because certain aspects were sorely in need of attention, such as trustee accountability. In many ways, she demonstrated a sophisticated critical engagement that recognized certain pieces of the current education system were in need of serious attention and reform, which Bill 64 would not have addressed; however, given the problems with the current system and lack of accountability in certain key positions, she firmly believed that changes were needed. Unfortunately, when Bill 64 was withdrawn and the opposition victory declared, conversations about education reform and what changes were needed—particularly in the realm of educational governance and organization—mainly receded from public discourse. However, the third and final theme from the interviews surfaces this perspective in framing the need for educational change.

The need for reform

Almost all the participants spoke about the need for educational change in Manitoba. While they predominantly expressed opposition to Bill 64, they were not opposed to the idea of education reform and, in fact, largely voiced support for education system change. In the previous theme, I described how the introduction of Bill 64 unexpectedly initiated an extensive collective response, which brought education to the

forefront of people's minds and enabled public discourse about education in the province; whether people were involved in response efforts or collective organizing, working within the education system, had children in schools, or simply followed the news, the proliferation of public discourse and visibility of these conversations were almost impossible to ignore. However, as Pamela described in the final quotation in the previous theme, while the opposition efforts were effective in resisting Bill 64, they were limited in their ability to productively move the conversation forward toward needed change.

Participants recognized the need for education reform, even while they largely opposed Bill 64 on the grounds that its proposed changes had the potential to enact autocratic centralization and negatively impact public education. Participants explained that the bill sought to make such extensive structural changes that would overburden the capacity of educators to enact—or, in other words, too much change all at once. This is not to say that gradual changes over time with the same goal would have resulted in a better outcome for Manitoba's education system; rather, incremental change that slowly reformed the system into Bill 64's vision would likely have been less noticeable by the general public, had less of a galvanizing effect, and provoked less trenchant opposition. This, in fact, was something participants spoke about as a source of anxiety about future changes to the education system, that the government would slowly introduce elements of Bill 64 over time. For instance, CM observed that since the withdrawal of Bill 64, the government had already introduced a new education strategy (i.e., *Action Plan*, Manitoba Education, 2022a). As a result, participants were already thinking about changes in education and spoke about various needs for reform.

Picking up on Pamela's observation in the previous section, she further explained the linkages between the bill's purpose and how it sought to address problems in the education system:

> I believe that Bill 64 was entirely about, we need to take a system that we think is broken in terms of the way it's governed, and we want to take that back and change it and bring it back into control. And I think it was sold as "we need to fix a really broken system." And this Bill 64 would be the magical legislation that would fix a very, very broken, old, archaic system. And I

> don't disagree that there are changes that probably are required to *The Public Schools Act* or changes that are required even to governance structures. But I feel like Bill 64 came out as a seek-and-destroy and then rebuild….
>
> Let's talk about accountability in governance structure. Let's not just throw it out. Let's actually talk about what is broken in that governance and come up with some accountability measures, would be my more reasonable or rational solution to how do you address parts of something that might be broken. The funding model that we have been living with, yes, needs adjustment. *The Public Schools Act* needs to be looked at. Who holds a board of trustees accountable needs to be looked at. But the way in which we were going to just go, you know, cartoon blow-up of school boards and just say, "we're going to start building from scratch." Probably not the way to go. And I think that's my understanding of sort of what Bill 64 was about.

In Pamela's explanation, she acknowledges that changes are needed but maintains a critical stance toward the idea that a complete overhaul—one that obliterates the system and then attempts to rebuild it from scratch—was not the right approach. Rather, what was needed was a critical consideration about what was not working within the system and introducing changes to address those.

> What is the accountability piece? As a superintendent… if I don't like the directions that my board gives me, regardless of what those are or how ridiculous or asinine or even detrimental they might be, my option as a superintendent is to pack [up] and go. I don't have another option. There is no governing body who will say, "hey, board, you messed up here. That's the wrong decision." There isn't. As a superintendent anywhere in the province, if you don't like the decision of your board, you can go….
>
> I actually didn't think Bill 64 was a bad thing in terms of addressing that the governance model was broken… I did voice that I think that [they] need to address the dysfunction or address the lack of accountability [with school boards]. And if it's not busting up a board of trustees, then

> take the blinders off and take a look at what's there.... There's a pretty easy accountability—it's a low-hanging-fruit accountability piece. Bring in some legislation that talks about what happens if you have a board that is not hitting the mandate that is their job. What if they're offside? Who looks at that? Because right now, *The Public Schools Act* says that they have sort of two options: they can bust up the board and designate a trustee, or they can keep their beak out. That's the two ends. So the only option Manitoba Education has is to blow [it] up and take over...
>
> The whole notion that having a bill like Bill 64 actually flies in the face of everything we know about democracy. It's a pretty big drawback. It's that we're centralizing all of this power and we're putting it into one hand. It feels autocratic. It feels like it's not the kind of society that we'd like to live in. And I would agree: it's not a society that I want to live in where I don't have voice. It's not a society I want to live in where only certain people have a voice… That's a drawback for sure. Would I rather spend my time working with functional people and having local voice and doing good work? Yeah, absolutely. That's a positive. But then the flip side of that is then, what do you do if you have someone who is in it for the wrong reasons? And who is detrimental?... There needs to be an accountability ball there. And that, to me, was a big missing piece… Someone has to take on the task of, well, who ensures that it's working? What group, what body, what—who makes sure that the governance structure that we have, whether it's school boards or whether it's the government, *who*, other than the media? Who, other than popular vote? Who holds government accountable?.... Where is the change mechanism? What does that look like? What's the accountability? How do all of those voices get heard in terms of—? Because if not, you're going to have people disengage entirely.

Despite being critical of Bill 64, Pamela also recognized that it usefully centred problems related to educational governance. As she explained, having a centralized governmental body overseeing education would not have addressed this lack of governance accountability; it would have lessened the ability for people to have a voice

that effectively contributes to the education system. Rather, she emphasized that people's ability to have a voice that contributes to governance, as well as having clear accountability structures, would enhance educational governance.

Josh similarly highlighted the governance problem in Bill 64, observing that it was a key concern for MSBA. However, he emphasizes that this scale of change should not be unilaterally introduced, even if by democratically elected officials:

> It goes without saying that governance was among our concerns. But frankly, we weren't self-protectionists. We had always said from the start that if there was a different model or there was a different structure that would better serve the communities and students of Manitoba, that we would be open to looking at that, *as long as* there was due consultation with the communities of this province—because we've long held that because school boards reflect democratically elected foundations, it ought to be the communities themselves that would decide whether or not any changes would take place.

The expressed openness to changing governance structures in education, as Josh describes it, needs to be rooted in communities to be reflective of the democratic foundation of school board trustees as elected positions. In this sense, the collective response to Bill 64 made it clear that communities were not in favour of this type of change—and they engaged in collective organizing and response to ensure that voice was heard, as the previous theme addressed. However, the corollary in Josh's quotation links the governance structure to what would better serve communities and students.

Another aspect to the governance piece that participants emphasized was its relation to funding of education, and specifically explaining that equity and inclusion initiatives require investment and adequate funding. For instance, Josh explained the importance of two other bills that introduced education reforms as well, which were introduced at the same time as Bill 64: Bill 45, which shifted provincial teacher bargaining, and Bill 71, which repealed education property tax in favour of a consolidated revenue stream. Both passed and,

both have impacts for the funding of the education system, regardless of the withdrawal of Bill 64. Speaking specifically about how DSFM (the francomanitobaine school district) would have retained their elected trustees under Bill 64, Josh went on to highlight that autonomy of decision-making in education requires financial autonomy:

> If you have the right to manage your own affairs, that typically involves some type of fiscal autonomy: Would they [DSFM] have the fiscal autonomy necessary to actually exercise governance over their own affairs? And I have to say that with the repealment of local education property taxation under Bill 71, that became a real question as to whether or not in the longer term the DSFM would have the ability to continue to fund its own affairs with some autonomy, rather than having a very top-down centralized structure where the government would ultimately call the shots based on holding the pursestrings. So that still remains a very real concern.

During this portion of the interview, Josh was working to explain how Bill 64 exempted DSFM from the wholesale centralization of educational authority that was being implemented through the elimination of elected trustee positions and consolidation of divisions into regions and, specifically, how the bill framed franophone language protections according to the Constitution; along the way, Josh highlighted parallels between governance, centralization, and true autonomy. Ultimately, as he explains here, it is doubtful whether a board would have had the freedom to operate in ways that were responsive to the needs of communities and students if they did not have the fiscal autonomy to determine budgets, allocate funding, and direct spending in their schools. Josh's observation speaks more broadly to the central concern about financial autonomy at stake in Bill 64 and, crucially, how it plays a role in whether educators are resourced to pursue equitable educational practices.

CM linked the funding conversation back to the work of educators and what occurs in schools, noting a general lack of understanding about the work that happens and the requirement for appropriate funding:

> I go back to a lack of understanding of what it is we do in public education. And the various roles and components that are intrinsic to its success. And so, again, you look at Bill 64—but even though Bill 64 is dead and they've created a new iteration of BEST, the funding and understanding of what is needed is still absent. And as a result, we're like zombies walking through this minefield that's there and trying to make it work. But we're missing so many people that are important. And it all comes down to budget… If the government really is invested in improving educational outcomes for students, if they're unwilling to put the funding needed into the system, there's no way for us out of this….
>
> Because I sit in the aftermath of Bill 64 with a lot of pieces that were identified as areas of concern that still remain concerns in the public education system that have just been left unaddressed.

Here, CM is directly speaking to the government's rationale in introducing Bill 64—the purported "failure" of the system to support student achievement—and linking it directly to funding schools appropriately for the work needed. She emphasized that educators know what is needed[69], particularly when it comes to equity-deserving groups and those students who may require additional educational supports, such as EAL learners, those who benefit from EAs in the classroom, students with exceptional needs, the presence of student support services or behavioural supports, early literacy needs, or equity-deserving groups:

> These are groups that often lack voice, and so we were able, with that additional funding that was able to be taxed locally [through school boards' ability to set education property tax rates],

[69] CM went on to question why the voice and opinions of educators are often disregarded when it comes to education, building on her observation that the work of educators is not well understood; she speculated that a wider systemic and societal devaluation of the voices of educators might potentially be linked with the fact that the field of education predominantly employs women (roughly 70% of teachers are women and there may be a link to the societal undervaluation of women's voices), that the field is undervalued because of its role in working with children (and the associations between women's work as caring for children, and a growing misunderstanding about the work schools do in educating children), or that educators are unionized (and public regard of unions is not always favourable).

> to cover off those needs. And those are the needs right now that seem to be unaddressed, but by budgets that the division is able to put forward. And so it remains a significant concern how we are able to care for those pieces and whether we as a society really are putting value on diversity, equity, and inclusion. Inclusion only works safely if you fund it appropriately….

This highlights a key facet of this theme: the need to centre students in education reform. Participants often spoke about this and, when asked about what future reforms they would like to see, they spoke clearly about the need to centre students and reform curriculum.

For instance, Lisa spoke about the need to update curriculum to provide more meaningful inclusion, up-to-date information, and foster more inclusive school environments:

> I do think curriculum has to be broadly updated in a lot of areas. I won't venture into the core subjects like math and science and stuff… But when it comes to things like the phys ed and health curriculum, and how we think about bodies, how we think about gender, how we think about sexuality—all of that needs to be modernized. And this certainly affects queer students, but my background and passion are also in like body inclusion of all people, all sizes; and so, language and behaviours in gym class and tips from teachers to diet or use this app or whenever, all of that has to be gone. I worked very hard on a lot of that stuff. We've got teachers mostly to stop using calipers in gym class, but it doesn't mean it's not in the curriculum, right? And so being able to teach about health and bodies in a way that shames no one, includes everyone, and actually motivates people to like themselves enough that they actually maybe want to learn some ways to stay healthier in the long term… make good choices for them, for their wellbeing. But also, that includes mental health… all of that needs to be a part of it… That curriculum piece is huge, and sexual health—like how to keep yourself safe and how to make choices, consent—there's no consent conversation in the sexual health curriculum, right? That is important for all students regardless of sexual orientation. So that, to me, that's one of the most important things

> that we could do is reform and update that curriculum. But also, I do think that this inclusive thing, of genuinely making schools open inviting places [is important].

During this portion of the interview, Lisa spoke about how updated curriculum works to support all students; she went on to discuss specific overlaps of inclusion that involve students with disabilities, those with anxiety, and those experiencing poverty—emphasizing that 2SLGBTQIA+ students are represented across all those areas and experience differential impacts.

Ellen similarly highlighted that education needs to change in "a direction that's good for kids," and she framed this in reflection upon Bill 64 and its limitations around inclusion of 2SLGBTQIA+ students and content:

> [There needed to be] a bit more explicit and active support in the Bill 64 legislation. They needed to talk about what is a human diversity policy, like I said before, specifically mention what should be in there, rather than just leave it up to school divisions to figure out, because I don't think that's how you should do that. I think there needs to be some mention of censorship. And I know school divisions definitely have policies regarding that, but I think some more explicit discussion of that would be beneficial so that we aren't suddenly losing books by 2SLGBTQ+ authors and so that teachers are able to and comfortable including that in their teaching, because then they know that they're not going to get a challenge by some irate parents and have to deal with that. They might still, but they are going to be protected by this policy. I think there needs to be more focus in curriculum, especially like health curriculum is…. More curriculum renewal that is more inclusive and focused on… making sure that students are included and that their gender identity and their sexual identity is protected and celebrated… There's so much it could be and it just isn't….
>
> I would like to see that there is offered to all schools, all school divisions, just a bit more professional development connecting with some of that. I'd like to see that anybody who wants to start a GSA can easily access [one]…. I'm an English teacher, so I'm always going to say just

> making sure that students see themselves represented in books, see themselves and their families represented in like the content of what they're seeing in class and the books they're reading, that type of thing…. There's just so much that could be done… Right now, I feel like it's a little bit piecemeal of things happen when there's staff around that really think this is important and know enough to do something. But there needs to be some more on high support for that in terms of just making sure there's training and professional development… to allow that type of thing to happen. I know they're doing like curriculum reforms right now, so it'd be great to see curriculum reforms that actually are inclusive.

Ellen touched on a number of aspects here that bridge policy interventions and professional development and curricular reforms, advocating for policy changes that strengthen existing policy provisions and provide more clarity regarding support, heading off censorship and parent objections, and strengthening curriculum and PD to support educators. Ellen also referred to the multiple submissions to the education review commission, which were part of the focus of her thesis, and noted that they included relevant recommendations about reform and a vision for education that could usefully enacted.

Similarly, Luanne emphasized the urgent need for curricular reform. During this portion of the interview, we spoke about the climate crisis and the rapidly changing needs of students, both in terms of responding to the environmental crisis but also the changing nature of information and global economies.

> [You] ask what future education reforms are needed, and our government's going to go into a curriculum reform—whether it's NDP or the Conservatives, it's going to happen. And I don't trust either, by the way, to do a good job of it. Because curriculum reform needs to—. There are different times in history where curriculum goes through a huge change. So we've got in the 1900s, everybody can go to school up to grade six, and curriculum is developed so everybody can read and write. So it goes from only the elite to… everybody's going to have access to reading and writing and knowledge. And then it's [reforms supporting high school education for

> everyone]. So now we're going into this period of time where, unless you have complete access to information, knowledge-based technology, economy—and unless students are able to address AI technology and climate change, and basically, everything [that is emerging as] essential to their lives and they're being... We need a curriculum right away that meets their needs, meets the needs—children's needs… It has to be empowering, it has to be critical thinking. It cannot be a list of things on a page… What do you need to know? What are you concerned about? How can I, as a teacher or as a school, be there to give you the power that you need? Children, teenagers, and youth. And it just has to be reformed so much. And that means gender identity, racism, poverty, Indigenous education—everything that is essential to the survival and continuation of our community, our world, our global community. And our students are all online and they have access to everything globally, so we need it to be global—100%—curriculum… So curriculum reform is, like, radical, radical. And this is a time, like we've had other times of not just minor but radical curriculum reform. And this is it.

What Luanne articulates is that education needs to change in drastic ways to respond to the current needs of students. As Luanne observed, education is at a critical point where curriculum needs to better attend to what students are facing in the world and be better prepared for their futures—and this has to occur through learning that is empowering and attends to rapidly changing global conditions. She puts forward the argument that at certain periods, education has taken drastic measures to adapt to social and economic conditions to expand access to education; analogously, the need for "radical curriculum reform" now must attend similarly to adapt to socioeconomic conditions to ensure students are receiving equitable access to the information and education they require.

To conclude this theme, I want to introduce a quotation from Pamela that speaks to the role of policy and legislation in meeting the needs of students. While the above quotations speak to different aspects of reform—whether governance, funding-related, curricular, or student needs—they offer points of connection to

the role of education policy and legislation. Pamela, in responding to the question of what future education reforms might involve for 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects, took a more "philosophical" approach (her language):

> If we're talking about educational reform, I think the mindset of data-informed classroom profiles is the way to relinquish the learning back to the kids. They have to be involved in their own learning, and what they need, and what they can and can't do. And we as teachers are going to be the facilitators of that for them and potentially their families. Now, that's not conventional, traditional kids-in-rows teaching…. So if we're talking about education—what are the pieces that we need for that? Probably more resources, probably more teaching and learning, probably more and more and more awareness about all of the individuals and groups ….
>
> I don't know how you put that kind of reform or that kind of dream into legislation. And maybe that's the disconnect, is that the way in which we operate and the way in which we operationalize and the way in which we care for kids and teach kids isn't legislatable.

In describing how to centre students in education, Pamela explains the idea of creating avenues for teachers to "relinquish learning back to the kids" in ways that centre their own involvement and needs. However, she questions more centrally how far legislation can go in operationalizing that approach. In a sense, the larger question, underwritten by her belief that educators must be attentive to student needs, is about how to legislate care for students and teach them responsively—concluding that perhaps this is not possible or, perhaps, simply not the role of educational policy.

Overall, the final theme emerging from participant interviews relates to support for the notion of education reform, even while following on the heels of the experience with Bill 64, which did not represent the kinds of changes participants thought would improve education. Participants supported the idea of education reform, emphasizing that reform needed to attend to actual challenges or problems in the current system, including governance accountability and stable, adequate funding, as well as the need to centre student needs

and voice, including curricular reform and empowering students' role in their learning. Participants' clear support for educational change needs to be held, for the purposes of this research, alongside a consideration of what education policy is able to accomplish, as Pamela observed in the previous quotation.

Summary

At the beginning of the interview results section, I described participants' overarching understandings of Bill 64. Overall, participants explained the bill as being focused on issues of governance and as a large-scale attempt to re-organize educational governance and organizational features of the education system; they consistently identified that the bill was an attempt to centralize educational authority and increase control of the education system, which involved control over funding, enhanced accountability measures for educators and students, and rationalization of the need for reform based on poor student outcomes and overspending. Throughout the interviews, these overarching understandings resurfaced repeatedly in connection with the specific themes I explained in this results section. Regarding the theme of the limitations of 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion in Bill 64, participants recognized that 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects had limited representation through the "respect for human diversity policy" and GSA provisions; however, 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects were also implicitly referenced through the introduction of the "potentially sensitive content" clause, which would have moved a piece of the curriculum framework from 2000 into legislation, establishing a potential policy contradiction. Participants recognized the implications of governance changes for 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects as well, explaining that the creation of parent-led SCCs would introduce a point of friction and potentially lend legitimacy to those expressing anti-2SLGBTQIA+ sentiment. In terms of the collective organizing and response theme, participants communicated various motivations for getting involved and described having a responsibility to respond to the bill, which they recognized as detrimental to public education. Further to that, engaging in public discourse regarding the bill often involved an educative role and resulted in feelings of empowerment and solidarity with a broader "collective" formed by those opposed to Bill 64. Importantly, these collective organizing efforts produced opportunities for participants to forge alliances and coalitionary movements across difference and

across political partisanship, allowing collective responses to develop solidarity through shared understandings of collective resistance and common cause. Despite the challenging period surrounding Bill 64, as well as the surrounding education review and other legislation working to reform education in regressive ways, participants expressed not only support for the need for educational change but specific recommendations about what areas of reform were needed.

In describing the results of the interviews, one of my main objectives was to centre the voices of participants and allow them, as much as possible, to stand on their own and speak in their own voices. I have kept my commentary and interpretation to a minimum, as much as possible, and aimed to direct my comments toward clarifying or summarizing their points and perspectives, explaining the context in which comments were made, or demonstrating connections between the thematic areas, with larger trends in the data, and to my earlier analyses of the policyscape and text of Bill 64. My strategy in this was to allow their perspectives and readings of the bill, as well as their motivations and understandings about education and Bill 64, to ground these results. In coding the interviews and "imposing" thematic categories on the data, I have already added my own interpretive lens to the results. I return to these in the final chapter in my synthesis of the findings and conclusion.

For now, I would emphasize that these themes broadly align with and expand upon the results of the policyscape and the Bill 64 critical policy discourse analysis. They recognized the significant limitations in the bill itself and described various ways that they expressed opposition to them and their motivations for doing so. The larger question emerging from the data is what role legislation and education policy has in educational change. As I describe earlier in this thesis, Bill 64 represents a large-scale education reform effort that took aim at organizational and structural aspects of educational governance; however, these organizational changes were not value neutral when it came to 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects or for other marginalized groups within education. As participants explained, by neglecting to take equity into account in the reform effort, systemic inequity persisted and even introduced new avenues for inequity to take root—whether in terms of complicating governance

structures, limiting who could participate in educational governance, undercutting stable funding required to attend to student needs, or neglecting to consider how proposed changes would impact certain equity-deserving groups. Some participants felt these were intentional features of Bill 64, which, alongside the policy discourse analysis in Chapter 5, aligns with my own analysis of the legislation. The key question, as we turn to the final discussion and conclusion, is what role, then, education policy can play in supporting 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects?

CHAPTER 7: Synthesis of Findings and Conclusion

> Somewhat ironic, Chris, is that the model that [Bill 64] would have entailed was what this province had in 1871, when every school had its own school board independent of any type of divisional structure that would have encompassed multiple schools under one administrative unit. So rather than modernizing education, it actually antiquated education.
>
> —*Josh (interview participant)*

I open this concluding chapter with a quotation that stuck with me from the interviews. At the time, I registered the comment as a rhetorical comparison meant to highlight the irony of the naming of Bill 64, *The Education Modernization Act*. Other interview participants provided such commentary—noting its similarity to the naming of the 2002 amendment that consolidated school divisions, or explaining that the bill was "modern" (aligned with modernism) in its paradigmatic orientation toward education, treatment of students, reliance on objective measures, and reinforcement of colonialism. However, as I worked through my analysis of the results, I realized that Josh's comment about Bill 64 antiquating education was aptly drawing on policy genealogies in the province and observing some profound similarities. As he explains in the quote, the 1871 education system had a consolidated administrative unit with each school having its own independent board; the administrative unit contained two departments, one for Protestant denominational schooling (predominantly in English) and one for Catholic schooling (predominantly in French). This set the stage for the Manitoba Schools Question—or to put it more overtly, this allowed for the central administrative unit to unilaterally decide to defund Catholic schools and virtually eliminate schools using French when the demography of the province's population changed to a majority of Protestant, English speakers. The centralization of that authority enabled the administrative authority to unilaterally marginalize and exclude Catholic education and the French language. As I described earlier on this topic, the obfuscation of the true motivations or intentions of this decision were somewhat blurred by the

conflation of Catholic religion with francophone populations, which meant they could justify the decision based on a funding decision that removed public funds from Catholic schools, even while their motivations were likely just as motivated by a desire to marginalize francophone people. The centralized authority at the time allowed for these changes with little recourse from the local school boards, whose main responsibility was for the administration of the single schools or their immediate localities.

In many ways, Bill 64 would have mirrored this arrangement. The centralization of educational administration under the Provincial Education Authority (PEA) for the majority of the province, alongside the retention of District scolaire franco-manitobaine (DSFM) and its elected trustees, would have constituted essentially two parallel systems—although DSFM would have fallen under the education authority's direction in many ways and their funding allocations would have been similarly administered, limiting their autonomy. Even though the bill reinforced language supporting Constitutional French-language schooling, the organization of governance structures inherently limited autonomy in that regard. With the creation of School Community Councils (SCCs) composed of parents/guardians and the Provincial Advisory Council (PAC) made up of 15 regional representatives of SCC executives elected to that council, the role of parents was installed in the governance structures of the education system; even while their input was relegated to an advisory capacity, the opportunities for their input into what happens in schools and how was greatly expanded. This structure reinforced a proliferation of accountability in schools, to which principals and teachers would be immediately answerable, while also installing those same voices at the upper level of governance in the PAC and with the appointment of two PAC members to the PEA; however, it also limited those voices at the local level of SCCs and DSFM's trustees to having an advisory capacity with principals, with regional directors, and through the PAC. Participants and public response to the bill recognized the threat of centralized authority and control of education in this re-organized governance, its reduction of local decision-making and democratic voice in the process of appointments to the PEA Board, and the potentially autocratic governance that would result. Even while it provided a greatly expanded platform for (certain) voices in the education system, control of the system

was increasingly localized in the PEA and with the Minister of Education—opening up the possibilities for unilateral decisions that could undermine education at the local level, through closures of rural schools, or eliminate programs or provisions for segments of the population, as had occurred during the Manitoba Schools Question. In this, I began to see the clear operation of policy discourses reiterating themselves in education policy and forming policy lineages that connected back to early formulations of the education system in Manitoba—the past policy context informing the present.

However, Bill 64 was obviously not identical to the 1871 system. The introduction of accountability language that directed its efforts at regulating educators through economic measures and student performance through test scores, the simultaneous responsibilization of students for their performance and paternalizing treatment of them as "the child," its economic justifications for changes that relied on return-on-investment logics, and its retention of "diversity" and "inclusion" language that worked to homogenize the student body and flatten them into neutral subjects within education—obviously diverse, obviously included, but ultimately irrelevant because those diversities were a distraction from the real business of school in learning the core subject matter that gets measured on standardized tests. Government messaging at the time, for example, noted that while poverty was a concern, it was not an excuse for low test scores. In this logic, the government laid bare their basic disregard for the impacts of social inequity; social inequalities and difference from the dominant norm were not "valid" excuses for how students performed, for what happened in schools, or even as a way for educators to attend to the needs of students or the community. In 1871, education was installed as part of Manitoba's constitution and enlisted in Canada's colonial nation-building effort. In subsequent years, as demographics shifted in the province, there was a heightened regard for nation-building that led to the belief that there was a need for a hegemonic notion of citizenship, which persisted through educational decision-making in the following years—evidenced also at the federal level through residential schooling and assimilationist efforts to eradicate Indigenous ways of being and knowing, remove knowledge about language, and interrupt kinship and communal identity. Bill 64 similarly seemed to regard education as a path toward the

regulation of the population, as governmentality suggests; however, rather than seeing this regulation in the service of the nation or citizenship, the bill sought to reinforce the idea that students are future economic actors, that their performance was tied to their ability to perform in the workplace, and the notion that education should be instrumentalized in service to the economy. There was little regard for recognizing the diversity of students, social inequities, or how those impact learning, except to retain provisions that acknowledged difference in order to dismiss it; instead, there was a reinforcement of a homogenous student and reinforcement of economic interlocks that enlisted students as subjects of learning, of future employment, and in dominant social norms (Janzen & Heringer, 2023).

In this concluding chapter, I present the findings from this research. First, I consolidate the results to answer my research questions; these are the central findings of my research. Then I offer a synthesis of these findings that discuss their relevance and identify a number of key insights produced from the research to speak to what my analyses contribute to education policy, how queer perspectives can enhance education policy and research, and what possibilities exist for education policy to support 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects. Crucially, as I argued earlier, discourses about education and reform are not neutral, particularly when they are silent, and without explicit regard for social inequities and concrete provisions to address inequality in ways that lead to more just educational outcomes, education policy is apt to reinforce inequities, oppress 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects by silencing them or seeking to assimilate them, or exert normativizing pressure to conform to approximations of cis-heteronormativity and socially privileged positions. Finally, I outline some limitations of this research and suggest future directions for research in this area.

Answering the research questions

In the preceding chapters, I have methodically laid out the pieces of my research by reporting the results of my investigation, and here I work to assemble them to answer my research questions and outline several key insights. There were three activities in data collection—the policyscape and policy genealogy of education in the

province and of Bill 64 particularly; a critical policy discourse analysis of the bill, which surfaced its policy discourses and established connections to the wider policyscape context; and interviews with key informants who spoke to their understandings of Bill 64, their efforts in public response to it, and their perspectives related to 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects. Results from these data act as facets through which to consider Bill 64 and the education reform effort in Manitoba, enabling different insights to refract and interact in seeing the bigger picture.

In consolidating these results and presenting the findings of this research, I set out to answer my research questions and identify how Bill 64 shaped education in the province, produced a conception of education and its role, provoked public discourse that contested how education is conceptualized, and worked to consign 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects to marginalized, peripheral positions through their assimilation into an untransformed educational neutrality aligned with dominant norms. Bill 64 constructs the "solution" to the policy problem of public education in Manitoba, and considering its text and critical reception provides an avenue to think through how education reform positions the problem of education. In answering my research question, I proceed in reverse order, responding first to my third research question regarding how Bill 64 and the related education reform efforts worked to discursively position 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects, then to my second research question about how the reform effort shaped educational contexts in the province, and finally to my first research question regarding how Bill 64 conceptualized education. Placing 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects first positions them in a central position in the findings, as I described in Chapter 1, reflecting a minor effort to queer the presentation of findings and bring the marginal to the forefront; through this, I build a response that places 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects at the centre and follows the outward ripples to discuss the policy context and how education itself is conceived.

Research question 3: How did Bill 64 and the broader education reform effort discursively position 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects (students and content)?

As I explained in my introduction of the research questions in Chapter 1, this question most directly focused on 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects in Bill 64 and set out to understand how they were constituted as problems, discursively positioned in the bill and broader reform effort, and what that representation produced. While there were locations in which 2SLGBTQIA+ were explicitly included, there were far more instances in which they were excluded, invisibilized, and silenced. These trends reflect findings from the broader research literature related to the power of historical educational silence on 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects and its current and persistent legacy (e.g., Campbell et al., 2021; DePalma & Atkinson, 2006; Griffin & Ouellett, 2003; Mayberry, 2006; Quinlivan & Town, 1999; Taylor, 2008; Taylor et al., 2015; Taylor et al., 2016). Making sense of these omissions is part of the purpose here and, in fact, speaks to the larger trends to marginalize social inequity and neglect the redressment of systemic oppressions in the bill. Considering how Bill 64 discursively constituted 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects also allows some insight into what educational interventions supportive of 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects were made possible. Centrally, this question seeks to understand the policy problematizations and discursive positioning of 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects in Bill 64 and the wider reform effort. A problematization approach centrally ask what the policy problem is represented to be (Bacchi, 1999, 2009; Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016), and it seeks to interrogate the implicit construction of the policy problem. In centering 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects in the investigation, I aimed to understand why policy matters for equity considerations, how it enables or limits practices, and how it constitutes 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects according to certain logics.

There was limited representation of 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects in Bill 64 and reform discourses. They were referenced directly in one location in the bill—section 138, related to anti-bullying measures, the development of a respect for human diversity policy at the PEA level, and the guarantee of students' ability to form a GSA student club—and they were discursively inferred through the introduction of the "potentially sensitive content" clause—section 144, related to the delivery of sensitive content in health and sexual health curricula, and its requirement that parents be informed and have the right to remove students from class when issues related to human sexuality, substance use, and abuse prevention and personal safety are part of instructional materials

(particularly if there is “a conflict between the content and the parent or child’s religious, cultural or family values”). The implicit reference to 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects here constructs them as potentially sensitive and deservedly outside the scope of appropriate learning material, which is exclusionary, works to silence material related to 2SLGBTQIA+ students, and conflates any discussion of human sexuality with substance use and abuse prevention; notably, these other areas disproportionately impact 2SLGBTQIA+ people and marginalized persons in general, and receiving instruction in these areas works to address biases, hostilities, derision, and violent treatment directed at women, non-binary, trans, racialized, and queer people among the wider student population. This is an important social intervention to address social and systemic oppressions—which was also noted in participant interviews. Comprehensive sexual health education, to be clear, benefits marginalized people. Allowing student exclusions from sexual health content, either through policy directives to educators to avoid certain topics or provisioning options for students to be removed from classroom instruction on the topic, disproportionately and negatively impacts socially marginalized students by allowing certain students to be exempt from comprehensive content related to healthy sexualities, diverse gender identities and sexualities, and the prevention of sexual violence.

The retention of the anti-bullying provisions and their explicit mention of sexual orientation and gender identity as protected characteristics in schools and through the respect for human diversity policies—while a positive inclusion that carried over in Bill 64 from the existing legislation—reinforced understandings of 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects being at-risk of victimization (as Loutzenheiser, 2015, observed in relation to other policies). Not only are 2SLGBTQIA+ students framed as the locus of the problem—according to the logic of listing protected characteristics, it is the listing of differences included in the policy that identifies the reasons they are targeted—but they are also relegated to a position in which their relevance is only a concern for the negative outcomes they experience. Retaining this provision situates 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects in relation to safety. While it is a positive and needed provision in the legislation, it also limits the visibility of 2SLGBTQIA+ students primarily to their relationship to risk and victimization narratives. However, this provision goes further: by retaining the

provision from the previous legislation and carrying it forward unchanged, it discursively suggests that the problem has been sufficiently addressed, as though to assure 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects that the negative outcomes have been taken care of; their "excuse" for claiming they have experienced poor climates, discrimination, or differential harassment and exclusion have been sufficiently addressed by an anti-discrimination provision. By virtue of its being the sole location in which they are explicitly mentioned, 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects are positioned solely in terms of these negative, at-risk outcomes. The problem, as it were, is only that they are harassed and discriminated against, and the legislation has "fixed" that problem by making it clear that they shouldn't be. In these ways, it exerts a normativizing pressure, or constitutes a conformist impulse, to name difference and attempt to enlist it within a neutral homogenous subject position that may be nominally diverse but substantively the same; ultimately, this strategy overlooks how the norm itself constitutes the problem. In overlooking other ways that 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects are treated, marginalized, silenced, or excluded, the bill also neglects recognition of systemic oppressions and their interlocking, reinforcing inequities. It further neglects the possibility that other interventions might be useful in addressing harmful, biased, or misinformed understandings about 2SLGBTQIA+ people that lead to their being targeted, such as educative ones that incorporate 2SLGBTQIA+ content into the curriculum or provide educators with needed assurances that these inclusions are supported in their practice. Rather, 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects are relegated to peripheral positions outside of regular classroom activities or valid areas of learning, their identities and lived realities treated as irrelevant to their learning (or "performance" of their learning the core testable material), outside content that can properly be taught in classrooms, and even beyond what valid objectives related to education ought rightly include (i.e., social equity is not considered a valid learning objective, nor is student mental health and wellbeing).

The potentially sensitive content clause provides useful insights to consider this further. As I noted, even though 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects were not explicitly named as potentially sensitive content, they are inferred as such through the language of the bill and by historical discourses related to sexualized content and the previous

curricular provision upon which this clause was based. As such, they are excluded by virtue of their unnameability, relegated to an invisible status—obviously included in this clause but too sensitive even to name, not least because that would constitute a violation of human rights protections. Rather, 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects are placed within their (historically) proper position in the health curriculum—inherently sexualized beings, sensitive and potentially offensive to religious or cultural sensibilities, opt-outable content. Moving the guideline from the (current) curriculum framework for health education, which employs "potentially sensitive content" language and makes discursive connections to 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects, Bill 64 gave this provision the force of law. This emphasizes the citationality and historical development of policy contexts, their reification and reiteration of problem constructions, and it reinforces the validity of an outdated curricular document. It undermines inclusion not only in sexual health and health education by actively working to silence and exclude it—implying that the proper place for 2SLGBTQIA+ content is outside the classroom (just like GSAs) and that parents have a right to object to their inclusion in classrooms. This confers parental authority over possible encounters with 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects, ensuring they retain decision-making authority about when and whether it happens—empowered still further by the bill's introduction of governance roles for parents to have a valid platform to raise their objections. The discursive implications of parental authority, as participants noted and as emerged throughout the results, is that there is an implied absoluteness to this authority—through the primacy of parents in the bill, to the infantilization of students as "the child," through the right of parents to remove students from certain kinds of content—which has the potential to spill out into other areas of the classroom and other curricular areas. Participants noted this, as did MLA Asagwara, in this clause's interpretation, its potential to creep into other subject areas or extend to discussions about other issues, and ultimately the way it works to sow uncertainty among educators about what might be interpreted as "sensitive content"—what subjects it applies to, what or who are constituted as sensitive content, and whether determinations of sensitivity reside solely with parents.

Here, it is the *potentiality* language that matters. Discursively, it suggests a degree of inevitability—some people *will* find this to be offensive—and it pre-loads reception to that content—people *do* have a right to

exclude it. *Potentiality* also leaves it open to interpreting what constitutes something as "sensitive"; is it what a parent deems offensive? Is it the treatment or context of that content? Is it that it presents a different view from my own, or stands in conflict with my "traditional" value system or religious/cultural values? In this policy construction, it is all of those factors that are *potentially* valid interpretations and, therefore, the clause had the potential to pervade curriculum and school cultures. Bill 64's reinforcement of the primacy of parents, appearing first in the list of educational partners (before even students or educators), emphasizes a paternalistic relation between parents/guardians and their child; the child belongs to the parent and is rightly under their sole discretion to educate or not. These attitudes disproportionately impact 2SLGBTQIA+ youth, pitting parents/guardians against the best interests of 2SLGBTQIA+ children. However, it further reinforced the primacy of parents by installing them in advisory capacities through SCCs and the PAC, amplifying their ability to enact "parental rights" objections and even challenge educators' ability to act in ways to support 2SLGBTQIA+ students. This was further reinforced through the provision of petitions that would introduce religious instruction and religious exercises in schools (s. 133 and s. 134), further reinforcing that religious content took primacy over 2SLGBTQIA+ content. These measures inhibit the ability of 2SLGBTQIA+ youth to have agency to make decisions about their own identities, as well as constituting governance structures that empower anti-2SLGBTQIA+ sentiments to influence the direction of schools. Even when 2SLGBTQIA+ youth have affirming and supportive parents, these advisory structures would enable a platform for other parents to raise anti-2SLGBTQIA+ concerns about them, playing into social narratives about the threat of 2SLGBTQIA+ people (which, in the contemporary moment, increasingly and disproportionately are raised against trans and gender nonconforming students). These SCCs, it is worth noting again, would have had opportunities to advise principals on hiring, evaluations, spending, curriculum, and student achievement—giving SCCs access to information and a platform to advocate concerns that may lack deeper insight into inclusive education practices or educators' professional practice. With the heightening of accountability measures that introduced "competency" language

into reasons for complaints against teachers, this opened up possibilities for educators to be challenged on the grounds of their competency in including 2SLGBTQIA+ content (and for this to be considered "valid").

Through these policy discourses, 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects are refused the ability to be truly queer—in exceeding definitions, in resisting norms—and enlisted as subjects in education that is marked by Bill 64's broader discourses about who the student is positioned to be and what the aim of education is. In short, 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects are included (read: "inclusion") as are all subjects (read: "diversity") in an educational project that aims to treat the student as a neutral subject whose purpose is to perform their achievement and who is constructed in a homogenous position (as Janzen & Heringer, 2023, argue). Effectively, this removes the ability to level any critique on the grounds of equity, as it is subsumed within the homogenized student body. Overall, both content and students are enlisted in conformist notions of schooling. The broader social discourses regarding 2SLGBTQIA+ people—such as the debates over parental rights, inclusion of 2SLGBTQIA+ content in schools, book challenges—emphasize clearly that 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects are being contested, and as has occurred historically, when explicit protections and inclusion of 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects are absent or omitted, that silence is interpreted along the convention of silence, reinforcing the status quo and dominant norms regarding sexuality and gender that invisibilize 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects. In many ways, this reflects critiques of inclusive education and its inadvertent conformist outcomes of working to incorporate 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects into untransformed school cultures, which still perpetuate norms regarding sexuality and gender (e.g., heteronormativity, cissexism, gender binary). The effect is that 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects are enlisted along the lines of dominant norms (e.g., homonormativity), which marginally expand who is recognized as included but ultimately reinforces the status quo and other forms of oppression.

Research question 2: How did Bill 64's education reform shape Manitoba's education policy context?

This question focuses primarily on understanding the broader context of education reform and seeks to understand how Bill 64 and public response articulated and contested the values, priorities, and approaches to the "problem" of education. In considering how 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects were discursively constructed as the

problem—2SLGBTQIA+ people are at risk of harassment, so they receive bullying protections that include them in the homogenously diverse student body, and 2SLGBTQIA+ content is sensitive, so it is properly relegated to its optional position in favour of the proper business of learning—it is important to track how the larger logics of reform played out through Bill 64 and the policy contexts in Manitoba.

Messaging about Bill 64 positioned the bill as responding to the problem of high spending and low student performance, as the government continually articulated it. The government further justified the bill through its invocation of the Education Review Commission's recommendations report and explained that the BEST strategy detailed how changes would be implemented. Public responses to this rationale and the questions and concerns raised as to how these reforms would benefit education were largely dismissed or diminished by government at the time. The government accused MTS of embarking on a "misinformation campaign" and characterized opposition to the bill as being the concerns of a "vocal minority" to diminish opposition. In response, they reiterated the same tired answers and rationales for what 64 would accomplish—save money and increase accountability measures to ensure higher levels of student achievement. However, these responses neglected to answer questions about how that would happen and often took evasive strategies that directed people look to the BEST strategy. However, public opposition seized on the characterization of their concerns being those of a "vocal minority" to draw attention to the extensive collective organizing and public responses, reinforcing the coalitionary quality of the opposition. Even though it was not a coordinated effort, collective opposition was citational, drew support from parallel campaigns, and worked to amplify common critiques and shared concerns about the bill. One notable feature during these collective opposition efforts was the capacity to build common cause across difference (as, for example, Luanne noted in their organizing with PPE about being able to share concerns about queer implications of the bill with rural citizens whose concerns were about the viability of local communities, and vice versa). While the most vociferous concerns predominantly centred on governance features like the elimination of elected school boards, the centralization of authority and control over education, and funding conversations, the overall character of the opposition was rooted in resistance to an

attempted heightening of regulation of the population, which we can observe through the lens of governmentality. That is, the governmental rationale for pursuing its reform of education was, according to public response, unconvincing and was perceived as an overreach of government policy: Bill 64 was not perceived as a viable "solution" to the policy problem the government articulated, nor was it considered to be a policy initiative that would provide benefit to the education system, the broader public, or students or educators.

Public opposition, in response, sought to understand what the impacts of the bill would be and how the proposed changes would impact the education system—and they did so in ways that dug deep into the bill, considered what the provisions would actually entail, and weighed the government's past and current policy agenda in their critical reception. Ultimately, many recognized the government's previous actions and policy decisions as erosions of public services and social welfare provisions, and they foregrounded these concerns in their response to Bill 64 by reinforcing the importance of the notion of the *public* in the education system. This notion of the public (in public schooling) could be articulated along the lines of universal access, government funding, equality of opportunity, decision-making through public political processes, and a regard for public interest (Wallin et al., 2021)—and it is worth emphasizing the ways these features reinforce notions of social equity, which I suggest was part of the reason why public discourse included critiques of the bill's socially regressive qualities and interview participants were able to discuss equity in intersectional ways. In short, public response to Bill 64 took the government's rationale into its consideration of the bill and responded on similar grounds (to critique the elimination of elected trustees, question the austerity logic of the bill and representational potential in the proposed governance structure, and object to the characterization of Manitoba's education system as "failing")—and then pushed the conversation further to discuss implications for social equity. Governmental actions and political decisions regarding Bill 64 were not considered in isolation; as described in the policyscape narrative of Bill 64 above (see Chapter 4), the government's previous policy decisions and actions informed people's interpretation of Bill 64 and how they perceived its intentions, its

rationality; people were reading the policyscape, as it were, and actively used their understanding of it to critique the government's proposed policy action.

In many ways, Bill 64 aligned with a neoliberal agenda (e.g., Henderson, 2021; Janzen & Heringer, 2023; Moore & Janzen, 2021; McCracken & Rogers, 2021), but it went beyond this. As described in the policyscape, Bill 64 was not a singular political action but imbricated with previous decisions, agendas, and priorities—not just in terms of the policy actions of the government but also in terms of their responses to events, such as the pandemic and discovery of unmarked graves at former residential school sites. The government's policy agendas were further evidenced during the following election, in which the PCs took up key policy platforms to support parental rights in schools and opposed searching the landfill, demonstrating that their motivations were not purely economic in orientation but linked to ideological motivations that pandered to social conservatives and opposed social equity. As Moore (2025) argues, parental rights movements are being used to "rationalize, legitimize, and mobilize privatization *of* and *in* public education" (p. 13) by politicizing certain content as ideological and thereby justifying the need for school choice and censorship of public school curriculum (see also Ganshorn, 2025, regarding these connections in Alberta's education system). It is not surprising that anti-2SLGBTQIA+ sentiment in the form of parental rights and protecting children interlock with privatization or with other forms of social inequity or oppressive ideologies. Further, Bees (2025) and Enoch (2025) observe that these strategies are being extended into school board trustee elections, where parental rights advocates are increasingly running for board positions to influence divisional policymaking related to parental rights and removing 2SLGBTQIA+ protections, creating conflict and dysfunction at the level of educational governance. These are not new strategies for anti-2SLGBTQIA+ initiatives, nor is it incidental that they lead into educational governance, policymaking, and decision-making.

With Bill 64, there was a larger political messaging that public response interpreted in the reform effort that recognized governmental actions were being taken to undermine democratic institutions and limit educational equity (e.g., through the elimination of elected trustees, the cracking of privatization possibilities in

education, the heightened control and centralization of education authority). While the bill reinforced a focus on the individual student in its emphasis on student performance and instrumentalization of education for future economic interests of students, the bill neglected to attend to the actual circumstances of individuals, social inequities, or seeking to address the impacts of social marganialization beyond naming "diversity" as being included in the existing system. This assimilationist impulse is a familiar strategy and, in Bill 64, it was enacted in ways that obfuscated difference to reify the system itself, consolidate power, and reinforce systemic inequities that facilitated current neoliberal trajectories of upward redistribution (Duggan, 2003). The enforcement of a homogenous conception of the student exerted normativizing pressures on 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects in working to conceal difference and enlist them normatively in the education system. In this, there is a subtle, insidious, concealed coercion to encourage 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects to align with the dominant and assimilate in ways that make difference unnoticeable, massage "diversity" into close approximations of dominant ways of being and knowing, and grant power and privilege along the lines of conforming performance and merit in benefiting from it (i.e., reward conformity, for those who can closely approximate it within dominant, oppressive institutions).

Throughout Bill 64, systemic oppressions were baked in, particularly when "neutral" initiatives were addressed or reinforced, such as in reliance on standardized testing, because of the ways that the status quo of the system treated them as foundational and cited it as the basis for evidence of its success. In many ways, the bill flattened diversity and inclusion where it named it in order to neutralize it; the fact of a diverse student body was precisely that it was the same in its subjection to discourses of performance, student achievement, ability to conform. In this, there was a notable move toward the privileging of those who already benefit from the system because the key change is that nothing substantively changed. The bill moves away from a broad understanding about who is included in public education—who is recognized, constituted, represented, named—and how they may be supported—by including supports to address and counter oppression, discrimination, marginalization. Structural patterns of discrimination and oppression are, in short, left unaddressed and actively suppressed in

favour of a normative, homogenous system precisely because no effort was made to name oppressive features of the system, differential experiences in education, or how to redress them.

In many ways, these trends align with the research literature, particularly in the ways that Bill 64 worked to silence and reinforce marginalization of 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects and those experiencing social inequities (e.g., DePalma & Atkinson, 2006; Griffin & Ouellett, 2003; Mayberry, 2006; Quinlivan & Town, 1999; Taylor, 2008). Despite the inclusion of the GSA provision and respect for human diversity policies, the bill exerted pressure to remove 2SLGBTQIA+ content through its introduction of the potentially sensitive content clause. This further reinforced constructions of 2SLGBTQIA+ students as inherently at risk of victimization but, once "protected," they required no further supports and their identities were largely irrelevant to the business of learning. The organizational changes and governance administration that Bill 64 introduced reinforced these provisions by centralizing educational decision-making in the PEA and empowering parental voices at the local level with SCCs; these governance changes would have had differential impacts on 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects, as well as for those experiencing poverty, identified as Indigenous, or experienced racialization (e.g., Bees, 2022; Braul, 2021), and perpetuated inequities in student achievement along lines of students who are marginalized or multiply marginalized. In fact, Bill 64 neglected to enhance or forward any initiatives regarding equity and, instead, emphasized that its main concern was for public spending and attending to (what they characterized as) poor student performance. However, these issues are *precisely* issues of equity and, as public response detailed, they cannot and should not be separated. Providing equitable and adequate funding to meet the needs of students, particularly in cases where students require additional supports, are the keys to supporting students' success. The governmental obsession with metrics associated with outcomes—balanced scorecard reporting of funding, standardized test scores—were drawn along lines that constructed prioritization of austerity and objectivity without regard for context or the material realities of student populations, which led government actors to policy decisions that constructed the problem of education along the lines of spending and measuring success. These were misleading and worked to obfuscate the real issue, divert attention to supposed inputs and outcomes

(along single-axes of measuring funding as input and test scores as output), and prioritize private interests that open avenues to undermine public education, reinforce educational inequities, and introduce privatization measures.

In a massive outpouring of passionate opposition to the bill, public campaigns opposing the bill from across the political spectrum led to the government withdrawing the bill. In this, public discourse represented a significant show of support for public education, which necessitated not only commitment to the public education system, including its elected board trustees, students, and educators, but also a to learning about education policy, its governance structures, and how education is legislated in the province; this, I suggest, required some learning about policy and legislation, but also an educative role to policy—a policy pedagogy—in learning about the bill and in learning about how to respond through public discourse on political actions. However, even though the bill was withdrawn—defeated by the public opposition efforts—its legacy did not immediately dissipate. Apprehensions persisted about future education reforms and a legacy of distrust for governmental decision-making and agenda setting was established. The PC party who had formed government did not earn back public trust in the intervening years before the next election and, in fact, seemed to double-down on their socially regressive policy positions as part of their reelection campaign—possibly in an attempt to cater to the recent resurgence of larger social movements opposing equity, diversity, and inclusion initiatives—in introducing an education platform that emphasized parental rights. However, despite the success of the public effort to oppose Bill 64, its withdrawal seemed to foreclose further conversations about education. It is even possible that the groundswell of public opposition to Bill 64 was partially motivated by the growing unpopularity of the PC-led government and their policy decisions over the previous years, including the not insignificant fumbling of their response to the COVID pandemic health crisis, rather than a purely positive show of support of public education. The unfortunate side effect of the drop off in public engagement with education was that the education system, as it stood before, was reinforced as the status quo, and none of the current problems or limitations of the system were addressed at the close of Bill 64's education reform effort.

Research question 1: How is education conceptualized through the texts of Bill 64 and in the education reform effort?

This question centres the conceptualization of education that emerged through Bill 64 and the reform effort, and its particular presentation of the problem of education that was to be addressed through the reform effort. As I noted in the previous section, government rationale regarding the need for the bill constructed the problem as one of high per capita spending accompanied by low student achievement—a problem of investment and return. These logics were constructed discursively throughout the bill, as well as in its connections to other reform-related documents, and particularly through the discourses the bill and public messaging employed in thinking about education. While the bill attempted to remove social factors from a consideration of education, even accusing others of "politicizing" education when they introduced concerns related to poverty or inequity, the government adamantly refused to acknowledge how social location, student circumstances, or educational marginalization contributed to lower achievement—and I would argue that this refusal was a strategy used to reinforce inequity by prioritizing austerity discourses and deny the ways in which underfunding inhibits educators and the education system to do its work. In this, we can recognize that underfunding education is a strategy to constitute the very conditions of failure, resulting in the ability to point to the inadequacy of the public system as justification for privatization (e.g., Klein, 2007; Love, 2019, 2023; Winton, 2022). Further, retrenchments in public spending in education impact marginalized students, including 2SLGBTQIA+ students, more directly in removing "non-essential" programs and supports to meet baseline student needs (e.g., Russell, 2006). Rather than attend to the real conditions and known investments required to attend to inequities in student achievement, Bill 64 rather emphasized the low performance of students along the lines of a unitary measure (i.e., standardized test scores)—a specious measurement at best. The bill instead framed educational problems in terms of the individualized student and their performance, divorcing social factors or structural

inequities from what they characterized as poor student performance. At core, as public opposition to the bill and interview participants noted, were factors related to inadequate funding and issues of inequity.

The core framing of Bill 64, then, framed the problem of education as an economic issue about how to reduce spending in order to enhance student outcomes, and it sought to do this through a conformist initiative that denied the impacts of inequity in favour of increased accountability to spending and to performance-based testing metrics. The bill also introduced fundamental changes in how the public school system was conceived, framing it instead as the "education system" comprising public schools, independent schools, and home school arrangements, and guaranteeing the right to choose among those. This was a notable shift toward privatization in its invocation of school choice language, which public response recognize and raised as an issue (e.g., Henderson, 2021). There were many ways, in fact, Bill 64 attempted to shift conceptualizations of education in the province: centralization of education authority, consolidation of control in PEA through an appointed board, elimination of elected trustees, away from notions of the "public" in schooling, enhancing accountability language and measures (particularly with SCCs) on the frontline in schools while removing accountability at the upper end (through removal of democratically elected positions at the top with only advisory roles surrounding it, consolidating power with the minister to make appointments). Even the PEA's power to act was constrained through the legislation by making their decisions and the performance of the system subject to financial accountability—through the notable measures of accountability in the administration of funding and reporting through balanced scorecard reporting, alongside the measures of student achievement. However, with the removal of democratically elected positions in the educational authority and decision-making, *there was no provision for accountability to the public or even to educators or students*. The emphasis for student and educators, rather, was on the regulation of their behaviours through the enforcement of a conceptualization about what education was *supposed* to accomplish in Bill 64's own terms. Students were recipients of knowledge and their responsibility was to perform that knowledge when required to validate the system. Educators were to impart knowledge in ways that resulted in direct evidence of student learning. The upshot was that students

were being framed in terms of economic action, the product of investment that would enable them as economic actors in service to the economy; this provided justification for the public investment in schools, which would be of benefit to capital and private economic interest.

Through these changes, there were drastic shifts to the ways educational subjects were discursively constituted in policy discourses. Trustees were eliminated, parents were given primacy, students were most often defined by their relation as "the child" of a parent, administrators were answerable to parents and the demands of the budget, principals were divided from teachers through their removal from the union and managerial roles in schools, and educators were given the last-place standing to ensure students did their part in testing well and thereby proving the viability of the system. Students, in fact, were primarily labelled as such in the bill only when they were being responsibilized—that is, being made responsible either for their conduct in schools or for their performance of learning. The student, then, was framed as a subject in relation to discourses of the "individual" through disciplinary tactics and procedures, but they were not constituted through the lens of equity or social location. Non-parents (or people who were not parents of current students) were excluded entirely from education decision-making or influence, unless they happened to be one of the appointments to the half-dozen seats or the minister themselves.

As participants explained during interviews, inclusion was not the goal of Bill 64. I would argue that we could further supplement that by arguing that the regulation of the population through education was the goal—and the bill actively sought to exclude equity considerations and foster compliant students according to dominant, normative discourses and within current economic systems. Governmentality emphasizes the principle for government action within liberal political systems is to strive for minimal government intervention, with the purpose of regulating the population and ensuring that it constitutes a strong body politic, often through the introduction of self-regulating practices (i.e., people regulate themselves through government directives and policy agendas, such as the tie between income assistance and employment as the motivation to work). For education, the emphasis on academic achievement ties into promises of economic prospects, and this

is one of the strategies in neoliberal political configurations. However, it seems that Bill 64 went too far and public response emphasized that this was not a minimal intervention and, in fact, constituted a major overstep. The rationale for government action was not clear or, according to public response, supportable, and public opposition to the bill emphasized that these were not policy actions that supported public education; rather, Bill 64 was an attempt to regulate the population, introduce autocratic power over the education system, and ultimately control education. These impacts had the potential to limit educational equity in significant ways, as I've discussed at length above. Opposition to the bill recognized that Bill 64 was not an exceptionality or unique; it was part of the PC-majority government's larger policy agenda, which they had come to know through its previous policy actions in regards to health care and in its pandemic response. In reading this policyscape, public opposition efforts demonstrated not only a facility for recognizing the patterns of decision-making but also of learning from these patterns in mounting resistance. These opposition campaigns enacted strategies to communicate this history, demonstrate how Bill 64 further enacted governmental policy agendas, and then took an educative tenor in their collective efforts—what we might even consider an educative and pedagogical policy process. During these opposition efforts, public response emphasized understandings of public education that recognized the importance of the public: Education was defined by its public status and, therefore, needed to be accountable to it. Public discourse at the time emphasized that publics were not equal—that poverty, racialization, Indigenous identity, 2SLGBTQIA+ identity, and disability all created inequity in educational spaces—and emphasized that education needed to address these inequities in real, material, and substantive ways. Again, the hallmarks of public education seemed to be reinforced during this time—the ability to have universal access, public funding, decision-making through public political processes, and be situated in and for public interests (e.g., Wallin et al., 2021).

In many ways, the conceptualization of education that emerged during the Bill 64 education reform effort was shaped through contestation over the role of government in its regulation of populations as much as by its stance toward education. The emerging recognition of principles of inclusive education in the latter half of

the 20th century, and particularly the education department's philosophy of inclusion, centred these concerns in people's minds. This often included regard for various social oppressions, and the recognition of inequity took on intersectional qualities; to paraphrase the RedforEdMB post, if opposition to Bill 64 are the concerns of a vocal minority and that is reason enough for the government to dismiss them, then this communicates clearly how the government regards minority concerns. In other words, the voices of minority populations need to be as important in government decision-making as those of the majority. Overall, there seemed to be a recognition that persistent inequities could either be alleviated by changes to the education system or work to reinforce them by dismissing, ignoring, or excluding them. My takeaway from this is that reform *needs* to attend to social inequities in education and, specifically, be responsive to the changing realities of schooling and evolving needs of students. The inadvertent reinforcement of the educational status quo that followed from the defeat of Bill 64 has done little to alleviate the shortcomings of the system. Reliance on previous educational models, policy problematizations, or traditional understandings of school's purpose are insufficient to address the current and future realities of a rapidly changing world, the demands of climate change, or the persistence of social and economic inequities.

Synthesis of findings and key takeaways

Based on my research findings and the answers to my research questions, I want to briefly identify several key insights regarding the research and about 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects in relation to education policy and reform. These are not intended to be exhaustive or comprehensive. Rather, when I think about this research there are a number of takeaways that come to mind that build on these findings and may usefully be applied to other education contexts. The question I had in mind at this stage of the writing was how this study and my findings might contribute to education reform, 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects, and policy work in other educational jurisdictions. What role does education policy play in supporting 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects, and what can education reform accomplish? In thinking through this question, I considered what I had learned through this research and

how my findings could usefully be summarized for others pursuing similar research or investigations of 2SLGBTQIA+ equity in education policy.

During the course of this research, the question occurred to me about whether Bill 64 could be considered a queering of the education system. It had, after all, taken a significantly different approach that reoriented the education system in substantial ways that did run counter to the way many education systems operated, had seemingly little regard for the established practices of educational structures and organization, and attempted to substantively shift the purpose of education. I quickly recognized that the answer to this question was *no*, Bill 64 could not be considered a queering of education—and I recognized the reasons for this answer offered a number of useful insights. Queering approaches are not simply about doing something different or counter to normative practices; queering approaches need to have some regard for queer, trans, and non-binary subjects and work to their benefit. While Bill 64 did take a significantly different approach to governance, it enacted dominant, oppressive, and normative logics in doing so—by ignoring or eliding difference, constructing it outside the relevance of the problem of education, and reinforcing oppressive systems of class and wealth, austerity discourses, neoliberalist approaches to reform that prioritize economic decision-making, and cast 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects as being simultaneously at-risk and unfit content for schools. Further, the bill undermined the voices and agency of 2SLGBTQIA+ students and those working in education, making them subject to the authority of parents (as the "child" and as being answerable to parental direction) and to a centralized education authority. I recognized that a key part of queering practice necessitated a challenge to the oppressive character of norms—whether related to heteronormativity or gender binary and cis-normative conceptualizations of gender, or related to other oppressive norms that align with dominant, hegemonic social configurations. Bill 64 did not effectively challenge any oppressive practices or norms, but rather reified them and, in fact, worked to reinforce conventional understandings of family relationships, undermine the autonomy and agency of children (under the authority of parents), and reinforce neoliberal agendas that prioritize economic concerns over those of social equity or public welfare.

Further, I wondered what a queering of education reform *might* entail. In other words, is there such a thing as a queering of education policy or queering of education reform? This was a more challenging question and provoked more reflection for me. In many ways, I felt that the challenge to queering policy is in finding a way to counter or resist the norms and normativizing practices of policy. However, policy itself is inherently normalizing in many ways, not least as a tool of institutional and state regulation; it works to position subjects in normativizing positions through comprehensive, one-size-fits-all approaches that work along a continuum of problem–solution policy constructions. Interrogations of policy problematizations, as I've attempted throughout this research, can pose inherent challenges to the normativizing impulse of policy by challenging how the problem is constructed, who it represents and how, and what interventions are constituted as solutions. This allows crucially for a surfacing of unarticulated values—particularly those values that align with dominant, heteronormative, binary and cis-normative, and oppressive norms that perpetuate inequity. In this, I think there is an opportunity to challenge some of the foundational assumptions and constructions of policy problems, including being able to pose impertinently queer questions and challenges to presumed norms. Considering policy problematizations can empower analyses that are able to interrogate the unstated, elided, or assumed values in the problem-solution policy construction process, as well as furnish educative potential for considering reforms and policy initiatives for equity-based objectives. Further, I see an opportunity to recognize and affirm certain strengths-based values for 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects—or rather, to orient policy toward values that seek to affirm, hold space for, ensure protections and interventions that intervene on behalf of 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects. Echoing other researchers (e.g., Duarte, 2019; Lugg & Murphy, 2014), these approaches require including queer subjects among the policy actors (including 2SLGBTQIA+ students and educators), giving voice and ensuring queer perspectives are incorporated in policy, and ensuring methodologically queer approaches are utilized in policy processes. Vitally, in these ways, there is a need to move away from deficit framings of 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects (as being at risk, as subject to parental rights, as controversial or sensitive content) toward future orientations that move beyond responsive interventions, affirm supports for curricular belonging, and centre

institutional and systemic support for educators to pursue 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion, hold educational governors responsible to legal protections for 2SLGBTQIA+ people (e.g., human rights frameworks), and ensure 2SLGBTQIA+ students are affirmed in schools, in broader social contexts, and on their own agentic terms. Cultivating these educational visions requires recognizing the importance of challenging oppressions and social inequities in education, and policy processes that are capable of consulting publics in ways that protect 2SLGBTIQIA+ persons, perspectives, and right to education. While reform efforts are limited as incrementalist change mechanisms, they play a vital role in mitigating immediate harms for 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects; they can also be motivated by transformative visions for change that imagine queer imaginaries or queer futurities.

With these reflections in mind, I synthesize a number of insights from this research that I consider to be useful to other research on education reform, policy, and 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects.

- **Research on education policy and reform needs to interrogate neutral or generic "inclusion" approaches that avoid naming 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects or that rely on generalizing "diversity" without substance.**

  There is a need to interrogate the discursive strategies of policies and reform documents that attempt to simply name inclusion or diversity under a generic recognition of their existence, but which actually enact very little substantive supports or provisions. These strategies of naming "diversity" and "inclusion" avoid naming the specific identities or addressing the needs of the very students whose educational equity is at stake. Interrogating how 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects, and other socially and educationally marginalized subjects, are represented in policy is a vital step to identifying the ways in which policy addresses educational equity. Relying on generic or subject-neutral language to signal inclusion of diversity is insufficient in education policy. When generic language is used, it contributes to the invisibilization and silencing of 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects, denies possible allocations of resources, avoids identifying locations of support, and glosses over social identities that have profound impacts on

educational equity; these generic approaches rely on the creation of homogenous categories of "diversity" to obscure the very identities and subject positions they are intended to support, and they exert normativizing pressure in support of dominant norms that work to reinforce status quo structures and systems. The pretense of diversity and inclusion work in institutional policies can inhibit the practice of inclusion and perpetuate the structural and systemic practices that disempower, overlook, or disregard specific needs of the people these initiatives claim to support. The result is that policy merely pays lip service to notions of inclusion, diversity, equity, accessibility, and reconciliation without accountability.

Policy decision-makers, researchers, and practitioners need to question these generic provisions to idenfity the ways policy *actually* works to recognize equity-deserving groups, include diversity in substantive ways, and build substantive provisions in support of educational equity. Silence or generic approaches to equity measures in policy merely undermines and conceals the potential to address inequity. In contrast, 2SLGBTQIA+-specific policies and provisions ensure the visibility of 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects, confer institutional support for inclusive education, and ensure 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects will not be overlooked or avoided. Policy also has the potential here to play a pedagogical role in educating toward how policy inclusions can provide explicit supports and protections for 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects. The avoidance of naming 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects, or other equity-deserving groups or characteristics, is not a neutral decision, nor is it effective at addressing educational or social inequities; policy reform must take the principle of choice seriously to engage with political values on behalf of educational equity, which include making choices to include 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects and equity-deserving groups in ways that inform educational practice through supportive policies.

- **Education policy must correct the ways in which policy discourses obfuscate, elide, oppress, or invisibilize 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects in their provisions—including the ways that other social oppressions, dominant ideologies, and economic interests cut across policies to legitimize inequity.**

Building on the first takeaway, this one calls directly for the identification of ways policies may avoid or work to suppress 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects—and then seek to correct them. In this research, I used Bacchi's policy problematizations—what the problem is represented to be—as an analytic tool to consider how the problem of 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects was constructed in government discourse and in the bill itself (as a representation in the policy "solution"). Through this analysis, there was sufficient support to recognize that 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects were being constructed as at-risk subjects and 2SLGBTQIA+ content as potentially sensitive, unfit for routine curricular inclusion. However, the elision of the concepts of "diversity" and "inclusion" to obfuscate the material impacts of social inequity, essentially removing them from consideration of how education policy might support 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects, and other socially marginalized subjects (along the lines of Indigenous identity, colonization, racialization, disability, social class, and so on), revealed that the interlocking forms of oppression necessitate analyses that bring an intersectionality lens. The centrality of economic considerations and austerity discourses also worked to make education accountable to market logics (where lower spending is presumed to lead to a more efficient system), opened the door to privatization (through school choice language, which exacerbates educational equity along the lines of SES inequalities and the attendant private interests that can pursue ideological programming and curricular objectives sheltered from public oversight), and leads to justifications for lower public spending in education (which hit equity initiatives first and hardest). Further, this study reinforced the importance of recognizing that systemic oppressions are perpetuated through the organization of education systems and the governance structures of education; for instance, centralizing educational authority has the potential to lead to autocratic education directives, while reinforcing parental voice has the potential to validate and empower parental rights movements in

opposing the rights and inclusion of 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects in schools. There is a crucial need to integrate these themes in analyses of education systems in work on 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects in education. In other words, to adequately investigate the ways in which systemic oppressions and inequities are enacted through education policy, it is necessary to consider the overlapping and interlocking nature of oppressions, as they are and will be mobilized in ways to reinforce one another and perpetuate inequalities across social categories. As I argue throughout, considering how sexuality and gender are represented and problematized in education necessitates intersectionality approaches that attend to the ways other oppressive systems—racism, colonialism, ableism, classism, capitalism, privatization, and so on—are enacted. They overlap and act as leverage points to further oppressions across social positionalities.

- **Education policy, and reform efforts in particular, must introduce recognition of and support for 2SLGBTQIA+ people in educative ways that centre 2SLGBTQIA+ experience and ensure protections exist for 2SLGBTQIA+ students to have agency and voice in their educational experience.**

Following the previous insight, education policy must move beyond merely redressing negative treatments of 2SLGBTQIA+ people and work toward proactive supports. Education reform may be limited in its ability to legislate or enforce care and equity for 2SLGBTQIA+ people, as participants noted in the interviews; however, policy is much better equipped in mandating protections to ensure educators and schools are able to support 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects in ways that reinforce other equity and justice frameworks, legal protections, and education regulations. To do this, it is important to recognize what educational policy *can* accomplish and enacting provisions suited to policy's platform. For instance, there are significant ways that policy *can* work to name, recognize, validate, and support 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects in education. Among primary importance is ensuring that there are clear protections for 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects—including protections for students, educators, families, and content—and for educators who

incorporate 2SLGBTQIA+ content and engage in educational practices that support 2SLGBTQIA+ students. These ensure that harmful, discriminatory behaviours do not go unchecked, and they also offer institutional assurance for educators so they do not question whether they will suffer repercussions, be censured, or be left unsupported if they face challenges or objections. Other forms of recognition and support include the usual suspects of curricular inclusion and teaching resources, hiring practices that recognize the importance of having 2SLGBTQIA+ educators, training and professional development, and support for 2SLGBTQIA+ student activities and events. These can help to ensure that educators have unequivocal support in understanding why 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects are important and need to be included, and how to do so. These types of interventions usefully support the changing social and educational contexts facing students. As participants noted, there is a pressing need to update curriculum to meet the changing needs of students in ways that reflect the evolving social, environmental, and political realities of the world; recognizing these changing contexts requires curricular reform attend to the ways social values have evolved and resist the impulse to policy citationality that reiterates or rehearses previous policy provisions. Policy must also attend to the ways in which education structures, organization, and governance may impact 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects and work to ensure accountability to students and legal frameworks that work to redress inequity. Further, 2SLGBTQIA+ students must be supported and affirmed to play an active role in their school communities—in having a voice in what happens, in creating their own experiences, in informing policies and decision-making that affects them, and in building inclusive events and educational practices. Ensuring 2SLGBTQIA+ students have agency and are empowered in schools recognizes that educational attainment necessarily involves the wellbeing and social outcomes of education processes, just as much as it involves academic learning. There is an educative role in this—for educators, administrators, and students—that may usefully be informed by queer and trans pedagogies and by wider 2SLGBTQIA+ studies.

Policy provisions for 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects must also recognize the interlocking nature of social oppressions and marginalization, and they must seek to redress oppressive practices and educational structures, including anti-racism materials, work on reconciliation and supporting Indigenous knowledges, reducing or removing barriers to educational accessibility, and resisting neoliberalist reform efforts related to marketization and privatization in and of public schools. In other words, basing policy provisions solely on the recognition and support of 2SLGBTQIA+ identity cannot accomplish equity for 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects; recognizing the interlocking and overlapping nature of multiple forms of social inequity—and the disproportionate impacts for multiply marginalized people—policy provisions must undertake wider social equity initiatives that oppose oppression in all its forms. Too often, 2SLGBTQIA+ advocacy efforts reduce equality to the single-axis of sexuality or gender, and neglect the ways in which racialization, disability, colonialism, capitalism, class, and extractive practices have been used to reinforce dominant power configurations and privilege. Educational equity for 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects must attend to these in order to respond to the recognition and support for 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects.

- **Education reform is necessary in maintaining the viability of public education, but it must reflect the values of public education, work to support social equity, receive adequate funding, and attend to the evolving needs of students.**

Participants widely supported the need for education reform and felt that it was important, but they were adamant that reform needed to attend to the actual problems, shortcomings, and challenges of the education system, its structures and governance, and its ability to meet the needs of students. They recognized that the shortcomings and challenges that face public education needed to be addressed in ways that were grounded in the actual needs of education and students—including 2SLGBTQIA+ students but all students, recognizing that social oppressions and inequities have differentially impact minoritized students across race, social position, economic status, and disability. For instance, addressing

challenges in governance requires recognizing that elected trustees need to be held accountable to human rights legislation and the needs of students, such that boards do not attempt to introduce divisional policies that work to undermine or discriminate against 2SLGBQIA+ students. Education reform must attend to the actual shortcomings of the present system in ways that recognize where educational efforts are being restricted by inequitable structures or directives. In this, education needs to be grounded in public values and the needs of students, both in terms of curricular content and student wellbeing.

Education reform efforts must recognize that current neoliberal trends in reform do not support educational equity. Austerity discourses, reductions in spending, and privatization logics will not enhance education and will only serve to perpetuate and further entrench social inequity. Without clear support for equity initiatives, including adequate funding to meet the evolving academic and wellbeing needs of students, public education will be ineffective in its mandate. Attempts to introduce neutral or generic provisions that name diversity of students or inclusive principles only to dismiss them without substantive provisions are inadequate: Systemic oppressions and inequities cannot be addressed through neutral or generic provisions that homogenize the student body. When generic provisions are used, it only reinforces the status quo. When economic logics are used, they neglect the wellbeing and academic and social needs of students. In order to address educational equity, there must be a recognition of social equity and adequate resources dedicated to the needs of the education system.

- **Education reform efforts must take public consultations seriously and centre the need for social equity.**

Educational equity is not attainable unless social equity is included. Recognizing the differential impacts of educational equity, as well as the experiences of feeling welcomed, included, and supported in schools, schools must be supported to ensure they are prepared to address systemic inequities and support marginalized students. Accordingly, education reform must involve comprehensive public

consultations to ensure policy provisions address these issues. Crucially, these consultations must ensure that the voices of students, educators, and the wider public are involved—and must take legal frameworks into consideration to ensure youth do not experience discrimination when regressive values surface (e.g., parental rights, anti-trans ideology). While these consultations may involve directed engagements for the purposes of the reform initiative—as the Commission's public consultations did—they must also seek to engage with the needs of students, research on reform and educational equity, and other evidence about what is needed to best support students and a viable education system to meet educational objectives. There need to be efforts made to engage the voices of those who are disconnected from formal education systems, systemically disenfranchised by education, or otherwise not able to contribute to the regular consultation pathways—going beyond rote invitations to contribute their perspectives to, rather, find innovative ways to engage those who are least likely to be able to contribute their voices. In this, there must be a regard for public discourses regarding education and how to address educational equity in meaningful ways grounded in the needs of students.

The collective response and public discourse regarding Bill 64 were an exceptional instance of public engagement regarding education. In that public discourse, the importance of the public's ability to attend to the policyscape was evidenced—in their ability to recognize the larger policy agendas of those pursuing reform initiatives, in reading the legislation and providing insightful commentary on policy directions, and calling for answers to their questions. Throughout this research, I have made the case for the importance of attending to the policyscape in analyzing education policy by linking Bill 64 and the education reform effort to the government's wider policy platform, to the current political landscape, and to past policy decisions to demonstrate why context matters and can help to inform readings of policy. These analyses were reinforced through the public discourse regarding Bill 64 and serve to highlight the importance of engaged public consultation. However, a policyscape analysis goes beyond the current policy landscape and enables a deeper historical consideration of policy. Not only does this

resist the urge to dehistoricize current policy decisions and governmental actions, but it also helps to surface broader understandings of the political, economic, and social ideologies underwriting policy directions. These understanding recognize the ways in which policies rely on pre-existing policy discourse and enact citational reiterations of policy provisions that resist change and reinstall regressive social values. Policyscape analyses also shed light on the ways that political agendas carry across public domains—and, in this case, carry ideological, economic, or other values into education. For instance, bringing economic accountability into education decision-making can work to undermine the objectives of education and shift conceptualizations of what education's role is. As I discussed at length in Chapter 5, the purpose of education is represented in implicit and explicit ways through policy, constituting education in certain ways that can work to confer validity on policy directions and ultimately justify actions that work against education's intended purpose or counter to the beliefs, understandings, and commitments of those working in the education system. Public perspectives and collective responses regarding education were an effective way to resist Bill 64, but they also constituted a potential avenue for constituting visions for a more equitable public education system.

Finally, it is vitally important that education reform is grounded in transparent, clear, and accountable government decision-making. Bill 64 was plagued by the government's inability to rationalize their proposed reform, dismissal of public voices, and lack of alignment with the education review's recommendations. In looking at the legislation itself and public response, it was clear that government rationale was rooted in the desire to centralize control of the education system, eliminate democratically elected trustees, and an obsessive regard for neoliberal accountability measures and economic austerity concerns; altogether, these opened the door for privatization initiatives and constituted an utter disregard for educational equity. Rather, they attempted to frame educational "success" in terms of lower spending and higher student performance—an equation that did not resonate with Manitobans. As a result, public discourse took government to task to hold them

accountable, questioning their rationale and the purported outcomes they aimed to achieve, and surfacing a wide range of concerns in the process; the government's ideological impulse toward neoliberal economic outcomes and opposition to social equity was clearly identified and further confirmed across their policy platform and reference to parental rights during the election. Throughout the Bill 64 reform effort, the government attempted to conceal their true intentions and avoid public accountability. Rather, what is needed for effective education reform is aligned government rationality backed by clear, transparent decision-making grounded in public and evidence-based understandings about education, the need to support educational equity through support for social equity, and the validation of the importance of public education.

- **Collective efforts to develop and advocate for 2SLGBTQIA+-expansive education are vitally important, including developing visions for equitable public education.**

As I noted in the previous insight, collective responses and public discourse regarding Bill 64 was vitally important in learning about and engaging with the Bill 64 effort—and it represented a significant public engagement in learning about and developing policy literacy. Unfortunately, as I discussed previously, public discourse regarding education declined significantly when the bill was withdrawn and, in many ways, this seemed to merely reinforce the status quo of the existing system. However, many educators, including the majority of the participants of this research, argued that education reform was still needed and many persistent problems and challenges in the current system were still left unaddressed. As a result, there is a need to cultivate engaged collectives on the topic of education to develop visions for the education system. I would suggest, further yet, that there is a need to engage queer imaginaries to develop futurities for education that attend to the evolving needs of 2SLGBTQIA+ students, educators, and content in schools. In other words, there is a need to develop a vision for what is needed in education to continue advocating for equitable educational outcomes for 2SLGBTQIA+

subjects, including wellbeing, social, academic, and policy-related outcomes. Fostering ongoing conversations about the value of public education, why social equity matters for educational equity, and how to address the interrelated social, academic, and wellness outcomes of schools (including the changing needs, emerging pressures, and evolving demands on youth) is critical to effective advocacy for public education and for 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects.

While these six takeaways are not the only possible findings that can usefully inform education policy and reform efforts for 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects, they reflect what I consider to be impactful takeaways that can inform future research into education policy and reform, as well as policy decision-making related to 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects. My articulation of these takeaways is intended to be reiterative, building each upon the others and relying on their ability to inform and reinforce one another. It is further worth noting that in light of recent education policy trends, like don't-say-gay and anti-trans policies and "parental rights" legislation, these takeaways may not resonate or be useful in every situation; attacks on 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects in schools can take much more explicit, harmful, and discriminatory directions—and these types of policy and reforms are in urgent need of redress. Considering the policy problems, similar to my research methodologies, may provide useful insights and strategies to these ends. However, as Bill 64 did not as explicitly enact these types of overtly discriminatory and exclusionary measures, this research did not end up addressing these types of policies or reforms—and if it had, these takeaways would likely have taken a significantly different tenor. Based on my research, the takeaways listed above aim to summarize key insights gleaned from the research that may usefully consider how systemic and structural inequities carry through reform efforts—unless, that is, specific efforts are made to redress them.

In recognizing the emerging trend toward neutral or homogenizing invocations of "inclusion" or "diversity," these takeaways provide starting points to excavate the roots of systemic inequities that are baked into the governance, decision-making, and the organizational structures of education systems. In calling for education policy to recognize and correct the invisibilization of 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects, I intend to highlight the

mechanisms of policy—taking a practical stance toward what policy is intended (and able) to accomplish and how it does so, focusing more on protections to ensure unequivocal supports for 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects and furnishing inclusion measures with appropriate provisions. These takeaways also call for the need to support public education and recognize, vitally, that social equity must be involved in education policy and practice. Public and collective involvement in fostering support for public education—including building broad support, engaged and policy-literate citizens, and sustained public investment—are important in building viable public education through these processes.

Limitations

There are a number of limitations in this research that should be noted. First, Bill 64 and the wider education reform efforts in 2021, including the prolific public response, widespread opposition efforts, and the preceding Education Review Commission materials, produced a massive amount of information, documentation, and material. Sorting through this material involved a concerted effort and many hours of work, and I recognize that the sense I made of it and research narrative I created is inherently limited in a number of ways. In centering 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects as a focal point for this research, and as a pathway to consider social equity and systemic oppressions in the bill and reform efforts, I attempted to narrow and clarify my focus to attend to particular discursive elements. The success of that decision and what I managed to produce through it is, hopefully, instructive and offers insights into education policy, problematizations, and education reform more generally. I would note that similar projects focusing on racialization, BIPOC, Indigeneity, ableism, and additionally socially minoritized subjects could be fruitfully undertaken. There are even opportunities to consider specific impacts of Bill 64's organizational, structural large-scale reform for their impacts on curriculum, assessment and evaluation, or to trace specific governance, administrative, or educator-related impacts. In an attempt to analyze the larger policy processes of Bill 64 and education reform, as well as limit the expansiveness of the research, I necessarily limited my scope in these areas.

Second, my recruitment of interview participants was limited, despite my efforts at targeted recruitment to hear from individuals from various eligible groups. I described this briefly in Methodology above, but I would reiterate that there are certain perspectives and positions that were not represented in the interviews. Specifically, none of the participants I recruited identified as Indigenous, First Nations, Métis, or Inuit; there were fewer participants with racialization-based minoritized experience; and gender balance is slightly skewed in favour of men, particularly when considering that education is a predominantly women-dominated profession (approximately 70%). Finally, I was unable to recruit any participants who supported the bill or who worked in government roles with the PC party (who formed the majority government that led the Bill 64 reform effort), which I deeply wished to do. Having greater access to more information about why people supported the bill, including the ability to ask questions about the bill itself and how they understood it, would have enhanced this research and helped to expand discussion of rationale for the bill and balance perspectives of it.

Third, I did not speak with any students in K–12 public education system about Bill 64, the reform effort, what it was like in schools during that period, or how they understand education. This is a vital perspective and would greatly benefit future research. Notably, the instance of students reading and interpreting Bill 64 (as reported in Macintosh, 2021, May 27) at Windsor Park Collegiate and the townhall presentations on the bill students presented represents a key educational engagement with policy and in recognizing the role of education in building active citizenship.

Finally, this research is limited in its treatment of political systems and policy critique. That is, I support public education and recognize the dedicated, compassionate, and passionate work of educators. I consider education to be a public good and think there is incredible potential for it. However, I recognize that my research was limited in its treatment of political systems and critique of policy within the context of a liberal nation state; while I relied on liberal political discourses in my analysis, particularly constructions of human rights and the role of the state in the recognition of rights, I would note that these are inherently limited conceptualizations aligned with dominant political systems and founded in colonial knowledge systems and structures that marginalize and

disenfranchise people. One of the tensions in this relates to the question of reform and what it accomplishes: Can reform remove oppressive, systemic, or unjust structures within a system that is founded on political structures that reinforce them? What would education need to look like for that to happen? How does the political system support inequitable systems or are there ways to transform systems beyond the inequities baked into those systems? These are *much* larger questions but important ones, I think, in considering how education meets its mandate and what role the state plays in it (particularly through policy agendas).

Future research

There are a number of potential areas for future research and investigation into education policy, reform, and 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects. First, building on the limitations of this research, there are opportunities to expand recruitment of participants to deepen understandings regarding education reform. Finding ways to recruit participants who are both supportive of and opposed to education reform and certain policy positions would enhance the research and produce more nuanced data about reform initiatives, policy decisions, understandings of reform discourses, and insights into contested education spaces. This would further enhance research into policy and facilitate investigations undertaking to understand policy contestations, particularly for 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects (as they are often cast in terms of "controversial" topics). There is also a need to engage student voices regarding education policy, both for its educative potential in facilitating learning about policy but also because students are most centrally affected by education policy. Student perspectives are often neglected in policy research and this reinforces the notion that youth are not policy actors, their concerns not relevant to policy, or that education should rightly assert a paternalistic authority over students' experiences. This, I would argue, is at cross purposes to education's objective and work to disempower students; for 2SLGBTQIA+ students, this may also subject them to policy decisions or educators' actions that ignore, overlook, or contribute to marginalization of their identity. Rather, there is a critical need for students to engage in learning about policy in ways that empower youth in policy conversations, build capacity to read and understand policy, develop greater facility in

understanding how policy shapes their lives and their experiences in education, and develop the ability to contribute to policy conversations in meaningful ways. Similarly, while this research recruited a limited number of participants who had experiences of racialized marginalization or disability, and no participants who were Indigenous, these are crucial perspectives for furthering research on education reform, 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects, and impacts of policy and social inequity in education.

Another area for future research could undertake analyses that further investigate intersectionality in policy studies. While this research on Bill 64 was able to develop limited content related to how intersecting oppressions work to reinforce one another, as well as the ways that participants and collective responses took intersectionality into account when thinking about educational equity in schools, there is a need to further investigate how to proactively support intersectionality in education.

Finally, there is a need to develop visions for queer educational futures that anticipate evolving and future needs of 2SLGBTQIA+ students and content, as I noted in the insights in the previous section. While significant gains have been made for 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion—such as providing GSAs in schools and enacting protective anti-harassment and anti-HBTP policies—there are increasingly virulent forms of resistance to 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects in schools, anti-trans sentiment, and socially regressive objections to 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion. In responding to these challenges, future research may usefully take up these considerations to develop responses to these forms of anti-2SLGBTQIA+ activity. Further to that, there are opportunities to engage in developing queer futurities that ask what queerness has to offer education, how critiques of "norms" related to education and policy may advance, or how to effectively counter neutral or generic approaches that flatten diversity. Vital to this effort is the potential of building engaged collectives across difference in advocating for social equity in public education.

Conclusion

This research centred a discursive analysis of Bill 64 and its policyscape to investigate the impacts of education policy reform efforts on 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects. Recognizing the importance of contextual factors—including the history of education in Manitoba, policy genealogies, and the political actors and policy agendas of the government that introduced Bill 64—this study set out to understand the systemic inequities of Bill 64 to consider how public discourse contributed to the policy landscape of Manitoba's education system. Importantly, the history of education in Manitoba demonstrated the ways in which governmental policy actions worked to marginalize and exclude minoritized concerns in public education in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in favour of consolidating majority regard in constructing Canadian identity around the English language. While the latter half of the 20th century and into the 21st brought a shift toward more inclusive educational environments for 2SLGBTQIA+ identities—supported, in part, by the partial decriminalization of homosexuality in the late 1960s, the addition of sexuality and gender identities to human rights codes beginning in the 1970s, and expansions of inclusive education recognizing 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects in the 2010s—tensions continued to exist contesting the inclusion of 2SLGBTQIA+ content and what should be considered appropriate content in educational spaces, driven primarily by socially regressive groups opposing 2SLGBTQIA+ people.

In Bill 64, these tensions were mainly avoided; the bill retained the previous legislation's anti-harassment provision and support for student-initiated GSA clubs, but it also introduced a "potentially sensitive content" clause that discursively constructed sexuality and gender–related content (i.e., 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects) as being unfit for regular classroom inclusion and mandating informing parents when such content would be covered in class so parents could withdraw their child from such sensitive content. The discursive construction across these two explicit mentions of 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects cast them as being both at-risk of victimization and as sensitive content, to which others may rightly object. The bill neglected any further mention of 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects—and it was extremely limited in any other provision regarding social equity. For instance, it named diversity and inclusion, but neglected to furnish either with any legislated backing; it also named Indigenous students but largely neglected any substantive provisions, save to identify their lack of academic success. This constituted a

missed opportunity to advance 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion or any other equity-related consideration in the bill. While social equity was not a focal point of the education reform initiative, as participants noted, and the bill mainly focused on governance features and funding of education, these features introduced significant changes that had systemic impacts for equity-deserving groups. Notably, these governance changes had the potential to disadvantage 2SLGBTQIA+ students in substantial ways, from the centralization of educational authority with no democratic input at the upper level of the education system to the introduction of parental advisory committees at each level of the schools system (from local schools to regional areas to a provincial council, with designated seats reserved on the centralized education authority board). This would have empowered the parental rights movement with a voice directly into educational provisions throughout the system.

Motivating these changes, according to government talking points, was the characterization of a failing education system. Continually, government cited the high level of spending per student alongside low achievement as their rationale for Bill 64, dismissing questions and criticism as the concerns of a "vocal minority" and neglecting to demonstrate how reductions in funding, the marginal savings of eliminating elected trustee positions, or enhanced funding accountability measures would produce the promised efficiencies or improve student performance. In response, there was an enormous and sustained public response opposing the bill and the proposed reform, from the formation of collectives and social media campaigns to lawn signs, letter writing, and editorial publications, which resulted in the eventual withdrawal of the bill. The public discourse aptly picked up on the pattern of the government's policy agenda, recognizing neoliberal efforts to reduce spending and introduce measures toward privatization of education. Further, Bill 64 worked to increase accountability regarding students' performance, remove student agency under the authority of their parent's purview over the education of their "child," and generally relegate educators to positions subservient to educational and parental authority. Using a problematization approach to considering how the policy problem of education was represented through Bill 64, this research found that 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects were constructed as simultaneously at-risk and potentially sensitive content; beyond that, they were excluded from the realm of potential policy

provision. The citational power of previous policy discourses—in carrying forward the previous legislation's anti-harassment provision and in introducing a curriculum guideline from 2000 into the legislation—exerted continued influence, bringing previous "conventional" wisdom regarding 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects into current law. Not only did it double down on these discourses, but it introduced a potential conflict between providing protections to 2SLGBTQIA+ students and classifying 2SLGBTQIA+ subject matter as sensitive content that students could be opted out of. Beyond this, the bill was largely silent, which worked to constitute the problem of education as being inherently limited to overspending and underperformance—with questions of equity being excluded as potential factors impacting either.

Overall, the bill relied on generic provisions that reinforced the status quo. In neglecting to name specific forms of diversity or provide substantively for measures of inclusion, the bill's silence effectively dismissed the possibility that social inequity might factor into poor student performance or, conversely, benefit from material funding supports. As retrenchments in funding hit equity initiatives first and most substantially, the additional austerity measures introduced by the bill worked to further limit the potential for equitable outcomes. By retaining the anti-harassment and GSA provisions, the bill reinforced the misconception that the 2SLGBTQIA+ "problem" had been adequately addressed—as the only problem, clearly, was the negative individual-level behaviour student experienced. Alongside this, the respect for human diversity policy laid out clearly that discrimination on the grounds of any protected personal characteristic was prohibited, neglecting to address any further social or attitudinal factor that may impact students or limit educators' ability to intervene.

References

Adams, N., Cox, T., & Dunstan, L. (2004). “I am the hate that dare not speak its name”: Dealing with homophobia in secondary schools. *Educational Psychology in Practice, 20*(3), 259–269. https://doi.org/10.1080/0266736042000251826

Ahmed, S. (2006). *Queer phenomenology: Orientations, objects, others*. Duke University Press.

Ahuja, A., & Webster, C., Gibson, N., Brewer, A., Toledo, S., & Russell, S. (2015). Bullying and suicide: The mental health crisis of LGBTQ youth and how you can help. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Mental Health, 19*(2), 125–144. https://doi.org/10.1080/19359705.2015.1007417

Airton, L. (2013). Leave “those kids” alone: On the conflation of school homophobia and suffering queers. *Curriculum Inquiry, 43*(5), 532–562. https://doi.org/10.1111/curi.12031

Airton, L., Kirkup, K., McMillan, A., & DesRochers, J. (2019). What is “gender expression”? How a new and nebulous human rights construct is taking shape in Ontario school board policy documents. *Canadian Journal of Education / Revue canadienne de l’éducation, 42*(4) 1154–1182.

Albanese, C. (2012). Embedding LGBTQ topics in the curriculum: Looking at the need, examining the barriers, and considering the possibilities in the secondary school setting. *Quest Journal, 6*, 1–7. http://www.questconference.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/2012AlbaneseArticle.pdf

Alphonso, C. (2021, October 12). Standardized test results show most Canadian students’ math skills improving. *Globe & Mail*. Retrieved from https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-standardized-test-results-show-most-canadian-students-math-skills/

Anderson, H. S. (2018). *A feminist analysis of educational policies related to gender equity: Policy framing of gender equity in Manitoba education from 1975 to 2012* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. University of Manitoba.

Anderson, J. (2014). Providing a safe learning environment for queer students in Canadian schools: A legal analysis of homophobic bullying. *Journal of LGBT Youth, 11*(3), 212–243. https://doi.org/10.1080/19361653.2013.879463

Anderson, K., Hallett, L. G., Young, M., & Delgado, L. (2024). Kashkikwaata lii troo: Mending the gap: A guide to Indigiqueering the curriculum. University of Manitoba. Retrieved from https://ldelgado.com/research/

Apple, M. W. (2017) What is present and absent in critical analyses of neoliberalism in education. *Peabody Journal of Education, 92*(1), 148–153. https://doi.org/10.1080/0161956X.2016.1265344

Asagwara, U. (2021, March 22). "Inclusive Education Curriculum Request for Government Support." Legislative Assembly of Manitoba. *Official report (Hansard) LXXV(39)*. 42nd Legislature, 3rd session. Retrieved from https://www.gov.mb.ca/legislature/hansard/42nd_3rd/hansardpdf/39.pdf

Asher, N. (2007). Made in the (multicultural) U.S.A.: Unpacking tensions of race, culture, gender, and sexuality in education. *Educational Researcher, 36*(2), 65–73. http://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X07299188

Atkinson, E. (2002). Education for diversity in a multisexual society: Negotiating the contradictions of contemporary discourse. *Sex Education, 2*(2), 119–132. https://doi.org/10.1080/14681810220144873

Awad, D. I. (2018, March 19). *Education reform: Assessing the impact of Nova Scotia's* Education Reform Act. Dentons. Retrieved from: https://www.dentons.com/en/insights/alerts/2018/march/19/education-reform-assessing-the-impact-of-nova-scotias-education-reform-act

Bacchi, C. (1999). *Women, policy, and politics: The construction of policy problems*. Sage.

Bacchi, C. (2000). Policy as discourse: What does it mean? Where does it get us? *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education, 21*(1), 45–57. https://doi.org/10.1080/01596300050005493

Bacchi, C. (2009). *Analysing policy: What's the Problem Represented to be?* Pearson Education.

Bacchi, C., & Goodwin, S. (2016). *Poststructural policy analysis: A guide to practice*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Baker, J. (2019). What is "safe sex"? Understanding the need for sex education reform. *Gettysburg Social Sciences Review, 3*(2), 66–87 [Article 4]. Retrieved from https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/gssr/vol3/iss2/4

Balanced Scorecard Institute. (2024). Balanced scorecard basics. Balanced Scorecard Institute. Retrieved 26 Sept. 2024 from https://balancedscorecard.org/bsc-basics-overview/

Ball, S. J., & Youdell, D. (2007). *Hidden privatization in public education: Preliminary report*. Education International 5th World Congress.

Ball, S. J. (1993). What is policy? Texts, trajectories and toolboxes. *Discourse, 13*(2), 10–17. https://doi.org/10.1080/0159630930130203

Ball, S. J. (1994). *Education reform: A critical and post-structural approach*. Open University Press.

Ball, S. J. (1998). Big Policies/Small World: An introduction to international perspectives in education policy. *Comparative Education, 34*(2), 119–130. https://doi.org/10.1080/03050069828225

Ball, S. J. (2008). *The education debate*. Policy Press.

Ball, S. J. (2013). *Foucault, power, and education*. Routledge.

Ball, S. J. (2015). What is policy? 21 years later: Reflections on the possibilities of policy research. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education, 36*(3), 306–313. https://doi.org/10.1080/01596306.2015.1015279

Ball, S. J. (2016). Neoliberal education? Confronting the slouching beast. *Policy Futures in Education, 14*(8), 1046–1059. https://doi.org/10.1177/1478210316664259

Ball, S. J., Maguire, M., & Braun, A. (with Hoskins, K., & Perryman, J.). (2012). *How schools do policy: Policy enactments in secondary schools*. Routledge.

Barnard, I. (1999). Queer race. *Social Semiotics, 9*(2), 199–212.

Bartone, M. D. (2019). "I want them [teachers] to treat us like human beings": Educational experiences of Black gay youth. In A. D. Martin & K. J. Strom (Eds.), *Exploring gender and LGBTQ issues in K–12 and teacher education* (pp. 95–109). Information Age Publishing.

Baş, G. (2021). Teacher beliefs about educational reforms: A metaphor analysis. *International Journal of Educational Reform, 30*(1), 21–38. https://doi.org/10.1177/1056787920933352

Bascia, N. (2009). Pushing on the paradigm: Research on teachers' organizations as policy actors. In G. Sykes (Ed.), *Handbook on educational policy* (pp. 348-361). American Educational Research Association.

Battiste, M. (2013). *Decolonizing education: Nourishing the learning spirit*. Purich Publishing; UBC.

Bedford, J. (2021, May 18). Keep partisan politics out of the classroom. *Winnipeg Free Press*.

Bees, E. (2022). *Manitoba Education Reforms, White Settler Discourses, and the Marginalization of Indigenous Perspectives* [Master's thesis]. Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba.

Bees, E. (2025). Parental rights and school boards as contested spaces in Manitoba. *Our Schools/Our Selves,* Summer/Fall 2025, 29–32. Retrieved from https://www.policyalternatives.ca/news-research/our-schools-our-selves-summer-fall-2025/

Bell, L., & Stevenson, H. (2006). *Education policy: Process, themes and impact*. Routledge.

Bellefontaine, M. (2024, October 31). Alberta tables bills on transgender youth health care, students' pronouns, opt-in sex education. *CBC News*. https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/alberta-tables-bills-on-transgender-youth-health-care-students-pronouns-opt-in-sex-education-1.7370006

Bellini, C. (2012). The pink lesson plan: Addressing the emotional needs of gay and lesbian students in Canadian teacher education programs. *Journal of LGBT Youth, 9*, 373–396. https://doi.org/10.1080/19361653.2012.714178

Belsey, C. (2002). *Poststructuralism: A very short introduction*. Oxford University Press.

Berlant, L., & Warner, M. (1995). What does queer theory teach us about X?" *PMLA, 110*(3), 343–349. https://www.jstor.org/stable/462930

Bernhardt, D. (2021, February 5). Manitoba education minister laments poor student performance as 2021–22 funding announced. *CBC News*. https://www.cbc.ca/amp/1.5902493

Bernhardt, D. (2024, May 28). CEO of Seine River School Division resigns suddenly 'for personal reasons': Division in financial straits but CEO departure unrelated, board chair says. *CBC News*. https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/seine-river-school-division-financial-manitoba-1.7217056

Besley, T., & Peters, M. A. (2007). Understanding the neoliberal paradigm of education policy. *Counterpoints*, *303*, 131–154. Retrieved from https://www.jstor.org/stable/42979446

Betro, R. (2014). Intercultural education and the inclusion of LGBTTIQ people in Ontario schools. *Intercultural Education, 25*(2), 143–156. https://doi.org/10.1080/14675986.2014.893606

Blackburn, M. V., & McCready, L. T. (2009). Voices of queer youth in urban schools: Possibilities and limitations. *Theory Into Practice, 48*(3), 222–230. https://doi.org/10.1080/00405840902997485

Bialystok, L. (2019, August 29). The politics behind Ontario's sex-ed curriculum. *Maclean's*. Retrieved from https://www.macleans.ca/opinion/the-politics-behind-ontarios-sex-ed-curriculum/ (Previously published as Doug Ford's reboot of sex education in Ontario: Same as it ever was, August 26, 2021, in *The Conversation*, https://theconversation.com/doug-fords-reboot-of-sex-education-in-ontario-same-as-it-ever-was-122299)

Biesta, G. (2007). Why "what works" won't work: Evidence-based practice and the democratic deficit in educational research. *Educational Theory, 57*(1), 1-22.

Biegel, S., & Kuehl, S. J. (2010). *Safe at school: Addressing the school environment and LGBT safety through policy and legislation*. Williams Institute in the UCLA Law School and the National Education Policy Center (NEPC). Retrieved from http://www.escholarship.org/uc/item/6882f656

Bill 12: Accepting Schools Act [S.O. 2012, c. 5]. (2012). 40th Parliament, Ontario, 1st Session. Ontario Legislative Assembly. https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/s12005

Bill 14: The Public Schools Modernization Act (Public Schools Act Amended). (2002). 37th Legislature, Manitoba, 3rd Session. Government of Manitoba [first reading May 2, 2002; passed and received royal assent July 17, 2002].

Bill 18: The Public Schools Amendment Act (Safe and Inclusive Schools). (2012). 40th Legislature, Manitoba, 2nd Session. Government of Manitoba [first reading December 4, 2021; passed and received royal assent on

September 13, 2013; came into force on October 10, 2013]. https://web2.gov.mb.ca/bills/40-2/b018e.php

Bill 35: The Education Administration Amendment Act (Teacher Certification and Professional Conduct). (2023). 42nd Legislature, Manitoba, 5th Session. Government of Manitoba [first reading March 14, 2023; passed and received royal assent May 30, 2024]. https://web2.gov.mb.ca/bills/42-5/b035e.php

Bill 64: The Education Modernization Act. (2020). 42nd Legislature, Manitoba, 3rd Session. Government of Manitoba [first reading November 5, 2020; withdrawn October 6, 2021].

Bill 71: The Education Property Tax Reduction Act (Property Tax and Insulation Assistance Act and Income Tax Act Amended). (2021). 42nd Legislature, Manitoba, 3rd Session. Government of Manitoba [first reading April 19, 2021; passed and received royal assent May 20, 2021].

Bittner, R., Ingrey, J., & Stamper, C. (2016). Queer and trans-themed books for young readers: a critical review. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education, 37*(6), 948–964.

Bowe, R., Ball, S. J., & Gold, A. (1992). *Reforming education and changing schools: Case studies in policy sociology*. Routledge.

Brackett, S. W., & Janovicek, N. (2019, June 20). Sex ed, gay-straight alliances, and the Alberta curriculum. *Active History*. Retrieved from https://activehistory.ca/2019/06/sex-ed-alberta/

Bradley, J. (2021, September 23). Scotland becomes first country in world to embed LGBT education in school curriculum. *The Scotsman*. Retrieved from https://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/scotland-becomes-first-country-in-world-to-embed-lgbt-education-in-school-curriculum-3393389

Bradlow, J., Bartram, F., Guasp, A., & Jadva, V. (2017). *School report: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bi and trans young people in Britain's schools in 2017*. Stonewall UK.

Brass, J. (2015). Engaging education policies through governmentality studies. *English in Australia, 50*(3), 9–13.

Braul, E. (2021, March 31). Bill 64: The public education modernization act is racist. *Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives Manitoba Office*. Retrieved from https://www.policyalternatives.ca

Britton, C. J. (2006). *A historical listing of significant events in Manitoba's elementary-secondary education, post-secondary education and training systems 1989-2006*. Manitoba Centre for Health Policy, Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth, & Manitoba Advanced Education and Training. https://umanitoba.ca/faculties/health_sciences/medicine/units/chs/departmental_units/mchp/protocol/media/history_education_events_1989to2006.pdf

Britzman, D. P. (1995). Is there a queer pedagogy?—Or, stop reading straight. *Educational Theory, 45*(2), 151–165.

Britzman, D. P. (1998). *Lost subjects, contested objects: Toward a psychoanalytic inquiry of learning*. SUNY Press.

Brockenbrough, E. (2013). Introduction to the special issue: Queers of Color and anti-oppressive knowledge production. *Curriculum Inquiry, 43*(4), 426–440. https://doi.org/10.1111/curi.12023

Brockenbrough, E. (2015). Queer of color agency in educational contexts: Analytic frameworks from a queer of color critique. *Educational Studies, 51*(1), 28–44. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131946.2014.979929

Brodbeck, T. (2021, June 18). Bill 64 re-evaluation tied to Pallister retirement. *Winnipeg Free Press*.

Brodbeck, T. (2021, August 20). Bill 64 dead, but stay tuned for its sequel. *Winnipeg Free Press*. A3

Brodbeck, T. (2021, October 29). Education property tax cut hinges on PC race result. *Winnipeg Free Press*.

Brown, A., & Danaher, P. A. (2019). CHE principles: Facilitating authentic and dialogical semi-structured interviews in educational research. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education, 42*(1), 76–90. https://doi.org/10.1080/1743727X.2017.1379987

Bruno-Jofré, R. C. (Ed.) (1993). *Issues in the history of education in Manitoba: From the construction of the common school to the politics of voices*. Edwin Mellen Press.

Bruno-Jofré, R. (1999). Citizenship and schooling in Manitoba, 1918–1945. *Manitoba History, 36*. Retrieved from https://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/mb_history/36/citizenship.shtml

Bryant, C., Cesmystruck, B., Crozier, K., Cuthbert, P., Derksen, R., Dysart, A., Fidierchuck, C., Giavedoni, C., Gouriluk, B., Hurton, D., Klassen, K., Kwanitza, S., Lafond-Bouchard, P., Lough, B., Lussier, L., Metcalfe, R.,

Moreau, P., Reagan, D., Reddy, S. …. Yeo, D. (2021, May). An open letter to all Manitobans. *Manitoba Association of School Superintendents*. https://mass.mb.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/An-Open-Letter-to-Manitobans.pdf

Bryson, M., & de Castell, S. (1993). Queer pedagogy: Praxis makes im/perfect. *Canadian Journal of Education / Revue candadienne de l'éducation, 18*(3), 285–305. https://www.jstor.org/stable/1495388

Burchell, G., Gordon, C., & Miller, P. (Eds.). (1991). *The Foucault effect: Studies in governmentality with two lectures and an interview with Michel Foucault*. University of Chicago Press.

Butler, J. (1990). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. Routledge.

Butler, J. (1993). *Bodies that matter: On the discursive limits of "sex."* Routledge.

Call-Cummings, M., & Ross, K. (2019). Re-positioning power and re-imagining reflexivity: Examining positionality and building validity through reconstructive horizon analysis. In K. K. Strunk & L. A. Locke (Eds.), *Research methods for social justice and equity in education* (pp. 3–14). Palgrave Macmillan.

Campbell, A. (2020, December 15). Time to lift the shroud from Bill 64. *Winnipeg Free Press*. A7.

Campbell., A. (2021, May 7). Time to have those political, challenging conversations. *Brandon Sun*. https://www.brandonsun.com/opinion/letters-to-the-editor/time-to-have-those-political-challenging-conversations-574367322.html

Campbell, C., Fraser, L., & Peter, T. (2022). The impact of school attachment and parental involvement on the positive mental health of 2SLGBTQ + students during COVID-19. *Frontiers in Education, 7*: 957543. https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2022.957543

Campbell, C., Peter, T., & Taylor, C. (2022). "It shouldn't be my or my peers' responsibility to make ourselves feel safer": Human rights discourse and gender and sexual minority youth. In W. Antony, L. Samuelson, & J. Antony (Eds.), *Power and Resistance* (7th ed.), Fernwood Press.

Campbell, C., Peter, T., & Taylor, C. (2021). Educators' reasons for not practicing LGBTQ-inclusive education. *Canadian Journal of Education / Revue canadienne de l'éducation, 44*(4), 964–991. Retrieved from https://cje-rce.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2021/09/4.-4665-Campbell-Nov-29_964-991.pdf

Campbell, C., & Taylor, C. (2017). *The Every Teacher Project Recommendations Toolkit*. Winnipeg, MB: The Manitoba Teachers' Society.

Campbell, C. P., & Taylor, C. G. (2024). Queer-expansive education. In R. C. Mizzi (Section Ed.; Canadian perspectives); L. Allen & M. Rasmussen (General Eds.), *The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Sexuality Education*. Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-95352-2_40-1

Canadian Press. (2013, 3 April). Manitoba school may change its mind and allow posters for gay alliance after student fights back. *National Post*. Retrieved from https://nationalpost.com/news/canada/manitoba-school-may-change-its-mind-and-allow-posters-for-gay-alliance-after-student-fights-back

Carbado, D. W. (2019). Colorblind intersectionality. In K. W. Crenshaw, L. C. Harris, D. Martinez HoSang, & G. Lipsitz (Eds.), *Seeing race again: Countering colorblindness across the disciplines* (pp. 200–223). University of California Press. https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520972148-010

Carbado, D. W., Crenshaw, K. W., Mays, V. M., & Tomlinson, B. (2013). Intersectionality: Mapping the movements of a theory. *Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race, 10*(2), 303–312. https://doi.org/10.10170S1742058X13000349

Carlisle, M. (2022, March 8). Florida just passed the "Don't Say Gay" bill. Here's what it means for kids. *TIME*. Retrieved from https://time.com/6155905/florida-dont-say-gay-passed/

CBC News. (2017, March 14). Teachers union 'dumbfounded' by removal of cap on K–Grade 3 class sizes. *CBC News*. https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/class-size-kindergarten-manitoba-1.4024470

CBC News. (2021, March 15). Here's what parents need to know about how education is changing in Manitoba: Manitoba provincial government plans to eliminate most elected school boards, merge many school

divisions. *CBC News*. https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/manitoba-education-reform-report-faq-1.5950279

Chan, C. D., Steen, S., Howard, L. C., & Ali, A. I. (2019). Disentangling the complexities of queer theory and intersectionality theory: Research paradigms and insights for social justice. In K. K. Strunk & L. A. Locke (Eds.), *Research methods for social justice and equity in education* (pp. 59–70). Palgrave Macmillan.

Cho, S., Crenshaw, K. W., & McCall, L. (2013). Toward a field of intersectionality studies: Theory, applications, and praxis. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 38*(4), 785–810. https://doi.org/10.1086/669608

Christie, P. (2006). Changing regimes: Governmentality and education policy in post-apartheid South Africa. *International Journal of Educational Development, 26*, 373–381. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2005.09.006

Clarke, K. (2023, April 14). Bill 35: Transparency or target practice? *Winnipeg Free Press*. https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2023/04/14/transparency-or-target-practice

Clarke, K. (2024, January 26). Manitoba Education sought review amid New Brunswick's push for pronoun policy. *Winnipeg Free Press*. https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2024/01/26/manitoba-education-sought-review-amid-new-brunswicks-push-for-pronoun-policy

Clifton, R. A. (2021, March 31). Bill 64 won't destroy public education. *Winnipeg Free Press*.

Clifton, R. A., Long, J. C., & Narth, P. K. (2021, October 12). Bill 64 is dead, but reform still required. *Winnipeg Free Press*.

Cohen, C. J. (1997). Punks, bulldaggers, and welfare queens: The radical potential of queer politics. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies, 3*(4), 437–465. https://doi.org/10.1215/10642684-3-4-437

The Combahee River Collective. (1977). *The Combahee River Collective statement*. Retrieved from https://americanstudies.yale.edu/sites/default/files/files/Keyword%20Coalition_Readings.pdf

Crawley, S. A. (2025). Policy and practice: Critically reading and interpreting policies to support LGBTQ+ curricular inclusion in K–12 classrooms. In R. C. Mizzi & N. M. Rodriguez (Eds.), *LGBTQ+ studies in education:*

Theoretical interventions in curriculum and pedagogy (pp. 45–63). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-85118-6_4

Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A Black Feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum, 1989*(1), Article 8, 139–167. http://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/uclf/vol1989/iss1/8

Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. *Stanford Law Review, 43*(6), 1241–1299. http://www.jstor.org/stable/1229039

CTV News. (2013, 28 February). Steinbach teen says he's victim of discrimination over plans to establish gay-straight alliance group. Retrieved from https://winnipeg.ctvnews.ca/steinbach-teen-says-he-s-victim-of-discrimination-over-plans-to-establish-gay-straight-alliance-group-1.1176731

Cummings, D. (2021). Searching for utopia in rural queer narratives. In *Advances in Autoethnography and Narrative Inquiry* (pp. 155-171). Routledge.

Cumming-Potvin, W., & Martino, W. (2018). The *policyscape* of transgender equality and gender diversity in the Western Australian education system: A case study. *Gender and Education, 30*(6), 715–735. https://doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2018.1483491

Darbyson, K. (2021, April 15). Rural parents protest Bill 64. *Brandon Sun*.

Darbyson, K. (2021, April 21). Coalition forming to fight Bill 64. *Brandon Sun*.

Darling-Hammond, K. (2019). Queeruptions and the question of QTPOC thriving in schools – an excavation. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 52*(4), 424–434. https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2019.1705205

de Lauretis, T. (1991). Queer theory: Lesbian and gay sexualities. *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies, 3*(2), iii-xviii.

DePalma, R., & Atkinson, E. (2006). The sound of silence: Talking about sexual orientation and schooling. *Sex Education, 6*(4), 333–349. https://doi.org/10.1080/14681810600981848

Diem, S., Young, M. D., Welton, A. D., Cumings Mansfield, K., & Lee, P.-L. (2014). The intellectual landscape of critical policy analysis. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 27*(9), 1068–1090. https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2014.916007

Douglas, N., Warwick, I., Kemp, S., & Whitty, G. (1997). *Playing it safe. Responses of secondary school teachers to lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils, bullying, HIV and AIDS education and section 28*. Terrence Higgins Trust.

Donzelot, J., & Gordon, C. (2009). Governing liberal societies: The Foucault effect in the English-speaking world. In M. A. Peters, A. C. Besley, M. Olssen, S. Maurer, & S. Weber (Eds.), *Governmentality studies in education* (pp. 3–15). Sense Publishers.

Dryden, J. (2024, November 1). Alberta ban on trans women in female sports advances as athletic association questions need: Bill introduced Thursday would establish biological female-only divisions. *CBC News*. https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/alberta-transgender-danielle-smith-acac-mount-royal-1.7370620

Duarte, B. J. (2020). Situating subjectivities in the macrosocial policy context: Critical/queer multifocal policy research. *Journal of Education Policy*, 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1080/02680939.2020.1739338

Duggan, L. (2003). *Twilight of equality? Neoliberalism, cultural politics, and the attack on democracy*. Beacon Press.

Duke, T. S. (2011). Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth with disabilities: A meta-synthesis. *Journal of LGBT Youth, 8*(1), 1–52. https://doi.org/10.1080/19361653.2011.519181

Elia, J. P. (2014). Bisexuality and schooling: Erasure and implications for health. *Journal of Bisexuality, 14*(1), 36–52. https://doi.org/10.1080/15299716.2014.872461

Ellis, V. (2007). Sexualities and schooling in England after Section 28: Measuring and managing at-risk identities. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Issues in Education, 4*(3), 13–30.

Eng, D. L., Halberstam, J., & Muñoz, J. E. (2005). What's queer about queer studies now?" *Social Text, 23*(3–4)/84–85, 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1215/01642472-23-3-4_84-85-1

Ennab, F. (2021, May 7). Bill 64 abandons racialized communities. *Winnipeg Free Press*.

Enoch, S. (2025). Discrimination through deception: The parental rights movement's school board strategy. *Our Schools/Our Selves,* Summer/Fall 2025, 26–28. Retrieved from https://www.policyalternatives.ca/news-research/our-schools-our-selves-summer-fall-2025/

Epstein, D. (1994). *Challenging lesbian and gay inequalities in education*. Open University Press.

Ewasko, W. (2021, July 11). Column: Report from the Legislature – Bill 64 will improve education. *The Carillon*. https://www.thecarillon.com/local/2021/07/11/column-report-from-the-legislature-bill-64-will-improve-education

Fairclough, N. (2013). Critical discourse analysis and critical policy studies. *Critical Policy Studies, 7*(2), 177–197. https://doi.org/10.1080/19460171.2013.798239

Farley, A. M., & Leonardi, B. (2021). Beyond bathroom bills and the gender identity debate: Complicating the policy conversation about supporting trans students in schools. *Educational Policy, 35*(2), 274–303. https://doi.org/10.1177/0895904820986770

Ferguson, R. A. (2004). *Aberrations in Black: Toward a queer of color critique*. University of Minnesota Press.

Fetner, T., Elafros, A., Bortolin, S., & Drechsler, C. (2012). Safe spaces: Gay-Straight Alliances in high schools. *Canadian Review of Sociology*, *49*(2), 188-207. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1755-618X.2011.01290.x

Fiola, C. (2020). Naawenangweyaabeg coming in: lntersections of lndigenous sexuality and spirituality. In S. Nickel & A. Fehr (Eds.), *In good relation: History, gender, and kinship in Indigenous feminisms* (pp. 132–151). University of Manitoba Press.

Forbes, S. (2021, September 2). Time for a new education policy. *Winnipeg Free Press*.

Formby, E. (2015). Limitations of focussing on homophobic, biphobic, and transphobic "bullying" to understand and address LGBT young people's experiences within and beyond school. *Sex Education, 15*(6), 626–640. https://doi.org/10.1080/14681811.2015.1054024

Foucault, M. (1977a). *Discipline & punish: The birth of the prison*. Vintage.

Foucault, M. (1977b). Nietzsche, genealogy, history. In M. Foucault (D. F. Bouchard, Ed.), *Language, counter-memory, practice: Selected essays and interviews* (pp. 139–164). Cornell University Press.

Foucault, M. (1978). *The history of sexuality: An introduction. Volume 1*. Vintage.

Foucault, M. (1980a). Truth and power. In M. Foucault (C. Gordon, Ed.), *Power/Knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings 1972–1977* (pp. 109–133). Vintage.

Foucault, M. (1980b). Two lectures. In M. Foucault (C. Gordon, Ed.), *Power/Knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings 1972–1977* (pp. 78–108). Vintage.

Foucault, M. (1983). Discourse and truth: The problematization of Parrhesia: Six lectures given by Michel Foucault at Berkeley, Oct-Nov. 1983. Berkeley University. Retrieved from http://foucault.info/documents/parrhesia/

Foucault, M. (1988). *Madness and civilization: A history of insanity in the age of reason*. Vintage.

Foucault, M. (2007). *Security, territory, population: Lectures at the Collège de France 1977–1978*. Picador Palgrave.

Foucault, M. (2008). *The birth of biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France 1978–1979*. Picador Palgrave.

Fraser, J. D. (2024). Exposing the spectre: Resisting neoliberal education reforms in Manitoba. *Critical Education, 15*(2), 122-142. https://doi.org/10.1488/ce.v15i2.186868

Froese, I. (2020, January 5). 'High degree of anxiety' as Manitoba's education system braces for major reforms: Education minister says he expects review of Manitoba K–12 education to recommend significant changes. *CBC News*. https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/manitoba-education-review-kindergarten-grade-12-anxiety-1.5414078

Froese, I. (2021, May 24). Opposition to Manitoba's sweeping school reforms has already sprouted on lawns, expected to swell at hearings. *CBC News*. https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/groundswell-opposition-manitoba-school-reforms-bill-64-lawns-town-halls-1.6037550

Froese, I. (2021, June 1). Push to get education bill to 2nd reading denied, as Pallister celebrates following legislative session: Bill cutting property tax, implementing paid sick leave among legislation passed. *CBC News*. https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/bill-64-denied-second-reading-pallister-boasted-robust-legislation-1.6048901

Froese, I. (2021, June 14). Outcry over Manitoba's education reform hangs on misinformation, minister says: Minister shouldn't dismiss valid criticisms, opponents counter. *CBC News*. https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/outcry-manitoba-education-reform-misinformation-cliff-cullen-1.6065299

Fullan, M. (2009). Large-scale reform comes of age. *Journal of Educational Change, 10*, 101–113. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10833-009-9108-z

Ganshorn, H. (2025). In Alberta, "parental rights" and privatization go hand in hand. *Our Schools/Our Selves,* Summer/Fall 2025, 16–20. Retrieved from https://www.policyalternatives.ca/news-research/our-schools-our-selves-summer-fall-2025/

Gedro, J., & Mizzi, R. C. (2014). Feminist theory and queer theory: Implications for HRD research and practice. *Advances in Developing Human Resources, 16*(4), 445–456. https://doi.org/10.1177/1523422314543820

Giroux, H. (2012). The war against teachers as public intellectuals in dark times. *Truthout*. Retrieved from https://truthout.org/articles/the-corporate-war-against-teachers-as-public-intellectuals-in-dark-times/

Giroux, H. (2019). Neoliberalism and the weaponising of language and education. *Race & Class, 61*(1), 26–45. https://doi.org/10.1177/0306396819847945

Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (2012). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Aldine Transaction. (Originally published 1967.)

Glazzard, J., & Stones, S. (2021). Running scared? A critical analysis of LGBTQ+ inclusion policy in schools. *Frontiers in Sociology, 6*(613283). https://doi.org/10.3389/fsoc.2021.613283

Global News. (2023, May 11). Call to remove LGBTQ2, sex education books from Brandon schools met with approval, outrage. *Global News*. https://globalnews.ca/news/9692584/call-removal-lbtq2-sex-education-books-brandon-schools/

Goerzen, M. (2021, March 25). Tories must make case more openly. *Brandon Sun*.

Goldstein, T., Collins, A., & Halder, M. (2007a). Anti-homophobia education in public schooling: A Canadian case study of policy implementation. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services, 19*(3/4), 47–66. https://doi.org/10.1080/10538720802161540

Goldstein, T., Russell, V., & Daley, A. (2007b). Safe, positive, and queering moments in teaching education and schooling: A conceptual framework. *Teaching Education, 18*(3), 183–199. https://doi.org/10.1080/10476210701533035

Gordon, C. (1991). Governmental rationality: An introduction. In G. Burchell, C. Gordon, & P. Miller (Eds.), *The Foucault effect: Studies in governmentality* (pp. 1–51). University of Chicago Press.

Gorman-Murray, A., Johnston, L., & Waitt, G. (2010). Queer(ing) communication in research relationships: A conversation about subjectivities, methodologies and ethics. In K. Browne & C. J. Nash (Eds.), *Queer methods and methodologies: Intersecting queer theories and social science research* (pp. 98– 112). Routledge.

Grace, A., & Wells, K. (2016). *Sexual and gender minorities in Canadian education and society, 1969–2013: A national handbook for K–12 educators*. Canadian Teachers' Federation.

Green, M. G., & Tucker, J. L. (2011). Tumultuous times of education reform: A critical reflection on caring in policy and practice. *International Journal of Leadership in Education, 14*(1), 1–19. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603124.2010.488701

Gregor, A., & Wilson, K. (1984). *The development of education in Manitoba*. Kendall/Hunt Publishing.

Griffin, P., & Ouellett, M. (2003). From silence to safety and beyond: Historical trends in addressing lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender issues in K–12 schools. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 36*(2), 106–114. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10665680303508

Guyan, K. (2022). *Queer data: Using gender, sex and sexuality data for action*. Bloomsbury Academic.

Hall, W. (2017). The effectiveness of policy interventions for school bullying: A systematic review. *Journal of the Society for Social Work and Research, 8*(1), 45–69. https://doi.org/10.1086/690565

Hammersley, M. (2015). *The myth of research-based policy & practice*. London: Sage. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781473957626

Hankivsky, O., & Jordan-Zachery, J. S. (2019). Introduction: Bringing intersectionality to public policy. In O. Hankivsky & J. S. Jordan-Zachery (Eds.), *The Palgrave handbook of intersectionality in public policy* (pp. 1–28). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-98473-5_1

Hansen, A. L. (2007). School-based support for GLBT students: A review of three levels of research. *Psychology in the Schools*, *44*(8), 839–848. https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.20269

Harper, P. B., McClintock, A., Muñoz, J. E., & Rosen, T. (1997). Queer transexions of race, nation, and gender: An introduction. *Social Text, 52/53*, 1–4.

Henderson, M. (2021, July 25). Beware of two-tiered system in sweeping K-12 reforms, Manitoba educator says. *CBC News*.

Herriot, L., Burns, D. P., & Yeung, B. (2017). Contested spaces: Trans-inclusive school policies and parental sovereignty in Canada. *Gender and Education*. https://doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2017.1396291

Herron, A. (2022, January 27). Indiana house votes to ban transgender girls from playing girls sports. *Indianapolis Star*. Retrieved from https://www.indystar.com/story/news/education/2022/01/27/hb-1041-indiana-house-votes-ban-transgender-girls-girls-sports/9244817002/

Hill, T., Li, N., & Emes, J. (2021). *Education spending in public schools in Canada: 2021 edition*. Fraser Institute. Retrieved from https://www.fraserinstitute.org/sites/default/files/education-spending-in-public-schools-in-canada-2021.pdf

Collins, P. H. (2015). Intersectionality's definitional dilemmas. *Annual Review of Sociology, 41*, 1–20. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-soc-073014-112142

Collins, P. H. (2019). *Intersectionality as critical social theory*. Duke University Press.

hooks, b. (1984). *Feminist theory: From margin to center.* South End Press.

Howlett, M., Ramesh, M., & Perl, A. (2009). *Studying public policy: Policy cycles & policy subsystems* (3rd ed.). Oxford University Press.

Howlett, M., Ramesh, M., & Perl, A. (2020). *Studying public policy: Principles and processes* (4th ed.). Oxford University Press.

Hoye, B. (2023, September 20). Protests over LGBTQ rights in schools come to a head in Manitoba: Protests in Winnipeg, Brandon among '1 Million March 4 Children' events across Canada. *CBC News*. https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/1millionmarch4children-counterprotest-lgbtq-1.6972517

Huff, R. (2020). Governmentality. *Britannica*. Retrieved January 22, 2022 from https://www.britannica.com/topic/governmentality

Human Rights Watch. (2025, May 9). UK: Court ruling threatens trans people: Judgment opens door for discrimination, segregation, and exclusion. News Release. *Human Rights Watch*. https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/05/09/uk-court-ruling-threatens-trans-people

Hunt, S., & Holmes, C. (2015) Everyday decolonization: Living a decolonizing queer politics. *Journal of Lesbian Studies, 19*(2), 154–172. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10894160.2015.970975

Hunter, A. (2023, October 12). Sask. Parental Bill of Rights introduced, notwithstanding clause to be invoked. *CBC News.* https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatchewan/sask-bill-137-notwithstanding-clause-1.6993335

Hursh, D. W. (2006). Marketing education: The rise of standardized testing, accountability, competition, and markets in public education. In E. W. Ross & R. Gibson, *Neoliberalism and education reform* (pp. 15–34). Hampton Press.

Hyatt, D. (2013). The critical policy discourse analysis frame: Helping doctoral students engage with the educational policy analysis. *Teaching in Higher Education, 18*(8), 833–845. https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2013.795935

Ibbitson, J. (2022, April 22). The LGBTQ community is under attack in the U.S. Is Canada at risk? *The Globe & Mail*. Retrieved from https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/article-florida-dont-say-gay-canada-lgbtq/

Indian Affairs and Northern Development. (2010). *Treaties in Manitoba*. Government of Canada. Retrieved from https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2011/ainc-inac/R3-145-2011-eng.pdf

Irvine, A., Drew, P., & Sainsbury, R. (2013). "Am I not answering your questions properly?" Clarification, adequacy and responsiveness in semi-structured telephone and face-to-face interviews. *Qualitative Research, 13*(1), 87–106. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794112439086

Iskander, L., & Shabtay, A. (2018). Who runs the schools?: LGBTQ youth activism and Ontario's Bill 13. *Journal of LGBT Youth, 15*(4), 339–352. https://doi.org/10.1080/19361653.2018.1500508

Jagose, A. (2009). Feminism's queer theory. *Feminism & Psychology, 19*(2): 157–174.

Jakobsen, J. R. (1998). Queer is? Queer does? Normativity and the problem of resistance. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies, 4*(4), 511–536. https://doi.org/10.1215/10642684-4-4-511

Janzen, M. (2021, June 29). Bill 64 opposition not just 'vocal minority'. *Winnipeg Free Press*.

Janzen, M., & Heringer, R. (2023). Who is the "student"? A critical analysis of neo-liberal education reform legislation. *Canadian Journal of Education / Revue canadiens de l'éducation, 46*(3), 545 - 569. https://doi.org/10.53967/cje-rce.5641

Jeffrey, A. (2024, December 4). Alberta legislation on transgender youth, student pronouns and sex education set to become law. *CBC News*. https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/alberta-legislation-on-transgender-youth-student-pronouns-and-sex-education-set-to-become-law-1.7400669

Jennings, T. (2015). Teaching transgressive representations of LGBTQ people in educator preparation: Is conformity required for inclusion? *The Educational Forum, 79*(4), 451–458. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131725.2015.1068420

Kaščák, O., & Pupala, B. (2011). Governmentality – neoliberalism – education: The risk perspective. *Journal of Pedagogy/Pedagogicky Casopis, 2*(2), 145–158. https://doi.org/10.2478/v10159-011-0007-z

Keddie, A. (2016). Children of the market: performativity, neoliberal responsibilisation and the construction of student identities. *Oxford Review of Education, 42*(1), 108–122. https://doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2016.1142865

Keele, J. (2021, July 22). 'Bill 64 is an attack on local government': Winnipeg City Council joins ranks opposting education reform bill. *CTV News*. https://www.ctvnews.ca/winnipeg/article/bill-64-is-an-attack-on-local-government-winnipeg-city-council-joins-ranks-opposing-education-reform-bill/

Keenan, H. B. (2024). Learning without subjects?: Considering trans pedagogies in practice, *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 37*(8), 2223–2235. https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2023.2299013

Kelleher, P. (2021, May 24). *It's been 33 years since Section 28 came into law, and the LGBT+ community remains under attack*. PinkNews.com. Retrieved from https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2021/05/24/section-28-margaret-thatcher-britain-uk-lgbt-rights/

Kendall, G., & Wickham, G. (1999). *Using Foucault's methods*. Sage Publications.

Kivinen, O., & Rinne, R. (1998). State, governmentality and education—the Nordic experience. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 19*(1), 39–52. https://doi.org/10.1080/0142569980190103

Klein, N. (2007). *The shock doctrine: The rise of disaster capitalism*. Vintage.

Knegt, P. (2011). *About Canada: Queer rights*. Fernwood Publishing.

Kokozos, M., & Gonzalez, M. (2020). Critical inclusion: Disrupting LGBTQ normative frameworks in school contexts. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 53*(1–2), 151–164. https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2020.1764881

Konishi, C., Saewyc, E., Homma, Y., & Poon, C. (2013). Population-level evaluation of school-based interventions to prevent problem substance use among gay, lesbian and bisexual adolescents in Canada. *Preventative Medicine*, *57*, 929–933. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ypmed.2013.06.031

Kosciw, J. G., Clark, C. M., & Menard, L. (2022). *The 2021 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of LGBTQ+ youth in our nation's schools*. GLSEN. https://www.glsen.org/research/2021-national-school-climate-survey

Kumashiro, K. (2000). Toward a theory of anti-oppressive education. *Review of Educational Research, 70*(1), 25–53.

Kumashiro, K. K. (Ed.). (2001). *Troubling the intersections of race and sexuality: Queer students of colour and anti-oppressive education*. Rowman & Littlefield.

Kumashiro, K. K. (2002). *Troubling education: Queer activism and antioppressive pedagogy.* RoutledgeFalmer.

Kurt, L. J., & Chenault, K. (2017). School policy and transgender identity expression: A study of school administrators' experiences. *International Journal of Education Policy & Leadership, 12*(3), 1–17. https://doi.org/10.22230/ijepl.2017v12n3a757

Kusch, L. (2021, April 20). Province pushes forward on education tax rebates. *Winnipeg Free Press*. A5.

Lakhani, S. (2020). Queer of color critique. *Lambda Nordica, 25*(1), 127–132. https://doi.org/10.34041/ln.v25.625

Lambert, S. (2019, March 16). New Manitoba consultant was behind sweeping changes in Nova Scotia. *CTV News*. https://www.ctvnews.ca/winnipeg/article/new-manitoba-consultant-was-behind-sweeping-education-changes-in-nova-scotia/

Lapointe, A. A. (2015). Standing “straight” up to homophobia: Straight allies’ involvement in GSAs. *Journal of LGBT Youth, 12*(2), 144–169. https://doi.org/10.1080/19361653.2014.969867

Lapointe, A. A. (2017). “It’s not pans, it's people”: Student and teacher perspectives on bisexuality and pansexuality. *Journal of Bisexuality, 17*(1), 88–107. https://doi.org/10.1080/15299716.2016.1196157

Laswell, H. D. (1956). *The decision process: Seven categories of functional analysis*. University of Maryland Press.

Laswell, H. D. (1971). *A pre-view of policy sciences*. Elsevier.

Laychuk, R. (2021, July 17). Loss of local voice, potential school school closures worry rural residents opposed to Manitoba’s Bill 64. *CBC News.*

Lees, J. D. (2021, October 4). Letters, Oct. 4. Re: *Manitoba Tories embark on long road of repentance* (Opinion, Sept. 24). *Winnipeg Free Press*.

Lemke, T. (2013). Foucault, politics, and failure: Critical reviews of studies in governmentality. In J. Nilsson & S.-O. Wallenstein (Eds.), *Foucault, biopolitics, and governmentality* (pp. 35–52). Södertörn University.

Lenon, S., & Dryden, O. H. (2015). Introduction: Interventions, iterations, and interrogations that disturb the (homo)nation. *Disrupting queer inclusion: Canadian homonationalisms and the politics of belonging* (pp. 3–18). UBC Press.

Leonardi, B., & Staley, S. (2018). What’s involved in “the work”? Understanding administrators’ roles in bringing trans-affirming policies into practice. *Gender and Education, 30*(6), 754–773. https://doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2018.1455967

Letts, W., & Fifield, S. (2019). *STEM of desire: Queer theories and science education*. Brill Sense.

Letts, W. J., & Sears, J. T. (1999). *Queering elementary education: Advancing the dialogue about sexualities and schooling.* Rowman & Littlefield.

Levin, B. (2005). *Governing education*. University of Toronto Press.

Levinson, B. A. U., Sutton, M., & Winstead, T. (2009). Education policy as a practice of power: Theoretical tools, ethnographic methods, democratic options. *Educational Policy, 23*, 767–795.

Liasidou, A. (2008). Critical discourse analysis and inclusive educational policies: The power to exclude. *Journal of Education Policy, 23*(5), 483–500. https://doi.org/10.1080/02680930802148933

Lieutenant Governor of Manitoba. (2024). *Roles and responsibilities*. Lieutenant Governor of Manitoba. https://manitobalg.ca/role/

Lingard, B., & Ozga, J. (2007). Introduction: Reading education policy and politics. In B. Lingard & J. Ozga (Eds.), *The RoutledgeFalmer reader in education policy and politics* (pp. 1–8). Routledge.

Lipman, P. (2006). "No child left behind": Globalization, privatization, and the politics of inequality. In E. W. Ross & R. Gibson (Eds.), *Neoliberalism and education reform* (pp. 35–58). Hampton Press.

Logan, C. (2020, February 16). Section 28: 20 years on from the repeal, effects are still felt. *The National*. Retrieved from https://www.thenational.scot/news/18238377.section-28-20-years-repeal-effects-still-felt/

Long, J. C., Clifton, R. A., & Narth, P. K. (2021, August 17). Don't slam the door on Bill 64. *Winnipeg Free Press*. A7.

Lorde, A. (1984). Age, race, class, and sex. In *Sister outsider: Essays and speeches by Audre Lorde* (pp. 114–123). Crossing Press.

Loutzenheiser, L. W. (2015). 'Who are you calling a problem?': Addressing transphobia and homophobia through school policy. *Critical Studies in Education, 56*(1), 99–115. https://doi.org/10.1080/17508487.2015.990473

Love, B. L. (2019). *We want to do more than survive: Abolitionist teaching and the pursuit of educational freedom*. Beacon Press.

Love, B. L. (2023). *Punished for dreaming: How school reform harms Black children and how we heal*. St. Martin's Press.

Love, H. (2011). "Queers ____ this." In J. Halley & A. Parker (Eds.), *After sex? On writing since queer theory* (pp. 180–191). Duke University Press.

Ludwig, G. (2016). Desiring neoliberalism. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy, 13*, 417–27. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13178-016-0257-6

Lugg, C. A., & Murphy, J. P. (2014). Thinking whimsically: Queering the study of educational policy-making and politics. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 27*(9), 1183–1204. https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2014.916009

Luhmann, S. (1998). Queering/querying pedagogy? Or, pedagogy is a pretty queer thing. In W. F. Pinar (Ed.), *Queer theory in education* (pp. 120–132). Lawrence Erlbaum.

Lundin, M. (2014). Inviting queer ideas into the science classroom: Studying sexuality education from a queer perspective. *Cultural studies of science education, 9*(2), 377–391.

Macgillivray, I. K. (2004a). Gay rights and school policy: A case study in community factors that facilitate or impede educational change. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 17*(3), 347–370. https://doi.org/10.1080/0951839042000204652

Macgillivray, I. K. (2004b). *Sexual orientation and school policy: A practical guide for teachers, administrators, and community activists*. Rowman & Littlefield.

MacIntosh, L. (2007). Does anyone have a Band-Aid? Anti-homophobia discourses and pedagogical impossibilities. *Educational Studies, 41*(1), 33–43. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131940701308874

Macintosh, M. (2021, March 17). 'Our voices won't be any louder.' *Winnipeg Free Press*.

Macintosh, M. (2021, March 19). Province says time to change lesson plan. *Winnipeg Free Press*.

Macintosh, M. (2021, March 24). Educators question province's process. *Winnipeg Free Press*.

Macintosh, M. (2021, March 30). Diversity a must for reworked school system: advocates. *Winnipeg Free Press*.

Macintosh, M. (2021, April 3). Content clause a concern for teachers. *Winnipeg Free Press*.

Macintosh, M. (2021, April 6). Parent collective calls for shredding of bill. *Winnipeg Free Press*.

Macintosh, M. (2021, May 7). Tories accused of politicizing education. *Winnipeg Free Press*.

Macintosh, M. (2021, May 27). Reform bill offers teachable moment: Not appropriate to discuss government policy in classrooms, says education minister. *Winnipeg Free Press*. https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2021/05/27/reform-bill-offers-teachable-moment

Macintosh, M. (2021, June 8). Teachers union 'sharing false information': education minister. *Winnipeg Free Press*.

Macintosh, M. (2021, June 12). Teachers seeing red in education overhaul fight. *Winnipeg Free Press.*

Macintosh, M. (2021, June 15). Cullen sticks up for education bill. *Winnipeg Free Press.*

Macintosh, M. (2021, June 22). Seven Oaks schools directed to relocate Pride flags. *Winnipeg Free Press*.

Macintosh, M. (2021, July 15). Rural voices object to education reforms. *Winnipeg Free Press*.

Macintosh, M. (2021, August 21). Critics demand Cullen quit education portfolio. *Winnipeg Free Press*.

Macintosh, M. (2021, September 3). Back to class on education reform. *Winnipeg Free Press*.

Macintosh, M. (2021, September 4). Back-to-school burnout. *Winnipeg Free Press*.

Macintosh, M. (2022, April 21). Controversial measures scrapped in new Tory education blueprint. *Winnipeg Free Press.*

Macintosh, M. (2024, March 15). The 'rights' fight: Newest culture-war battle zone pits parents versus educators, with kids' identities caught in the middle. *Winnipeg Free Press*. https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/featured/2024/03/15/the-rights-fight

Macintosh, M. (2024, August 27). Teachers, school boards sign groundbreaking four-year provincial contract. *Winnipeg Free Press*. https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2024/08/27/teachers-school-boards-sign-groundbreaking-four-year-provincial-contract

Macintosh, M. (2024, October 1). 'Sad to see it go': Non-profit parent-council organization pulling plug after 70 years. *Winnipeg Free Press*. https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2024/10/01/sad-to-see-it-go-non-profit-parent-council-organization-pulling-plug-after-70-years/

Macintosh, M. (2024, October 11). French teachers approve new contract. *Winnipeg Free Press*. https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2024/10/11/french-teachers-approve-new-contract

Macintosh, M. (2025, January 13). Dozen panellists appointed to hear teacher disciplinary matters. *Winnipeg Free Press*. https://www.winnipegfreepress.com/breakingnews/2025/01/13/dozen-panellists-appointed-to-hear-teacher-disciplinary-matters

MacLean, C. (2021, March 15). Manitoba government plans to eliminate elected school boards in major overhaul of education. *CBC News*. https://www.cbc.ca/amp/1.5950197

MacLean, C. (2023, May 23). Cheers as Brandon School Division rejects call to remove library books on sexuality, gender identity: Hundreds pack high school gymnasium in response to May 8 delegation. *CBC News*. https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/brandon-school-division-books-libraries-1.6852651

MacLean, C. (2023, August 17). Manitoba PCs promise expanded parental rights in schools if re-elected: Proposed new rights include information about curriculum, advance notice about speakers. *CBC News.* https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/manitoba-pcs-promise-expanded-parental-rights-in-schools-if-re-elected-1.6939489

MacLean, C. (2018, May 29). Manitoba government, unions heading to court over wage freeze bill. *CBC News*. https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/manitoba-unions-wage-freeze-lawsuit-1.4681680

Madill, A. (2011). Interaction in the semi-structured interview: A comparative analysis of the use of and response to indirect complaints. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 8*(4), 333–353. https://doi.org/10.1080/14780880903521633

Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning, & Egale Canada Human Rights Trust. (2014). *Safe and caring schools—A resource for equity and inclusion in Manitoba schools (MyGSA Toolkit)*. Government of Education. Retrieved from https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/safe_schools/mygsa/index.html

Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning. (2022a, April). *Manitoba's K to 12 education action plan: A roadmap in response to the recommendations of the commission on K to 12 education*. Government of Manitoba. Retrieved from https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/action_plan/index.html

Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning. (2022b). *Mamàhtawisiwin: The wonder we are born with: An Indigenous education policy framework*. Government of Manitoba. Retrieved from https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/iid/

Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning. (2023, May). *Manitoba's K to 12 education action plan: Update – May 2023*. Government of Manitoba. Retrieved from https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/action_plan/index.html

Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning, & Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba. (2023, June). *Treaty education for all: Manitoba's plan for K to 12 Treaty education.* Manitoba Education. https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/iee/treaty_education.html

Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning. (2024, July). *Framework for Learning*. Province of Manitoba. Retrieved September 2024 from https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/framework/docs/overview.pdf

Manitoba Education and Training. (2000). *Kindergarten to Senior 4 Physical Education/Health Education: Manitoba curriculum framework of outcomes for active healthy lifestyles*. Retrieved 5 January 2024, from https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/physhlth/

Manitoba Education and Training. (2014 [Revised 2017]). *Provincial code of conduct: Appropriate interventions and disciplinary consequences*. Government of Manitoba. Retrieved from https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/safe_schools/index.html

Manitoba Education and Training. (2014). *Taking action against bullying*. Government of Manitoba. Retrieved from https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/support/taking_action/index.html

Manitoba Education and Training. (2017a). *Supporting transgender and gender diverse students in Manitoba schools*. Government of Manitoba. Retrieved from https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/support/transgender/index.html

Manitoba Education and Training. (2017b). *Safe and caring schools: A whole-school approach to planning for safety and belonging*. Government of Manitoba. Retrieved from https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/support/whole_school/index.html

Manitoba Education and Training. (2021). *Better education starts today: Putting students first*. Government of Manitoba. Retrieved from https://bettereducationmb.ca

Manitoba School Boards Association. (2023). *School boards and trusteeship in Manitoba*. Retrieved from https://www.mbschoolboards.ca/about/schools-boards/

Manitoba Teachers' Society. (2023, March 31). Bill 35 – The Education Administration Amendment Act. *The Manitoba Teachers' Society*. https://www.mbteach.org/mtscms/2023/03/31/bill-35-what-you-need-to-know/

Manness, C., & MacKinnon, J. (2020). *Our children's success: Manitoba's future: Report of the commission on K to 12 education*. Government of Manitoba. Retrieved from https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/educationreview/docs/commission-report/index.html

Marquez, R., & Brockenbrough, E. (2013). Queer youth v. the State of California: Interrogating legal discourses on the rights of queer students of color. *Curriculum Inquiry, 43*(4), 461–482. https://doi.org/10.1111/curi.12021

Martino, W., Airton, L., Kuhl, D., & Cumming-Potvin, W. (2019). Mapping transgender *policyscapes*: A policy analysis of transgender inclusivity in the education system in Ontario. *Journal of Education Policy, 34*(3), 302–330. https://doi.org/10.1080/02680939.2018.1478992

Martino, W., & Cumming-Potvin, W. (2018). Transgender and gender expansive education research, policy and practice: Reflecting on epistemological and ontological possibilities of bodily becoming. *Gender and Education, 30*(6), 687–694. https://doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2018.1487518

Martino, W., & Cumming-Potvin, W. (2019). 'Effeminate arty boys and butch soccer girls': Investigating queer and trans-affirmative pedagogies under conditions of neoliberal governance. *Research Papers in Education, 34*(2), 131–152. https://doi.org/10.1080/02671522.2017.1402082

Martino, W., Kassen, J., & Omercajic, K. (2022). Supporting transgender students in schools: Beyond an individualist approach to trans inclusion in the education system. *Educational Review, 74*(4), 753–772. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2020.1829559

Massaquoi, N. (2015). Queer theory and intersectionality. In J. D. Wright (Ed.), *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences* (2nd ed.). Elsevier.

Mayberry, M. (2006). School reform efforts for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered students. *The Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas, 79*(6), 262–264. https://doi.org/10.3200/TCHS.79.6.262-264

Mayo, C., & Rodriguez, N. M. (2019). Wanting more: Queer theory and education. In C. Mayo & N. M. Rodriguez (Eds.), *Queer pedagogies: Theory, praxis, politics* (pp. 1–8). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-27066-7

Mayo, C., & Rodriguez, N. M. (Eds.). *Queer pedagogies: Theory, praxis, politics*. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-27066-7

McCann, H., & Monaghan, W. (2020). *Queer theory now: From foundations to futures*. Macmillan International and Red Globe Press.

McConaghy, C. (2004). On cartographies of anti-homophobia in teacher education (and the crisis of witnessing rural student teacher refusals). *Teaching Education, 15*(1), 63–79. https://doi.org/10.1080/1047621042000179998

McCracken, M., & Rogers, P. (2021, May 12). Cautionary tales from Nova Scotia's education review. *Winnipeg Free Press.* Retrieved from https://policyfix.ca/2021/05/12/nova-scotia-education-overhaul-a-cautionary-tale-for-manitoba/

McCready, L. (2004a). Some challenges facing queer youth programs in urban high schools: Racial segregation and de-normalizing Whiteness. *Journal of Gay and Lesbian Issues in Education, 1*(3), 37– 51.

McCready, L. T. (2004b). Understanding the marginalization of gay and gender non-conforming black male students. *Theory Into Practice, 43*(2), 136–143. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15430421tip4302_7

McCready, L. T. (2019). Queeruptions, queer of color analysis, radical action and education reform: An introduction. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 52*(4), 370–372. https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2019.1705206

McMackon, C. (2024, December 19). N.B. government reverses to school gender identity policy. *Global News.* https://globalnews.ca/news/10926212/new-brunswick-liberals-policy-713-revised/

Mettler, S. (2016). The policyscape and the challenges of contemporary politics to policy maintenance. *Perspectives on Politics, 14* (2), 369–390. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592716000074

Meyer, E. J. (2019). Ending bullying and harassment: The case for a queer pedagogy. In C. Mayo & N. M. Rodriguez (Eds.), *Queer pedagogies: Theory, praxis, politics* (pp. 41–57). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-27066-7

Meyer, E. J., & Keenan, H. (2018). Can policies help schools affirm gender diversity? A policy archaeology of transgender-inclusive policies in California schools. *Gender and Education, 30*(6), 736–753. https://doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2018.1483490

Miller, R. A., & Smith, A. C. (2020): Microaggressions experienced by LGBTQ students with disabilities, *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*. https://doi.org/10.1080/19496591.2020.1835669

Mizzi, R. C., & Walton, G. (2024). Moving beyond myopia: Queer pedagogy in globalized adult education. In J. Gedro & T. Rocco (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of LGBTQ identity in organizations and society* (pp. 57-63). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003128151-6

Moore, S. (2025). Parental rights as privatization. *Our Schools/Our Selves,* Summer/Fall 2025, 13–15. Retrieved from https://www.policyalternatives.ca/news-research/our-schools-our-selves-summer-fall-2025/

Moore, S., & Janzen, M. (2021, April 7). Bill 64 undermines public education. *Winnipeg Free Press*.

Moore, S., & Lopuck, K. (2025). Discursive decoys: The legitimation of homophobia and transphobia, educational neutrality, and teacher deprofessionalization in mainstream media's coverage of the "parental rights" movement in Manitoba. *Canadian Journal of Education / Revue canadienne de l'éducation, 48*(2), 686–713. https://doi.org/10.53967/cje-rce.6933

Morgan, J. J., Mancl, D. B., Kaffar, B. J., & Ferreira, D. (2011). Creating safe environments for students with disabilities who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. *Intervention in School and Clinic, 47*(1), 3–13. https://doi.org/10.1177/1053451211406546

Morgensen, S. L. (2010). Settler homonationalism: Theorizing settler colonialism within queer modernities. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies, 16*(1–2), 105–131. https://doi.org/10.1215/10642684-2009-015

Mountain View School Division. (2024, October 8). *A message from the MVSD Board of Trustees*. Mountain View School Division. https://www.mvsd.ca/apps/news/article/850186

Mullet, D. R. (2018). A general critical discourse analysis framework for educational research. *Journal of Advanced Academics, 29*(2), 116–142. https://doi.org/10.1177/1932202X18758260

Namaste, V. K. (2009). Undoing theory: The "transgender question" and the epistemic violence of Anglo-American feminist theory. *Hypatia, 24*(3), 11–32. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1527-2001.2009.01043.x

Nation.lk. (2022, January 29). 'Don't say gay' bill would keep Florida schools from teaching Pulse shooting. *Nation.lk*. Retrieved from https://nation.lk/online/don-t-say-gay-bill-would-keep-florida-schools-from-teaching-pulse-shooting-170219.html

Nixon, D., & Givens, N. (2007). An epitaph to section 28? Telling tales out of school about changes and challenges to discourses of sexuality. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 20*(4), 449–471. https://doi.org/10.1080/09518390601176564

Northwestern Now. (2025, January 31). Three takeaways from new executive order on 'gender ideology.' *Northwestern Now*. https://news.northwestern.edu/stories/2025/01/trans-people-face-violence-due-to-gender-executive-order/

O'Grady, K., Houme, K., Costa, E., Rostamian, A., & Tao, Y. (2021). *PCAP 2019: Report on the pan-Canadian assessment of mathematics, reading, and science*. Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC). Retrieved from https://www.cmec.ca/Publications/Lists/Publications/Attachments/426/PCAP2019-Public-Report-EN.pdf

O'Leary, B. (2021, April 19). Education bill hammers those who help. *Winnipeg Free Press*.

Oliver, C. (2012). Critical realist grounded theory: A new approach for social work research. *British Journal of Social Work, 42*, 371–387. https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcr064

Orsini, M., & Smith, M. (eds.) (2007). *Critical policy studies*. UBC Press.

Osborne, K. (1999). One hundred years of history teaching in Manitoba schools. Part 1: 1897–1927. *Manitoba History, 36*(Autumn/Winter), n.pag. Retrieved from http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/mb_history/36/historyteaching.shtml

Ouellett, M. (1996). Systemic pathways for social transformation: School change, multicultural organization development, multicultural education, and LGBT youth. *Journal of Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Identity, 1*(4), 273–293.

Ozga, J. (2000). *Policy research in educational settings: Contested terrain*. Open University Press.

Ozga, J. (2008). Governing knowledge: Research steering and research quality. *European Educational Research Journal, 7*(3), 261–272. http://dx.doi.org/10.2304/eerj.2008.7.3.261

Ozga, J. (2021). Problematising policy: The development of (critical) policy sociology. *Critical Studies in Education, 62*(3), 290–305. https://doi.org/10.1080/17508487.2019.1697718

Parker, D., & McGray, R. (2015). Tensions between teaching sexuality education and neoliberal policy reform in Quebec's professional competencies for beginning teachers. *McGill Journal of Education, 50*(1), 1–15.

Parson, L. (2019). Considering positionality: The ethics of conducting research with marginalized groups. In K. K. Strunk & L. A. Locke (Eds.), *Research methods for social justice and equity in education* (pp. 15–32). Palgrave Macmillan.

Payne, E. C., & Smith, M. J. (2018). Refusing relevance: School administrator resistance to offering professional development addressing LGBTQ issues in schools. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 54*(2), 183–215. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X17723426

Perfect, M. B. (1978). *One hundred years in the history of the rural schools of Manitoba: Their formation, reorganization and dissolution (1871–1971)* [Unpublished master's thesis]. University of Manitoba.

Peter, T., Campbell, C., & Taylor, C. (2021). *Still every class in every school: Final report on the second climate survey on homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia in Canadian schools.* Toronto, ON: Egale Canada Human Rights Trust.

Peter, T., Taylor, C., & Campbell, C. (2016). "You can't break... when you're already broken": The importance of school climate when examining LGBTQ youths' experiences with suicide and suicide behavior. *Journal of Gay and Lesbian Mental Health, 20*(3), 195–213.

Peter, T., Taylor, C., & Chamberland, L. (2015). A queer day in Canada: Examining Canadian high school students' experiences with school-based homophobia in two large-scale studies. *Journal of Homosexuality, 62*(2), 186–206. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2014.969057

Peters, M. (2001). Foucault and governmentality: Understanding the neoliberal paradigm of education policy. *The School Field, 12*(5/6), 61–72.

Peters, M. (2009) Introduction: Governmentality, education and the end of neoliberalism? In M. A. Peters, A. C. Besley, M. Olssen, S. Maurer, & S. Weber (Eds.), *Governmentality studies in education* (pp. xxvii–xlvii). Sense Publishers.

Peters, M. (2014). Problematizing liberal cosmopolitanisms: Foucault and neoliberal cosmopolitan governmentality. *Contemporary Readings in Law and Social Justice, 6*(1), 13–37.

Peters, M. A., Besley, A. C., Olssen, Maurer, S., & Weber, S. (Eds.). (2009). *Governmentality studies in education*. Sense Publishers.

Pinar, W. (1998). *Queer theory in education*. Lawrence Erlbaum.

PressProgress. (2021, June 25). Brian Pallister's education bill further entrenches systemic racism in Manitoba schools, parents and teachers say: Government accuses teachers of being manipulated by 'misinformation.' *PressProgress*. https://pressprogress.ca/brian-pallisters-education-bill-further-entrenches-systemic-racism-in-manitoba-schools-parents-and-teachers-say/

Probe Research. (2021, September). *Manitoba provincial party support and views on PC leadership candidates*. Probe Research. https://www.probe-research.com/polls/progressive-conservative-support-rebounds-manitoba

Prosser, J. (2006). Judith Butler: Queer feminism, transgender, and the transubstantiation of sex. In S. Stryker & S. Whittle (Eds.), *The transgender studies reader* (pp. 257–280). Routledge.

Puar, J. (2007). *Terrorist assemblages: Homonationalism in queer times*. Duke University Press.

Pyne, J. (2020). "Building a person": Legal and clinical personhood for autistic and trans children in Ontario. *Canadian Journal of Law and Society / Revue Canadienne droit et société, 35*(2), 341–365. https://doi.org/10.1017/cls.2020.8

Quinlivan, K., & Town, S. (1999). Queer pedagogy, educational practice and lesbian and gay youth. *Qualitative Studies in Education, 12*(5), 509–524. https://doi.org/10.1080/095183999235926

Rayside, D. (2008). *Queer inclusions, continental divisions: Public recognition of sexual diversity in Canada and the United States*. University of Toronto Press.

Rea, J., & Scott, J. (2021). Manitoba Act. In *The Canadian Encyclopedia*. Retrieved from https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/manitoba-act

Reimer, K., & Brown, B. (2021, April 28). Education changes will favour the fortunate. *Winnipeg Free Press*.

Ring, T. (2022, March 29). 16 states pushing 'Don't Say Gay' bills and censorship laws right now. *The Advocate*. Retrieved from https://www.advocate.com/law/2022/3/29/16-states-pushing-dont-say-gay-bills-and-censorship-laws-right-now#media-gallery-media-2

RISE Project on 2SLGBTQ+-Expansive Teacher Education. (n.d.). *RISE Project: Queering teacher education*. https://riseproject.ca

Robinson, M. (2014). "A hope to lift both my spirits": Preventing bisexual erasure in Aboriginal schools *Journal of Bisexuality, 14*(1), 18–35. https://doi.org/10.1080/15299716.2014.872457

Rodriguez, N., Mizzi, R. C., Allen, L., & Cover, R. (2023). *Queer studies and education: An international reader*. Oxford University Press.

Rodriguez, N., & Pinar, W. (2007). *Queering straight teachers: Discourse and identity in education*. Peter Lang.

Roen, K. (2006). Transgender theory and embodiment: The risk of racial marginalization. In S. Stryker & S. Whittle (Eds.), *The transgender studies reader* (pp. 656–665). Routledge.

Rosario, M., Schrimshaw, E. W., & Hunter, J. (2011). Different patterns of sexual identity development over time: Implications for the psychological adjustment of lesbian, gay, and bisexual youths. *Journal of Sex Research, 48*(1), 3–15. https://doi.org/10.1080/00224490903331067

Rosen, K. (2021, June 23). Manitoba investigating after school division instructed to remove Pride flags from same poles as Canadian flags. *CTV News.* https://www.ctvnews.ca/winnipeg/article/manitoba-investigating-after-school-division-instructed-to-remove-pride-flags-from-same-poles-as-canadian-flags/

Ross, E. W., & Gibson, R. (2006). Introduction. In E. W. Ross & R. Gibson (Eds.), *Neoliberalism and education reform* (pp. 1–14). Hampton Press.

Rural Voices United. (2021, July 22). Op-Ed: Convince Manitobans on Bill 64. *Southern Manitoba Review*.

Russell, S. T., Kosciw, J., Horn, S., & Saewyc, E. (2010). Safe schools policy for LGBTQ students. *Social Policy Report*, *24*(4), 3–17.

Russell, S. T. (2011). Challenging homophobia in schools: Policies and programs for safe school climate. *Educar em Revista*, *Curitiba*, *Brasil*, *39*, 123–138.

Russell, V. (2006). Equity undone: The impact of the conservative Ontario government's education reforms on the Triangle Program. *Journal of Gay and Lesbian Issues in Education, 3*(4), 45–57. https://doi.org/10.1300/J367v03n04_04

Ryan, C. L., & Hermann-Wilmarth, J. M. (2013). Already on the shelf: Queer readings of award-winning children's literature. *Journal of Literacy Research, 45*(2), 142–172.

Sadowski, M., Chow, S., & Scanlon, C. P. (2009). Meeting the needs of LGBTQ youth: A "relational assets" approach. *Journal of LGBT Youth, 6*(2–3), 174–198. https://doi.org/10.1080/19361650903013493

Saewyc, E. M., Konishi, C., Rose, H. A., & Homma, Y. (2014). School-based strategies to reduce suicidal ideation, suicide attempts, and discrimination among sexual minority and heterosexual adolescents in Western Canada. *International Journal of Child, Youth and Family Studies*, *5*(1), 89–112.

Saldana, J. (2016). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers (3rd ed.)*. Sage.

Sale, T. (2021, July 13). School-tax rebate is classic bait and switch. *Winnipeg Free Press*.

Scheurich, J. J. (1994). Policy archaeology: a new policy studies methodology. *Journal of Education Policy, 9*(4), 297–316. https://doi.org/10.1080/0268093940090402

Seddon, T. (1996). The principle of choice in policy research. *Journal of Education Policy, 11*(2), 197–214. https://doi.org/10.1080/0268093960110205

Seine River School Division. (2024). *Procedure no. 116.1: Respect for human diversity.* Seine River School Division. Retrieved from https://www.srsd.ca/governance/policies___procedures/100-_governance

Settee, G. (2021, June 7). Grand Chief Settee's letter to Manitoba Ministers re: Request to Immediately Withdraw Bill 64, The Education Modernization Act. *Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc.* https://mkonation.com/requesttowithdrawbill64/

Shebahkeget, O. (2024, October 8). 'Hostile intentions' behind embattled Manitoba school board's new flag restrictions: employee. *CBC News*. https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/mountain-view-school-division-flag-ban-1.7346362

Sheppard, B., Galgay, G., Brown, J., & Wiens, J. (2013). *School boards matter: Report of the Pan-Canadian study of school district governance*. https://cdnsba.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/School-Boards-Matter-Report-Small.pdf

Shewchuk, S., & Cooper, A. (2018). Exploring equity in Ontario: A provincial scan of equity policies across school boards. *Canadian Journal of Education / Revue canadienne de l'éducation, 41*(4), 917–953.

Shlasko, G. D. (2005). Queer (v.) pedagogy. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 38*(2), 123–134. https://doi.org/10.1080/10665680590935098

Short, D. (2013). Bound for glory: Bill-18, The Public Schools Amendment Act (Safe and Inclusive Schools). *Manitoba Law Journal, 36*(2), 115–136.

Short, D. (2014). Queering schools, gay–straight alliances, and the law. In G. Walton (Ed.), *The gay agenda: Claiming space, identity, and justice* (pp. 327–343). Peter Lang.

Short, D., MacDougall, B., & Clark, P. T. (2021). *Making the case: 2SLGBTQ+ rights and religion in schools.* Purich Books / UBC Press.

Simms, E. F. (1944). *A history of public education in Manitoba from 1870 to 1890 inclusive* [unpublished Master's thesis]. Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba.

Simons, M., & Masschelein, J. (2006). The learning society and governmentality: An introduction. *Educational Philosophy and Theory, 38*(4), 417–430. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-5812.2006.00202.x

Sinclair, N. (2021, March 19). Indigenous education to be set back by decades by Tory bill. *Winnipeg Free Press*.

skelton, j. w. (2022). Schools often fail to expect trans and nonbinary elementary children: What gender independent, nonbinary, and trans children desire. *Teachers College Record, 124*(8), 244–274. https://doi.org/10.1177/01614681221126243

Slee, R. (2008). Beyond special and regular schooling? An inclusive education reform agenda. *International Studies in Sociology of Education, 18*(2), 99–116. https://doi.org/10.1080/09620210802351342

Slee, R. (2019). Belonging in an age of exclusion. *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 23*(9), 909–922.

Snapp, S. D., McGuire, J. K., Sinclair, K. O., Gabrion, K., & Russell, S. T. (2015). LGBTQ-inclusive curricula: Why supportive curricula matter. *Sex Education, 15*(6), 580–596. https://doi.org/10.1080/14681811.2015.1042573

Snider, K. (1996). Race and sexual orientation: The (im)possibility of these intersections in educational policy. *Harvard Educational Review, 66*(2), 294–302.

Sokhi-Bulley, B. (2014). Governmentality: Notes on the thought of Michel Foucault. *Critical legal thinking*. Retrieved from https://criticallegalthinking.com/2014/12/02/governmentality-notes-thought-michel-foucault/

SoRelle, M. E. (2022). Politics of the policyscape. In A. Farazmand (Ed.), *Global encyclopedia of public administration, public policy, and governance*. Springer. https://doi-org/10.1007/978-3-030-66252-3_2532

Sosin, K. (2022, April 20). “Don't Say Gay” bills aren't new. They've just been revived. *Them*. Retrieved from https://www.them.us/story/history-of-dont-say-gay-bills-lgbtq-education-discrimination

St. John, A., Travers, R., Munro, L., Liboro, R., Schneider, M., & Greig, C. L. (2014). The success of Gay– Straight Alliances in Waterloo Region, Ontario: A confluence of political and social factors. *Journal of LGBT Youth*, *11*(2), 150–170. https://doi.org/10.1080/19361653.2014.878564

Steinmetz, K. (2020, February 20). She coined the term 'intersectionality' over 30 years ago. Here's what it means to her today. *Time*. Retrieved from https://time.com/5786710/kimberle-crenshaw-intersectionality/

Stephenson, G. (2021, October 4). After Bill 64, reform remains an issue. *Winnipeg Free Press*.

Stewart, J. (2008). *The history of special education in Manitoba* [Slidedeck presentation]. Retrieved from https://slideplayer.com/slide/231579/

Stirling, B. E. (2019, June 4). Alberta's GSA fight and the rights of the queer child. In G. Mauro (Chair), *Please (don't) hold still: Doing research and advocacy with queer youth, the ever-becoming* [Panel]. Queer Studies in Education & Culture (QSEC), Canadian Society for the Study of Education (CSSE) Conference, Congress for the Social Sciences and Humanities 2019, Vancouver, BC.

Sullivan, N. (2003). *A critical introduction to queer theory*. New York University Press.

Sumara, D., Davis, B., & Iftody, T. (2006). Normalizing literary responses in the teacher education classroom. *Changing English, 13*(1), 55–67. https://doi.org/10.1080/13586840500523497

Szalacha, L. A. (2003). Safer sexual diversity climates: Lessons learned from an evaluation of Massachusetts safe schools program for gay and lesbian students. *American Journal of Education*, *110*(1), 58–88. http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/377673

Tasker, J. P. (2023, September 9). Conservatives approve policies to limit transgender health care for minors, end race-based hiring: Other debate focused on female spaces, the energy industry and Canada's passport. *CBC News*. https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/conservative-policy-convention-transgender-1.6961991

Tattrie, J., & McIntosh, A. (2020). *Manitoba and Confederation*. The Canadian Encyclopedia. Retrieved from https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/manitoba-and-confederation

Taylor, C. G. (2008). A human rights approach to stopping homophobic bullying in schools. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services, 19*(3–4), 157–172. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10538720802161672

Taylor, C. (2012). A Canadian thaw? Signs of progress in the struggle for LGBTQ-inclusive schools. *MASS Journal: The official magazine of the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents, Fall,* 20–24. http://mass.mb.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/mass_journal_fall2012.pdf

Taylor, C. (2014). Our right to choose: Religious conservatives versus LGBTQ inclusive schools. In G. Walton (Ed.), *The gay agenda: Claiming space, identity, and justice* (pp. 309–325). Peter Lang.

Taylor, C. & Peter, T. (with McMinn, T.L., Elliott, T., Beldom, S., Ferry, A., Gross, Z., Paquin, S., & Schachter, K.). (2011). *Every class in every school: The first national climate survey on homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia in Canadian schools. Final report*. Egale Canada Human Rights Trust.

Taylor, C., Peter, T., Campbell, C., Meyer, E., Ristock, J., & Short, D. (2015). *The Every Teacher Project on LGBTQ-inclusive education in Canada's K-12 schools: Final report.* Winnipeg, MB: Manitoba Teachers' Society.

Taylor, C. G., Meyer, E. J., Peter, T., Ristock, J., Short, D., & Campbell, C. (2016). Gaps between beliefs, perceptions, and practices: The Every Teacher Project on LGBTQ-inclusive education in Canadian schools. *Journal of LGBT Youth, 13*(1–2), 112–140. https://doi.org/10.1080/19361653.2015.1087929

Taylor C., Peter T., Edkins T., Campbell C., Émond G., & Saewyc E. (2016). *The National Inventory of School District Interventions in Support of LGBTQ Student Wellbeing: Final Report*. Vancouver, BC: Stigma and Resilience Among Vulnerable Youth Centre, University of British Columbia.

Taylor, S. (2004). Researching educational policy and change in 'new times': Using critical discourse analysis. *Journal of Education Policy, 19*(4), 433–451. https://doi.org/10.1080/0268093042000227483

Thomas, P. G. (2021, September 4). Pallister's legacy is a mixed bag. *Winnipeg Free Press*.

Thomson, S. B. (2011). Sample size and grounded theory. *JOAAG, 5*(1), 45–52.

Tikly, L. (2003). Governmentality and the study of education policy in South Africa. *Journal of Education Policy, 18*(2), 161–174. https://doi.org/10.1080/0268093022000043074

Timonen, V., Foley, G., & Conlon, C. (2018). Challenges when using grounded theory: A pragmatic introduction to doing GT research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 17*, 1–10. https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406918758086

Tooth, J. (2008). *Reflection of citizenship and citizenship education in Manitoba civics textbooks, 1911–2007* [unpublished doctoral thesis]. Faculty of Education, University of Winnipeg.

Torrance, H. (2017). Blaming the victim: assessment, examinations, and the responsibilisation of students and teachers in neo-liberal governance. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education, 38*(1), 83–96. https://doi.org/10.1080/01596306.2015.1104854

Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba. (n.d.). Numbered Treaties. *Treaty Relations Commission of Manitoba*. Retrieved March 28, 2025 from https://trcm.ca/lets-talk-treaties/treaties-with-the-crown/

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2015). *Honouring the truth, reconciling for the future: Summary of the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*. Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

Tucker, J., & Fushell, M. (2021). Neoliberal influences: The aftermath of educational reform—a reflective analysis. *International Journal of Educational Reform, 30*(4), 361–378. https://doi.org/10.1177/1056787921998342

Turner, W. B. (2000). *A genealogy of queer theory*. Temple University Press.

Verrette, M. (2016). Manitoba Schools Question. In *The Canadian Encyclopedia*. Retrieved from https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/manitoba-schools-question

Vidovich, L. (2007). Removing policy from its pedestal: Some theoretical framings and practical possibilities. *Educational Review, 59*(3), 285–298. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131910701427231

Wallin, D., Young, J., & Levin, B. (2021). *Understanding Canadian schools: An introduction to educational administration* (6th ed.). University of Saskatchewan Open Press.

Walton, G. (2004). Bullying and homophobia in Canadian schools: The politics of policies, programs, and educational leadership. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Issues in Education*, *1*(4), 23–36. https://doi.org/10.1300/ J367v01n04_03

Walton, G. (2006). H-cubed: A primer on bullying and sexuality diversity for educators. *Professional Development Perspectives, 6*(2), 13–20.

Walton, G. (2010). The problem trap: Implications of Policy Archaeology Methodology for anti-bullying policies. *Journal of Education Policy, 25*(2), 135–150. https://doi.org/10.1080/02680930903428630

Warner, M. (1993). Introduction. In M. Warner (Ed.), *Fear of a queer planet: Queer politics and social theory*. University of Minnesota Press.

Warner, M. (1999). *The trouble with normal: Sex, politics, and the ethics of queer life*. Harvard University Press.

Whitley, J., & Holloweck, T. (2020). Includion and equity in education: Current policy reform in Nova Scotia, Canada. *Prospects, 49*, 297–312. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11125-020-09503-z

Wiens, J. R. (2021, September 25). Poverty greatest threat to children. *Winnipeg Free Press*.

Wilson, A. (2008). N'tacimowin inna nah': Our coming in stories. *Canadian Woman Studies / Les cahier de la femme, 26*(3–4), 193–199.

Wilson, A. (2015). Our Coming In stories: Cree identity, body sovereignty and gender self-determination. *Journal of Global Indigeneity, 1*(1), 1–5. http://ro.uow.edu.au/jgi/vol1/iss1/4

Wilson, A. (2016, December 6). *Coming in to Indigenous sovereignty: Relationality and resurgence*. Weweni Lecture Series, Winnipeg, MB, Canada. https://www.uwinnipeg.ca/indigenous/weweni/past-wewenis/coming-in-to-indigenous-sovereignty.html

Wilt, J. (2019, August 28). The devastation of Manitoba: An autoposy of Pallister's austerity regime. *Canadian Dimension*. https://canadiandimension.com/articles/view/the-devastation-of-manitoba

Wilson, A. (2021). Queering land-based education during Covid19. *Journal of Global Indigeneity* 5 (1): 1–10. https://www.journalofglobalindigeneity.com/article/19438-queering-land-based-education-during-covid19

Wingrove, J. (2013, 17 May). Gay teen holds the line for Manitoba bullying bill. *The Globe & Mail.* https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/gay-teen-holds-the-line-for-manitoba-bullying-bill/article9863497/

Winnipeg Free Press. (2021, April 10). Editorial: Sensitive-content clause is a backward step. *Winnipeg Free Press*.

Winnipeg Free Press. (2021, July 19). Editorial: The 'vocal minority' is getting louder. *Winnipeg Free Press*.

Winnipeg Free Press. (2021, September 2). Manitoba government axes controversial education reform bill. *Winnipeg Free Press*.

Winton, S. (2022). *Unequal benefits: Privatization and public education in Canada*. University of Toronto Press.

Wright, JJ, & Manuel, C. A. (2025). Cripping and queering gender-based violence prevention: Bridging disability justice, queer joy, and consent education. *Culture, Health & Sexuality, 27*(4), 451–466. https://doi.org/10.1080/13691058.2024.2380768

Yoon, E., & Young, J. (2021, May 27). Centralized education model raises serious questions. *Winnipeg Free Press*.

Appendix A: Semi-structured Interview Protocol

As outlined in the Methodology section, participants were recruited through targeted participant recruitment based on their professional roles or participation in public discourse regarding Bill 64. Participants who expressed interest in being part of the interviews for this project were invited to participate in a 60–90-minute semi-structured interview that began with an informed consent procedure that included the opportunity for participants to indicate whether they wished to be named or to be anonymized. Participants were provided with a simplified version of the interview question framework (essentially, the questions below but with the prompts removed for simplicity).

Once consent was obtained, the interview formally began and the recorder was started; consent was recorded or, in cases where signed consent forms were collected, reiterated at the start of the recording with explicit consent recorded and a statement regarding anonymity (this ensured this information would be embedded in the transcript). Interview questions covered three main areas: (1) Participant understandings of Bill 64 and the education reform effort overall, including the values, motivations, and justifications for the bill; (2) Personal and public reception to the bill, including specific topics both in support of and in opposition to the proposed reform; and (3) Understandings of 2SLGBTQIA+ students and topics in Bill 64 and in broader educational terms, such as bigger social discourses related to 2SLGBTQIA+ subjects in educational contexts. Interviews were conducted using the following semi-structured interview protocol:

- Tell me about yourself and your work.
  - Prompts: Where do you work? What's your position/responsibilities? How long have you worked in this position? How long in this field? What efforts or actions did you take in response to Bill 64 (e.g., were you part of any community organizations or any of the groups involved with opposing Bill 64)?
  - Prompts: Would you tell me about your social positionality? What is your gender, sexual orientation, racialized or cultural identity?
- Can you explain to me broadly what Bill 64 was about?
  - Prompts: Pretend I haven't heard of the bill. What was its purpose? What does "education reform" mean to you? How did you develop this understanding about Bill 64 (e.g., read it, heard from others, news media)?
- What do you think the main motivation for Bill 64 was?
  - Prompts: Why do you think the government introduced education reform at this time? What were they hoping to accomplish? Why do you think this was the motivation?
- What were some of your reservations about Bill 64?

- Prompts: Did you oppose or support the bill publicly? How did you do this? On what grounds? What were your criticisms/oppositions to the bill? What was missing from the bill?
- In most cases, participants will have been identified and invited to participate *because* of their public engagement with the bill. I will ask about these efforts/commentaries and provide specific instances of their engagement to tell me about (e.g., asking about specific arguments that editorial writers articulated; asking about specific campaigns they ran or participated in, what their role was, what the campaign's strategy entailed, etc.).

- What were some positive things about the bill that you could support?
  - Prompts: Are there any specific provisions you felt could be usefully developed? Were they adequately framed within the bill or in public discourse regarding the bill? Do you think these positives should be pursued in future reform efforts?
- Why do you think that Bill 64 was withdrawn?
- Now that some time has passed since Bill 64 was dismissed, would you describe your reflections on that process? What needs/topics did it highlight for you? What would you like to see in future education reform in Manitoba?
  - Prompts: If you could change anything about education in Manitoba, what would it/those things be? Why are these aspects important? How are these things addressed in the bill (either explicitly or implicitly)? Since Bill 64, have these conversations changed for you (e.g., what conversations does it allow; what "hot spots" in education have been highlighted; are you more able to talk about this topics now)?
- I'm particularly interested in how 2SLGBTQIA+ students and 2SLGBTQIA+ content is addressed in Bill 64. Where do you see these topics addressed in Bill 64?
  - Prompts: Where are 2SLGBTQIA+ (or sexual and gender diversity) people/topics mentioned? Where are they excluded? Where do you think they could be included? How do these topics relate to the reservations we've already discussed?
- During the course of Bill 64 – from the time it was introduced and throughout the public discussion of the bill until it was withdrawn – what did you hear about 2SLGBTQIA+ students or 2SLGBTQIA+ content in the bill?
  - Prompts (if they identify something): Did you discuss these topics with colleagues or with other people in your life? Were they at the forefront of your attention? How do they relate to your work? To your hopes for education in Manitoba? To the concerns you've expressed about the bill? Do you see 2SLGBTQIA+ topics related to the concerns you discussed (racism/poverty/school achievement/etc., depending on their stated concerns)?
  - Prompts (if *nothing* or *very little*): Why do you think people weren't really talking about 2SLGBTQIA+ issues in relation to this bill? What other topics/issues were people talking about that might relate to 2SLGBTQIA+ people/topics in the education reform effort?
- If 2SLGBTQIA+ students and content were added to a future education reform, what would you want to see there?
  - Prompts: How does support for 2SLGBTQIA+ students align with other anti-oppression efforts? Does it support anti-racism? Efforts to integrate Indigenous education? Inclusive education practices for exceptional learners or students with disabilities? Efforts to address poverty or economic inequities among students? What overlaps do you see? What could future reform look like that is broadly anti-oppressive?
- What is on your mind when it comes to supporting 2SLGBTQIA+ students/content in schools?
- Is there anything we haven't discussed that you think would be important for me to know for this research?

Appendix B: Interview Participant Profiles

Rather than solely provide a singular description that aggregated participants through specific characteristics or affiliations, I decided to create a series of participant profiles that offer a brief description of people who participated using their own words and the terms they did to describe them. I use the past tense in all descriptions to signal that these profiles reflect participants at the time of our interview. I have the utmost respect for the people I was able to speak with for this research—and I wanted to be sure to honour their contributions, express my gratitude, and give each of them a chance to stand on their own.

In working with the transcripts and coding participants' words, I recognized that there was a potential to lose a lot of the richness of our conversations and elide the immense knowledge, passion, and commitments that people brought to the interviews. Rather than accepting that limitation as an inevitability of my analysis, I decided to create these brief profiles to introduce each participant using the language they used to describe themselves, explain their social position, and situate their professional identity and relationships to education. I have tried to minimally edit their words, but have prioritized confidentiality where appropriate. It is worth noting that I did not require anyone to identify specific characteristics or social positionalities; instead, I provided an example of my own, some possible points they might want to consider including, and an invitation for them to share what they wished. This helped to ensure they could participate freely, respected privacy (and anonymity, where requested), and in ways they felt comfortable doing. Finally, I also include one quotation from each participant that made an impression on me and helped shape my overall thinking about this research. I chose these quotations because they made an impact on me; I would emphasize that these are all pulled from context and part of much longer conversations. While I have attempted to provide context and included (minimal) amendments to enhance clarity, these quotations are not intended to be taken outside this "profile" context or be used to infer particular standpoints or opinions of participants.

I enjoyed all these conversations immensely and I want to thank all the participants for speaking with me, sharing their knowledge and time, and for their commitments to public education.

Brian O'Leary was the Superintendent of Seven Oaks School Division at the time of our interview; he since moved to the role of Deputy Minister of Education and Early Childhood Learning, which he occupied until 2025. Brian identified as a white, heterosexual/straight, cisgender man, and he described having grown up without much privilege and gaining more throughout his career, which he explained as prompting his focus on equity work throughout his time as superintendent for Seven Oaks. When I asked about future reform efforts, Brian emphasized the importance of prioritizing Indigenous students:

> I think for Manitoba, the overwhelming priority has to be greater success for Indigenous kids. You know, we've got huge achievement gaps. They're a result of poverty. So it's not, it's not just on schools. But, you know, that needs to be the priority that dwarfs all other priorities. You know, and then I think... at a time when community has fractured... you know, you have social media echo chambers, I mean I think that the role of school is to build community and build understanding across difference, is really important. And, you know, to me the two things go together.

Chantal Shivanna Ramraj was a member of the Red for Ed Manitoba collective and a teacher. Chantal identified as a queer non-binary woman, who has she/her and they/them pronouns and uses the terms queer, gay, and lesbian to describe themselves; they identified as a racialized person, Indo-Guyanese, and as having been born and raised in Winnipeg, which she explained as informing a lot of their cultural background. Chantal was on an educational leave working on her master's of education in social justice when we met. Chantal explained that the Red for Ed collective emerged as a specific response to Bill 64 from a group that was already established called Manitoba Educators for Social Justice; Red for Ed was already established as through various movements across North America / Turtle Island as a way to make connections with teacher activism and organizing for systemic change, using a colour campaign of wearing red and facilitating transnational teacher organizing.

> Part of our work was really for people to understand [the intentionality behind Bill 64]. Like, "Oh, it's just not just government people who accidentally wrote a bad bill or didn't really think," or like, "Oh, they're just trying to make it streamline." Calling it "modernization" too, I think we can situate that in modernist thought, which was really just colonial. Like, the justification for colonialism, the pathetic justification for colonialism, and centralization of power and essentialism and inevitability, and one type of—like, science as one way of thinking of something. And it's all of that, it's intentional to oppress, to exclude, to harm, and to profit, to displace, and to take and hoard. And I think when we see—when anyone knows that—and then situates this education *modernization* bill that wants to create *residences* and centralize the [education] authority—literally using the word authority... It's not just an accident. Like, it's not just government people trying to save money and streamline how the government works. They would save a heck of a lot of money by not trying to control children's lives and what they learn, and create whole systems, paradigms, where we have the highest provincial—for a province, I believe, the highest rate of child poverty. And it's way more expensive to deal with the traumas of that—of course, there's going to be traumas that come out of hunger, children who are hungry from birth till [adulthood]. But throughout the school system, these kids are hungry. They're not going to—you can't learn when you're hungry. That was another part of it, is this idea of saving money, and then also that our kids are dumb. Saying that our test scores aren't good comparatively, aren't good compared to—like, we're not competitive to other provincial education systems.

Concerned Manitoba (or **CM**) was the operator of the Twitter (now X) account @64onBill64, a social media campaign to engage in public discourse on Bill 64 throughout the summer of 2021. The first message of the account explained, "For the next 64 days, my plan is to share a thought a day on Bill 64. My hope is to keep the

conversation going on this incredibly concerning and regressive piece of legislation. Respectful dialogue is welcome." CM wanted to maintain anonymity but felt comfortable sharing that, along with 70% of the teaching profession, she is a woman and a Manitoban teacher with roughly 20 years in the profession, and identifies as part of marginalized groups. She described herself as very politically aware and interested in talking about how the working of government impact the public education system.

> It's important, again, you know, while Bill 64 is dead on the books, the impetus and the impact... many of the goals are still in play. And that's what scares me more than anything as we continue on this chronological journey of life, that we're not done dealing with these demons yet. We need to find a more just society and that happens through education. We need to find ways of changing government really to be one that is respectful of public education, and its cause and in creating a better society, a more inclusive and caring and considerate society. And, again, I remain scared and worried that at present, quietly, pieces of Bill 64 are still at work, and it's going to be… a systemic concern across the country to eliminate governments that want to play, or impact public education in a way that doesn't meet the needs of our communities…. We're still reeling from the impact of what was there at the time and what is still slowly... remains. Again, we talked about the funding component, and the impetus to review the funding model. Well, that work still hasn't been done. There are various task forces that the government created that were part of Bill 64 or BEST that still, their work is unfinished, and those are the ones that deal with poverty reduction and all sorts of other pieces, where if we had just started there, you know—if we had started there and committed ourselves to being genuine and honest and doing the work, where could we be right now? Where...? I sit there and go, when will we make those investments [in education] and understand the ripple effect of those investments? That those will lessen our investments in health care, because people will be healthier. Lessen our investments in the judicial system, because there will be fewer incarcerated. Lessen our

> investments in other community services, because people won't need them. It all starts with us. Investing in education saves you so much money down the line. So, at some point, I hope that someone in that position of power will recognize that and invest accordingly.

Ellen Bees was a teacher in St. James-Assiniboia School Division working in middle-years grades. She identified as a white settler, cisgender woman, and straight. Ellen recently graduated with her Master's in Education when we spoke. Her master's thesis focused on Bill 64, BEST, and education reform documents, including briefs submitted to the education review commission. Her thesis research focused on the ways Indigenous peoples and topics were framed in the education system through reform documents and, specifically, bringing critiques of white settler colonialism to a reading of the education reform. I was really keen to speak with Ellen because of the research work she had done and, specifically, her focus on how systemic oppressions operated in the education reform effort. In the course of the interview, Ellen described aspects of her vision for the future of public education and, specifically, some of the tensions she recognized in the particular moment we spoke:

> I think especially coming out of the pandemic, there's been a lot of focus on student achievement and where they're at and trying to push them forward and that type of thing. And I don't think that's the most productive approach for us to be taking. Like, sure, yeah, they should still obviously be moving forward and learning and growing and developing and that kind of thing. But I think trying to quantify where they're at with the numbers [such as with standardized testing]… trying to just perseverate on that idea that, you know, there's been this learning loss, is maybe very harmful. And in a lot of the documents that came out with the education reform, there's a lot of talk about [how inadequate student achievement is in the province, how far behind students are, and how we need to improve it]—none of which is, I think, actually particularly true. So if I were to change one thing, I think I'd like to change our focus around what [it means] to be successful in the school system. Because I think some ways

> of us measuring achievement are actually fairly harmful for students. And I think there's other things that maybe... they would be better served if we focus on them in terms of well-being, in terms of just learning in general, rather than the number or score that they get. I think maybe just a different focus that way would be a lot more helpful for students.

Greg worked in a senior leadership position in a Faculty of Education in one of Manitoba's universities. He identified as a white settler, heterosexual, cisgender man and also mentioned being a parent. Prior to entering the academy on a full-time basis, he worked as a teacher for over 20 years for a number of different grade levels in early and middle years, teaching physical education and French, while also completing his graduate degrees and then working as a faculty associate. When he entered the university full time, he started working in a variety of administrative positions, which carried throughout his time there. One aspect of our conversation that I really appreciated was that Greg reflected on what the role of Faculties of Education were for something like Bill 64:

> One of the things that we tried to do as this was developing and starting to take shape, is that we tried to make sure that … our B.Ed. students were actually aware of what was going on and were taking an interest in what was going on—what were the cases that were being made, what were the arguments being made—and engaging them in a conversation about what this might mean as they enter the profession, or would be entering the profession at a very interesting time…. How would this affect their career trajectory in teaching in the province? So that's one of the roles is to make sure that your students are informed. And I think it's also—some of my colleagues would not agree with this—but I think it's important to try to provide a balanced perspective. You may not agree with, in this case, the government's plan to modernize the educational system. But I think it's incumbent upon educational leaders to try to provide a balanced view of what was being proposed, so as not to sort of indoctrinate students as they're on the cusp of beginning their careers. I'm not sure that's helpful. I'm not sure that's what a

> university should be doing. I mean, obviously, you know where I fall on that spectrum, but I still think if you're in a leadership role, you need to be doing what you can to encourage students to get engaged, to learn more, and to make their own decisions, rather than us telling them what they should think. There's a lot of that in education…. I'm not sure we do a very good job in faculties of education of walking the talk. I think we do a lot of talking. And we talk to our students about what they need to be paying attention to. But I'm not sure… I think there's more of that at the graduate level, but at the undergraduate level, I'm not sure we are very open to diverse perspectives on these complex issues... I've always worried about that… If you spend any time in schools [you'll notice] people learn just to do as they're told and not to question. And I think some of it, from my own perspective, in faculties of education, I think we are guilty of doing some of that at that level as well. We're telling beginning teachers what they need, how they need to be thinking… I always, I've always thought that we could do a better job of that.

James Bedford was the President of The Manitoba Teachers' Society (MTS) for almost four years, until his retirement in 2023 (our interview took place while he was still President). He identified as male and heterosexual, married, and a parent of three adult children who were all public school graduates. Prior to his tenure as President of MTS, James was the Vice-President in the immediate previous four years, and a high-school teacher of science, math, and physics in Louis Riel School Division before that. Before teaching, he worked for roughly five years for the federal government Atomic Energy of Canada Limited in nuclear reactor safety. Alongside his political office at MTS, he explained that he always puts teaching first and, during his political tenure, he described his role as custodian of the political office for a little while. He described his terms in office at MTS as VP and President as being defined by two life-changing events: Bill 64 and the COVID-19 pandemic. James observed that the period surrounding Bill 64 and public response showed a huge balloon in public interest that allowed everyone to have larger conversations about public education systems; however, that interest

largely dropped off once the bill was withdrawn. MTS maintained a public campaign during Bill 64's life, including lawn signs with the slogan "Slam the door on 64" and "Combattre 64." In talking about Bill 64, the topic of funding for public education emerged frequently, including Bill 71's reimbursement of local property tax related to education funding, and James offered the following reframing about funding that I thought was helpful:

> The missing component for Bill 71, and we said this at the time, was that, yes, it lays the groundwork for the move in public education for 100%, or near 100%, of the funding to come from the provincial government. But what was missing is, what's the process by which this is going to happen? Where, if you will, is the guarantee that as you take $1 away at the local level from local taxation, that you're replacing it with $1 at the provincial level? Where is the guarantee that the programming that's currently funded through local taxation is going, a school division is going to be able to maintain that through the use of provincial dollars? One of the key pieces to do that was a new education funding model. And that, too, is probably long overdue…. Without that new model in place, school divisions are, their local revenue, is frozen. They're more dependent on provincial dollars, provincial dollars that haven't been keeping up with the rate of inflation. So the squeeze is on. And I think a lot of the squeeze was in the minds of many to be alleviated by that new funding model. And part of our understanding of the new funding model is the new funding model would see the complete elimination of local school property taxes,… so 100% of your funding flowed from the province. And within that, they always touted it as a more equitable system. We always reminded people equitable isn't adequate. But it was at least going to be a more equitable system…. Ultimately, I hope Bill 71—I hope they sort it out and let us know what's happening down the road. Are we just going to always pay this local school property tax? Are you always going to rebate part of it to us? Are you going to finally fund public education 100% provincially and eliminate the local school property tax? And if you do that provincially, what funding model are you going to use to make sure that the system, that it's

> equitable but it also has to be adequate? I would really love the government to start using the term "adequate." It would be a much better term to use than "astronomical."

Josh Watt was the Executive Director of the Manitoba School Boards' Association and is mid-career, having served in that role for almost eight years at the time of our interview. He identified as a Caucasian (white) male and noted that he brings a certain degree of insight to the issue of promoting LGBTQ awareness and sensitivity in the classroom from having grown up in a fundamentalist Christian background and through his post-secondary education where he learned more about what it means to foster respect and human diversity. (I appreciated this perspective in the conversation, as I too have a background in fundamentalist Christianity and recognize the usefulness in bringing insights across politicized Christian beliefs and purportedly anti-2SLGBTQIA+ stances.) Prior to working at MSBA, Josh worked in provincial and federal government roles, as well as working at the Council on Post-Secondary Education, before moving to his current role at MSBA in 2015. During Bill 64's tabling and public debate, MSBA continued a campaign called "Local Voices, Local Choices," which centred on raising awareness about school boards, school governance, and the important role trustees play in the education system (including a lawn sign campaign). In closing, I asked if there was anything Josh wanted to emphasize or that I should pay attention to in this work, and he offered the following:

> I guess I would say that Bill 64 and its entire experience does provide a compass to the future. Because, for me, personally—not speaking for MSBA—this was one of the most significant dangers to democracy, in the context of everything that has happened recently, that could have been manifest. And that may seem to be hyperbolic in a way. To me, it's not. The fact that there were bills introduced without text for the first time in North American history was, by and large, if not pointing to the beginnings of authoritarianism and totalitarianism, a very real danger to democratic dialogue and discourse in this entire continent.... It was as if we needed to make it a final stand for democracy—it was a stand for democracy, right? … One that is based on making

> sure that everybody has the right to coexist and that affirms their person. And Bill 64 did not do that. In fact, it opened the door large and wide so that an anti-democratic ethos could control education going forward. Like I said, Chris, it's not a stretch to imagine that if a government that espoused various ideals or values that ran contrary to respect for minorities and different groups based on their inherent characteristics ever came into power, that they would have a multi-lane highway to repaving the education system as they see fit under Bill 64. I believe it was Lincoln that said, "the government that controls education today, controls the government of the future," because they know that preparing children as citizens is so fundamental to what happens. That statement is a very real manifestation of what we have in public education; the minds that we shape today will inherit the society of the future. And so what do you want them to come into society holding? Is it respect for diversity and everybody's inherent dignity? Or is it protectionism of a certain set of fundamental values that is closed and is not willing to even learn about the other by way of promoting harmony and ignoring ignorance and fear? Which are the things that lead to respect and the ability to achieve consensus and to meet one another…? So I guess, writ large, that would be my concluding thought on Bill 64 and the, what it represented and why we had to give everything without stopping every single day…. But you know, for us, it was so worth it because of what this represented.

Kevin was a member of the collective that organized under the name Rural Voices United, and he works in farming and agriculture. He is heterosexual and a parent, living in a rural community in southern Manitoba. Kevin described his involvement in Rural Voices United as something of a legacy commitment, as his parents had been involved years before advocating for the maintenance of a local school during an earlier division amalgamation that threatened to partially close the school. Kevin described the efforts of his parents and community members at that time as preserving the local school, with a partially privatized funding structure, and he recognized the

importance of opposing Bill 64 to preserve what they'd fought for. Overall, Rural Voices United emerged somewhat spontaneously, as Kevin described it, amongst a group of likeminded people who had similar concerns about centralization efforts, including the removal of elected boards, about the removal of the moratorium on school closures and limits on length of bus rides, and the resulting impacts on rural communities' viability. I really enjoyed speaking with Kevin and appreciated his making the time to do so, sharing his thoughts, and significantly adding a perspective about the rural context in relation to Bill 64.

> We see it from all kinds of little communities in rural Manitoba, as soon as you lose the school, your town is finished. I don't know many communities that are thriving without a school. And they might be able to sustain, you know—maybe it's their proximity to a larger centre…. But without a school, there isn't young families moving to town. And you look at it from our perspective, we're over half an hour away to any neighbouring community that maybe still would have a school. And I think about, you know, would I have come home to farm had there not been a school in my community? And I doubt that I would have. That was part of one of the reasons my partner and I came back to start raising a family here is because we like the quality of life. And one of that, one of the things that comes along with that is your proximity to your education, to your kids' education, and five miles down the road is pretty nice. But if you think about moving back to a town where you got to put a kid on a bus for an hour-and-a-half in the morning, and then he's coming home an hour, he or she is coming home an hour-and-a-half later in the day, that's just not acceptable. And so thinking back, I can't imagine that we would have moved home to farm had there not been a school in town….
>
> And that was always the discussion back in the day is, it's so easy to see that progression when you lose your school, what'll happen to the community, because, okay, well, now the kids are on the bus. And so the parents run and pick up those kids at school in neighbouring town, well, then they go, "Oh, I'm short a few groceries; well, I'll just pop into the grocery store here

> because, you know, it's easy, I'm waiting anyways." So then they buy those few groceries there, they stop at the hardware or whatever, and then all of a sudden our grocery store closes, and then the hardware store goes. And then you can't—you know, and it just it snowballs. And it does not take long. You can see that in a lot of communities that lost their school, it does not take long, and it's just a shell of itself. And then there's no community cohesion either, because people are going all different directions for everything, for kids activities and... which, I mean, there's a lot of that already now. But it gets that much worse. And so neighbours don't get a chance to chat with neighbours. You know, there isn't that school play that you're all going to together, and because some are going one way and some are going the other... And yeah, it just, yeah, you lose a lot pretty fast.

Lisa Naylor was the elected Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) for Wolesley. At the time of our interview, she was a member of the NDP Caucus and part of the official opposition. Since our interview, the NDP were elected to form a majority government in 2023, defeating the two-term Progressive Conservative government that introduced Bill 64, and Lisa was appointed as the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure. She identified as a white woman and lesbian, who grew up in a small town in Ontario, lived in Toronto for many years, before moving to Manitoba in 1999. Prior to her political career, Lisa worked in a variety of social service roles, including an almost 20-year stint at Women's Health Clinic. She was also a school trustee for Winnipeg School Division (WSD) for five years (initially elected in 2014) prior to being elected as MLA Wolesley in 2019. During the education review, Lisa was the Vice-Chair of WSD's board of trustees. She was instrumental in introducing and passing WSD's safe and caring policy for trans, gender diverse, and non-binary students—a piece of work that was incredibly progressive at the time and something she is immensely proud of: "I was very, very proud—I'm still prouder of that than anything else I've done as a politician." Throughout our interview, Lisa spoke passionately and committedly about the need to centre students in education, be responsive to their

needs, and about the various needs facing students—from poverty to the impacts of colonialism, from austerity measures and their impacts on adequate funding in meeting students' needs related to race, food security, mental health, safety, and culturally appropriate education. At their core, Lisa emphasized the need to centre core values to inform public education:

> Some schools are better than others, some school divisions are better than others, some classrooms and schools are better than others [when it comes to supporting queer and genderqueer students]. But we can't—it can't be acceptable for [one division to override human rights protections because of socially regressive views]. I guess, my fear of the sort of local decision-making piece is that human rights have to [be prioritized]. When the vast majority of a board is clearly homophobic and clearly driven by [socially exclusionary] ideologies, and staff feel scared [to] put a rainbow sticker on their door [because] they want students to know it was a safe place, that they felt scared about what they'd say and do because of, worried for retribution. That goes way too far in terms of the local decision-making aspect of things…. And I mean, I'm not just saying that because they're right wing… You could have a very left-wing ideological board who might overstep what is reasonable and right for students as a whole. Certain aspects of education should be the same across the province, and there needs to be flexibility within that to accommodate very different needs based on student population. But the human rights piece of it can't be optional and can't be opted out…

Luanne Karn was one of the founding organizers of Parents for Public Education (PPE), a parent, and a teacher. Luanne identified as a member of the 2SLGBTTQQIA+ community, or sometimes called the queer community or rainbow community. Luanne has been a teacher for over 20 years in the public education system and has been very politically involved, referring back to their involvement in queer activism in the 80s and 90s, including AIDS Action Now, beginnings of Pride in Toronto, fighting over bathhouse raids, censorship of gay and lesbian

sexuality, advocating for human rights in the Charter, among others. As one of three founding members of PPE, Luanne explained that the COVID pandemic motivated the start of the group as a specific response to the funding in schools during the pandemic, and catapulted into a larger campaign regarding public education in response to Bill 64. Partially, Luanne explained recognizing that the public health emergency echoed their experiences with the AIDS crisis, public health, queerness, and political activism. PPE's traction, however, caught more broadly through their efforts at network building, letter writing, and intentionally setting out to build connections with other parents and guardians who were isolated through the pandemic and concerned about the implications for public education.

> A lot of families will think about schools and think their kids are at school, the teacher's there, it's taken care of, it's great—and then I don't have to think about it anymore, right? But when the possibility that they as parents would have to form advisory committees in each school, and take on the burden of looking at the budget and hiring principals, and the day-to-day running of the school. And then a parent from every school division area or every [region] would then be elected onto another advisory board, and then there would be parents on advisory boards reporting directly to the Minister of Education—all for free. There was a definite need—not so much for teachers, because teachers would still have their jobs—for parents to look at it, and go, "What are they asking us to do? And what do schools do? And how do they do it?" And it was at a time when schools got shut down [due to the pandemic], which [meant] then they're looking at it even more closely. So it was a big strategic mistake on [the government's] part. Even though they thought it might be a time to push it through. So yeah, we had to look at what was going to be the parent role? Would they hire the principal? Would they fire the principal? Would they determine the salary of the principal? Would they be in contract negotiations? Without a school board. And they had to look at the functions of each school board and elected school trustees. I did feel—with a master's of education, a bachelor of education, a lot of experience in politics in

> schools—I had a lot to provide as both a parent and a teacher. And I would go to parent-teacher, or parent meetings, if they asked me to, I would go and meet with them on Zoom—all the parents for schools in [various regions throughout the province]. And we just talked a lot about this bill and made lots of charts…. Things that normally citizens wouldn't be that interested in talking about; how a school board runs, and the process of budget determination, and then how the *Public Schools Act* does it and how it would change with Bill 64. I know that other people were talking about it, like other political parties, but there's something about a person who's an equal to you—a parent or a teacher—talking to you, that makes you feel you can be part of it. So there was a lot of people who've never been politically active writing to the government. And that was so exciting. That was great. And then there were certain topics that we [never could have] talked about [before] that [now we could talk about].

Matt Henderson was the Assistant Superintendent of Seven Oaks School Division; he has since moved to the role of Superintendent of Winnipeg School Division. He identified as a cisgender, white man of European descent. Matt had also written several editorials during the Bill 64 period and, throughout our conversation, was extremely adept at connecting portions of Bill 64 and public discourse to threats of privatization and overall structures of governance.

> Well, when you start pulling the plug out of—whether it's housing, whether it's health care, whether it's education, all these things—who are the people impacted? Well, it's the people who can't send their kids to private schools, private clinics, all these private [services], sports and the arts that you have to pay for. You start yanking that out, and you have kids just kind of wandering—you have adults wandering around too, right? And that's what we're seeing. We're sort of seeing this kind of malaise…. So if we're looking at—you know, specifically in terms of your inquiry here—an investment in that notion of "public," right? It's kind of what Sue [Winton]

> was talking about: there are intentional forces wanting to create these catastrophes [i.e., chronic underfunding of education that ends up reinforcing the narrative that the current system does not work]. And so, if we're wanting to ensure that all kids have the opportunity for high-quality schools that bring everybody together, where we create empathetic communities, then you have to fund it properly. You have to fund it equitably…. And it's really difficult to have that conversation.

Pamela worked as a senior administrator in a rural school division superintendent's office. She identified as heterosexual, female, and white settler of eastern European descent. Previous to her work as a senior administrator, she worked as a mathematics and French teacher in Winnipeg before moving to her current rural division in vice-principal and principal roles until moving to the superintendent office almost ten years later. Pamela is proud of her division and the work they do. When I asked about future education reforms and what was possible, Pamela emphasized the importance of centering students in learning:

> We go and we meet you where you're at, and we try to figure out what that is. And I feel like, to me, that is the absolute crux of good education is [that] we need to go get whoever's in our system, at wherever they're at, and to bring them forward, wherever that might need to be. It's hard. It's way easier to have a cookie-cutter program or to say we're all going to do [this one approach of traditional kids-in-rows teaching]…. How do we design an education system where everybody has access to what they need in the system? And if they have access to what they need in the system, then ultimately, we're going to be responsive to who they are, and they're going to then begin owning their own learning… and they're going to want to have ownership in their own learning…. And so we model that all the way through, is what I would love to see with education reform. Because then it could be the topic that you want to learn about, it could be the—who you are as a human? How do you identify? It could be any one of those things that…

brings your story to the table…. The mindset of [creating] data-informed classroom profiles is the way to relinquish learning back to the kids. They have to be involved in their own learning and what they need, and what they can and can't do. And we as teachers are going to be the facilitators of that for them and potentially their families.