

Reconstructing the Power Narrative:
How Winnipeg Elementary School Teachers Think about
and Define their Everyday Work

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ABSTRACT

This study explores how Winnipeg early years elementary school teachers think about and define their everyday work. Many studies have addressed teacher perspectives. These studies, however, are often prescribed to particular subject areas, teaching methods, teaching strategies, or challenges. In contrast, this study casts the net wide and was concerned with broader narratives that examined how teachers think about their everyday work. The research question that guided this study was: How do teachers think about and define their everyday work?

Winnipeg elementary schools are situated in a local context that must be understood within a global context. In other words, Winnipeg elementary schools and classrooms are a small part of a wider universe. Accordingly, this research speaks to existing data by examining the lived experiences of teachers from their perspectives, in their specific context.

This qualitative study was guided by a phenomenological approach and atheoretical constructivist grounded theory. This study was not led by a hypothesis or a particular theory. From this standpoint, the broad concepts of what the teacher participants shared could be illuminated.

The findings identified significant challenges that teachers face in their everyday work, including direct violence, working with trauma, and lack of resources. These are not unlike human rights challenges found globally. Winnipeg elementary school teachers also identified strategies that are supportive in their everyday work, including student voice, and the importance of including multiple intelligences and perspectives and social and emotional needs. Building relationships was foundational to teachers' everyday work.

Ultimately, the teacher participants in this study identified areas of their jobs where they had influence and where they did not. Teachers are finding influence in humanizing, validating practices. The practice of advocating for dignity and human rights is a radical paradigm shift seeking to resist dehumanization and division. This speaks to power related to connection, cooperation and empathy.

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Finally, to my children Sidney, Grayson and Piper. You are my inspiration. My love for you is the law of life force. May the light of your life shine bright with power and joy.

DEDICATION

For Sidney, Grayson, and Piper
and
for all voices who seek and advocate for Justice and Peace

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INTRODUCTION

It is January 2013. It is a bitterly cold winter morning. The temperature outside reads -29C. "Another indoor recess," I think to myself. This will be the 89th consecutive indoor recess this winter. In September, I started teaching Grade 2 at an elementary school in Winnipeg. It is my first teaching position since staying at home after my own children were born.

As the bell sounds, 24 young people pour into my classroom. The majority of the students are Indigenous, while others represent Canada's diverse, multicultural society, including children with Filipino, Chinese, and Vietnamese heritage. With these cold temperatures, I worry about the walk to school for all of the students.

The students remove their outdoor gear in the coatroom, then meet me on the classroom carpet. This is where our days begin. Welcome, morning news, calendar, and the National Anthem. I hear the Canadian National Anthem begin to play over the school's intercom system, "O Canada, our home and native land...." I ask everybody to please stand.

As I look into the faces of the six- and seven-year-old children in front of me, I have a knot in my stomach. Although Canada has not declared this, there has been a cultural genocide in Canada (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). I wonder, "What am I asking my students to stand for?" I also ask myself, "What am I willing to stand for?"

This memory, a flicker in time, came from a journal that I began keeping to record these moments in my teaching career. I cannot pinpoint a specific moment of the crystallization of discontentment. Perhaps it was having my own children that caused me to reflect on my daily experiences with the students in my classroom. Returning to teaching after over a decade away from the profession, I felt angry to find that I was facing the same challenges that I had years earlier. It seemed nothing had changed. I spoke with several trusted colleagues about these challenges. They, too, had stories to tell as frontline workers in Manitoba's classrooms. I was deeply affected by these experiences, and I wanted to learn more about how teachers thought about their work.

Young people are coming to school affected by many of the social problems and cleavages impacting Winnipeg: poverty, the legacy of colonialism, the challenges faced by refugee families, racism, as well as discrimination based on gender and sexual identities. Currently in Manitoba, one out of every 3.5 children lives in poverty (Manitoba Child and

Family Poverty Report, 2016). Only 33% of Indigenous children in care will graduate from high school (Manitoba Task Force on Educational Outcomes of Children in Care, 2016). Recent data has indicated that transgender and gender-diverse students do not feel safe at school (Taylor et al., 2015). Stewart (2011) has argued that the current education system is contributing to the marginalization of refugee youth. Young people today navigate many potential barriers.

Much of the literature on social change, social intervention, development, and peacemaking has recognized that effective and ethical problem-solving requires the inclusion of all stakeholders (e.g., Lederach, 1995). For elementary education, this means including teachers in problem-solving approaches. As I began this study, I was deeply curious about how teachers think about and define their work. Do they see any challenges? If so, what are they? How are teachers responding to these challenges? What are their hopes and fears regarding their teaching? What keeps them strong in their work? Have teachers developed a personal philosophy of education? If so, what are the building blocks of this philosophy? Designed with these questions in mind, my research explored how Winnipeg elementary school teachers think about and define their everyday work.

The current school system evolved from and exists within a context of systemic inequality. In other words, within the current framework, not all children can participate equally. Peace and conflict studies (PACS) offers a body of knowledge useful for examining and resolving complex issues, since many PACS scholars have shown that elements of political conflict reverberate within communities and families (Reimer et al., 2015).

Speaking with frontline workers to learn their perspectives and insights can shed light on the origins and factors contributing to injustices (Fine, 1991). My research follows a tradition of peace research that seeks to hear from and understand the perspectives of people who are affected by, or working with those who are affected by, social inequalities, discrimination, conflict, and violence—such as Flaherty’s (2012) work with women from a variety of grassroots and academic places in Ukraine, Hunte’s (2012) study with Black American women in the construction trades, and Christmas’s (2017) study with those who work with young people affected by sex trafficking. This research provides a space for practitioners who are directly involved in a variety of social issues to share their experiences and feelings about their particular situations. Due to their unique experiences, teachers’ standpoints can generate new and alternate visions of social arrangement (Fine, 2012). This study explored the everyday lived experiences of Winnipeg elementary school teachers from their own frame of reference.

Researcher's Standpoint

Since I was a young child, I wanted to be a teacher. I enjoyed school and had very positive school experiences at all levels. For me, school was a place where I felt acknowledged, celebrated, and nurtured. Education was highly valued in my family, and I was recognized when I was successful.

It was a natural fit for me to pursue an undergraduate degree in the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba. Education, for me, meant hope and possibility. Having a keen interest in human behaviour, relationships, and development, I continued my studies at the University of Ottawa's Master's in Education program with a focus in Educational Counselling. There, I became immersed in the works of counselling theorists such as Alfred Adler, Carl Rogers, Fritz Perls, William Glasser, and Carl Jung. Personality indicators such as Myers-Briggs and the Enneagram also interested me.

At this time, my counselling approach is best described as a humanistic/existential approach. I remember reading Victor Frankl's (1984) *Man's Search for Meaning* for the first time during my life in graduate studies at the University of Ottawa. He wrote, "Ultimately, man should not ask what the meaning of life is, but rather he must recognize that it is he who is asked. In a word, each man is questioned by life; and he can only answer to life by answering for his own life; to life he can only respond by being responsible" (p. 131). I became deeply interested in the individual and the unique strengths they can offer to society.

After earning my master's degree, I began my teaching and counselling career in the public and private school systems in schools in Manitoba, Nova Scotia, and Ontario. A particular highlight was my position as a guidance counsellor at Caledonia Junior High School in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia. The school had an incredible leader, Principal Edy Guy Francois, who had a strong vision for the school. Caledonia Junior High experienced significant issues related to race relations combined with a very clear divide in socio-economic status. For a year, the National Film Board's documentary *Waging Peace* was filmed in the school (MacInnes, 1998). Safety was a real concern for many of the students, and at one point, the Canadian Armed Forces was called into the school. My role at the school—an experience I will never forget—included helping to support a peer mediation and conflict resolution program where students developed skills to collaborate to solve their own problems.

Another deeply rewarding experience was working at a school in Toronto, Ontario, where ten different translators were needed for parent/teacher interviews due to the number of

English-as-Additional-Language learners. At this school, I taught two twelve-year-old girls who had moved to Canada from Afghanistan. Until moving to Canada, they had lived under Taliban rule and been denied the right to formal education.

I also had the opportunity to spend a number of years at home with my three children after they were born. My passion for teaching shifted into a passion for building community for my children. I became more acutely and personally aware of the inequality of opportunity presented to many children and youth in Canada. During that time, I became involved with organizations and activities that promoted opportunities for children and helped develop a sense of community. This often took shape through fundraisers. One example of such a fundraiser was an “Amazing Race” that I organized with my son’s kindergarten class, through which the children raised enough funds to send 350 students living in India to school for one year.

When my youngest daughter started school, I returned to teaching. I taught Grade 2 (ages 6 and 7) at a school in Winnipeg. To say I was shocked at the poverty my students were experiencing would be an understatement. Basic needs such as food, clothing, and shelter were a constant concern. Yet my students came to school and throughout the course of any day showed snapshots of greatness. The majority of my students were on Individualized Education Plans, which meant they were working at least one full year below grade-level expectations.

For me, many questions arose, including: What did this mean? How and why were we grading elementary school students? What did my colleagues think? How were we responding to this information? And on a more personal level, *how was I to respond?* It was then I began contemplating returning to university to pursue answers to these unresolved questions.

Outline of the Study

Chapter One examines the social context of this study—Winnipeg elementary schools. In particular, the chapter explores four current and urgent issues in elementary classrooms: inequities faced by Indigenous children, refugee children, issues related to gender and sexuality, and children affected by the barrier of poverty.

Chapter Two outlines the four assumptions of the study. These assumptions were not used to hypothesize. Rather, the assumptions cast a light on overarching broad frames of discourse. The four assumptions are connected to peace and building a culture of peace.

Chapter Three serves as an integrated critical literature review. The intention of this study was not to prove a particular theory or thought pattern. The literature in this chapter is drawn from cross-curricular scholarship in the fields of Peace and Conflict Studies, Education, Indigenous Studies and Sociology. It highlights the importance of the everyday lived experiences of the people in the education system. The social environment is impactful, and the specific context cannot be devalued.

Chapter Four outlines the methodology used in this study. This qualitative study used in-depth interviews as a means of collecting data. Further, I drew on a phenomenological approach and atheoretical constructivist grounded theory approach to understand how Winnipeg elementary school teachers think about and define their everyday work. Examining some of the data through the lens of institutional ethnography could also serve as a means of evaluating the data.

The next chapters discuss the study's findings. Chapter Five examines the challenges that Winnipeg elementary school teachers face in their daily work, including security, lack of resources, negative workplace culture, lack of professional training, and frustration with assessment.

Chapter Six calls attention to the strategies and processes teachers identified as supportive to their everyday work. Some of the strategies that Winnipeg elementary school teachers have highlighted as a pedagogical blueprint that serves their work include: (a) the value of individual agency; (b) working with multiple intelligences and different perspectives; (c) taking social and emotional needs into account; (d) adopting a growth mindset; and (e) the pivotal role of leadership in early years education.

Chapter Seven is dedicated to the overarching importance of relationships. Throughout all of the interviews, relationships were a theme continuously revisited by participants as a fundamental building block in the early education of young people.

Chapter Eight works to understand the narratives of Winnipeg's early elementary school teachers. The chapter provides an overview of the findings presented in Chapters Five, Six and Seven. The chapter highlights a context of lack upon lack, including challenges that are beyond teachers' control. Life-giving processes and strategies within teachers' control are also highlighted. These processes are humanizing and connected to cooperation and empathy. If power is related to empathy, this study shows that teachers are finding incredible means to navigate power in Winnipeg elementary school classrooms.

Teachers are frontline workers in the complex education system. In other words, teachers are direct participants in the system, and they are experts due to their lived experiences. How they think about and define their everyday work is valuable and important knowledge. Elementary school children are spending up to eight hours of their day with their teacher. Accordingly, teachers are uniquely positioned to support transformative work with all children.

CHAPTER 1: CONTEXT

Introduction

Report cards have been handed out, and I am preparing to welcome parents into my classroom to discuss their child's progress. This will be my first-time meeting many of the parents or guardians of my six- and seven-year-old students. I often wonder why this is the case. Our report cards include an individual grading scale with a comment section for each subject area. I spent many hours writing each report card.

Rose, Adam's mother, is the first parent to arrive. I am happy to have the opportunity to meet Rose. We have approximately fifteen minutes together. Rose tells me a little about herself. She is a single mother of three boys. Currently, she works three jobs. She is very apologetic that she has not had the time to work with her son on his schoolwork. My turn is next. I explain that Adam is not meeting grade-level expectations in reading. I offer suggestions for our next course of action. Rose begins to cry.

I notice that I am upset, too. I have many questions. How does this assessment correlate to what I know about reading and learning to read? How is this assessment and encounter supportive to Adam and Rose?

This vignette is another snapshot from my time teaching elementary students at a Winnipeg elementary school. I was deeply uncomfortable meeting this parent for the first time to share with her that her son was not meeting the requirements of the school system. I have many similar memories and stories, and these experiences have given me pause to question elementary school education. How is elementary education impacted by its social context, and how in turn does it respond to social contexts?

There is an essential exchange between an individual and the society in which they live. As Miriam Greenspan (2003) described, “we live in the world, and the world lives in us” (p. 38). The public elementary education system in Manitoba is located in a specific social and cultural context. The social and cultural experiences affecting elementary education in Manitoba are a critical area of study.

To narrow this broad topic, this thesis has focused on four current and urgent human rights issues facing elementary education in Manitoba—specifically, the inequalities faced by Indigenous children, refugee children, issues related to gender and sexuality, and children

affected by the barrier of poverty. In this chapter, I examine these four critical issues generally, then in the Canadian context, and finally focus more specifically on the Manitoba context. These groups have been highlighted because of their participation in the education system and in society more broadly. The chapter concludes by highlighting the importance of equity in Manitoba's complex educational system.

Note: The COVID-19 Pandemic

The majority of the research and writing for this thesis took place during the past two years. In December 2019, the World Health Organization (2022) declared a public emergency of international concern. The COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced that we live in a global village. With hundreds of millions of cases of COVID-19 reported worldwide during the last two years, this pandemic has not only caused illness and death, but also great social and economic impact (Statistics Canada, 2022). It has been called a “tale of two pandemics—the rich and the poor” (Zuber, 2022). There are people who can afford to protect themselves, and people who cannot.

In 2021, according to Statistics Canada (2022), one quarter of Canadians reported experiencing high levels of stress most days. These rates were higher among people living with children under the age of 15. Further, Statistics Canada has highlighted that the COVID-19 pandemic will change the demographic makeup of Canada due in part to increased deaths, decreased immigration and delayed family planning. This could impact the school context.

The COVID-19 pandemic affected Winnipeg schools. Winnipeg schools were mandated to follow provincial COVID-19 policies and procedures including social distancing, disinfecting surfaces, and wearing masks. At times, schools were closed, and remote learning was in place. COVID-19 impacted how teachers did their work. However, these interviews took place at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. All the teacher participants clarified that their response reflected their experiences to date.

Teachers experienced significant stress over and above the normal challenges during this time. All the interviews for this study were completed on Zoom due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In-person interviews were not an option. Zoom interviews were conducted at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic and participants clarified the context.

Indigenous Children

The global context

Throughout the world, Indigenous peoples are involved in constant struggles to gain rights. Indigenous peoples have faced widespread oppression, assimilation practices and violence (United Nations, 2019). The United Nations Indigenous Forum has been mandated to work with Indigenous peoples' issues, and the rights of Indigenous peoples (United Nations, 2019). Specifically, the mandate of the Forum is to work with issues related to economic and social development, culture, the environment, education, health and human rights. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is a critical document for actualizing the rights of Indigenous Peoples in all regions of the world.

Although not declared by the Canadian Federal Government, there has been a cultural genocide in Canada. In the book *A knock on the door: The essential history of residential schools* (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, et al., 2016), Phil Fontaine defined cultural genocide as the "Destruction of those structures and practices that allow the group to continue as a group. States that engage in cultural genocide set out to destroy the political and social institutions of the targeted group" (p. 3). The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) took six years to investigate the legacy of residential schools. After hearing the stories and experiences of 6,750 residential school survivors, the TRC proposed ninety-four calls to action and called on Canadians in all institutions and jurisdictions to take up these calls to action (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada et al., 2016).

Colonization, the intergenerational impact of the residential school system, and practices such as the Sixties Scoop, during which Indigenous children were taken from their families and placed in foster homes or put up for adoption, have resulted in long-term negative effects for Indigenous families (Manitoba Task Force on Educational Outcomes of Children in Care, 2016). Throughout Canada, Indigenous children are significantly over-represented in care. According to the 2016 census data, Indigenous children represent 52.2% of children in foster care but only 7.7% of the Canada's child population (Government of Canada, 2019). This is a national problem with deep historical roots (Manitoba Task Force on Educational Outcomes of Children in Care, 2016).

Canadian teachers have inherited an education system at the forefront of assimilation. Hon. Justice Murray Sinclair observed that education is the cause of this situation, but he also noted that education is the solution (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, et al.,

2016). Reconciliation involves an understanding and deep acknowledgement of what existed and what has been taken. Reconciliation also requires that Canadians never forget what was allowed to happen to the most vulnerable people (Sinclair, 2021). Arguably, in many ways today's school system continues to reflect the past, rather than life at this historical moment.

Reflecting on his time as the chairman of the TRC, in an interview with CBC's *The National*, Hon. Justice Murray Sinclair (2021) observed that getting to the truth of the stories of residential school was difficult and critical. However, moving towards reconciliation is going to be even more difficult as it requires change in the attitudes and understandings of many Canadians. Hon. Justice Sinclair remarked that reconciliation might be better understood as akin to a situation of domestic abuse:

In terms of reconciliation, we should really think about this in terms of a domestic abuse situation. Where the husband finally is caught after all these years of abusing, oppressing his partner, denying rights, taking away the kids, convincing her that everything that's wrong is her fault. That there's something wrong with her - there's nothing wrong with him. That she's a lesser human being and he's a perfect human being. And then suddenly we catch him and all of those lies and he says, "Oh - OK, sorry. Now let's get over this and let's move on." Reconciliation is not that easy, but from his perspective, it is that easy. From the perspective of the victim of all this it's about what are you doing to change the way you do things? What are you doing about your attitude? What are you doing about your behaviour? How do I know that you're not gonna keep doing this because I see you keep doing this. I see that you haven't given up an ounce of your power. You haven't given up any of the laws and any of the changes and of the authorities that you feel you have. You still control all the bank accounts. You still have control over money, you control everything in the relationship, and you haven't changed a bit. And your thinking is just as bad as it used to be. And that's the kind of situation that we see out there. (2021)

Reconciliation is an important space between realism and transformation (Lederach, 2010). Forgetting and phrases such as, "move on" are not the shorthand for reconciliation. Rather, the history of the situation must be deeply understood before resolution can be found.

Inequities faced by Indigenous Children in Canada

On May 27, 2021, it was announced that the remains of 215 children, some as young as three years old, were found at a former residential school site in Kamloops, British Columbia, on the Tk'emlups te Secwepemc First Nation (Dickson & Watson, 2021). This was the first official notice of graves found that was brought to the public's attention. Chief Rosanne Casimir (2021) described how families had heard stories of young children running away from the

residential school, as well as stories of deaths and burials in unmarked graves. Hon. Justice Murray Sinclair (2021) shared:

We have hundreds and thousands of young Indigenous children who died in these schools. Some of them brutally, some of them at the hands of priests and nuns and people who worked in the schools. And we need to understand that the parents and families of those children were unaware of what happened, totally. They aren't even sure that any of these children are connected to them. So there's a lot of work that is going to need to be done. We had a set of calls to action in our report in which we talked about this being a very serious question that still bears investigation. We were denied the right to investigate that in the TRC. We think it still merits investigation, and until it's resolved, it's not going to be possible for us to achieve the relationship that we want to have with each other.

Weeks later, the Cowessess First Nation shared the discovery of another 751 unmarked graves (Pruden et al., 2021). Many First Nations across the country have started investigating the sites of former residential schools. The discovery of unmarked graves at former residential school sites have continued to be located (Deer, 2021). Although communities have been discussing mass grave sites for generations, having numbers has ignited a national dialogue (Deer, 2021). Indeed, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015) estimated that many thousands of children died while attending residential schools.

As Canada became a country, the settler peoples worked to replace Indigenous peoples' educational practices with hegemonic interests and authoritative discourses, guided by the settler assumption was that Indigenous culture was inferior to European culture (Baldwin, 2008). The Canadian federal policy of assimilation and residential schools is a tragic example of an attempt to destroy Indigenous culture and society. Children were sent to residential schools to break the parental attachment (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada et al., 2016). Assimilation and residential schooling go beyond examples of power imbalances—they represent ideologies such as “manifest destiny,” “terra nullis,” and white supremacist notions of racial categories that underlie the power imbalance. This has led to destruction of culture, language, customs, wisdom, and traditional knowledge, and caused death, poverty, illness, violence, and much suffering amongst Indigenous peoples.

In the history of the Canadian education system, the theme of power is evident. Education was a privilege directly linked to social class (Baldwin, 2008). Segregation was found in the Canadian education system dating back to the mid-1600s, when First Nations and French students were taught separately. Traditionally, teachers were single women who were willing to accept low pay and more likely to stay in their positions (Baldwin, 2008). Further,

competition has been embedded into the structure of Canadian schools. As will be discussed in this thesis, hierarchical social relations as well as unequal access to power work to deny many people equal participation in the education system.

Marie Battiste (2009) described how an Indigenous renaissance has helped to deconstruct Eurocentric views of Indigenous peoples and their knowledge systems, and the ways that Indigenous knowledge is necessary for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. Marlene Atleo and Laara Fitznor (2010) highlighted that Indigenous children's success is preceded by early life experiences based in language and cultural contexts. Decolonizing internal dialogue precedes recognizing, reclaiming, and revitalizing work (Atleo & Fitznor, 2010). Indeed, strategies proven to improve educational outcomes for Indigenous students include relationship-based pedagogy that builds and repairs relationships, classrooms that are student-focused, that give both feed-forward (a one-on-one process to restore relationship) and feedback to students, and that highlight culture, as well as Indigenous participation in school administration and leadership (Papp, 2016).

Relationship-building is essential for the healthy development of Indigenous children, and all children (Rahman, 2013). Gregory Cajete (2010) argued that an "ecology of Indigenous education" is necessary to explore a new kind of educational consciousness that includes deep ecological orientations, something that is becoming increasingly critical with the global ecological crisis. Cajete has highlighted that key questions in this quest include "what has been lost and what has been gained by participating in a system of education that does not stem from, or really honor, our unique Indigenous perspectives?" and "how can we re-vision and establish once again the 'ecology of education' that guided tribal societies?" (p. 1132). Cajete explained that a collective response is needed to these questions.

Inequities Faced by Indigenous Children in Manitoba

The population of Manitoba is approximately 1.3 million people, over half of whom live in Winnipeg. According to the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, Indigenous peoples represent 17% of Manitoba's population (Zerbe, 2016). The median age of First Nations people in Manitoba is 21. There is an expected 2.67% population growth rate for First Nations peoples in the province, which is significantly higher than Manitoba's overall growth rate of 1.7% (Zerbe, 2016).

On October 12, 2017, a *Globe and Mail* headline read, "Manitoba vows to reduce number of Indigenous Children in Care" (Lambert, 2017). The article highlighted that the

number of children living in care in Manitoba has nearly doubled in the last decade. Although Indigenous children represent 26% of the child population in Manitoba, they represent 90% of the children placed in the care of Child and Family Services (Brownell et al., 2015). This overrepresentation has been attributed to the historical effects of colonization and the intergenerational impacts of the residential school system.

Research has shown that Indigenous children are more likely than non-Indigenous children to enter care in their first year of life (Manitoba Task Force on Educational Outcomes of Children in Care, 2016). This is striking since children who enter care at a younger age are more likely to stay in care over a long period. Only 47% of the children in care are ready to enter school at the typical age, and only 33% of the children in care graduate from high school (Manitoba Task Force on Educational Outcomes of Children in Care, 2016). It is important that attention is paid to the language of the child welfare system. The institutional language of, “child in care,” could sound as if this is a good place for children. Arguably, some folks might say this institutional care is like the 1960’s scoop.

The disadvantages for children in care start before they even begin school (Manitoba Task Force on Educational Outcomes of Children in Care, 2016). Further, Forsman and Vinnerljung (2012) have pointed to the concerning absence of research for educational programming for Indigenous children in care, particularly since there are many questions around whether the current educational system allows for children in care to be successful. Children in care often have disrupted educational experiences for a variety of reasons (Brownell et al., 2015). Considering their complex needs, research has shown that children in care often have inadequate resources (Manser, 2007). Further, the Manitoba Task Force on Educational Outcomes of Children in Care (2016) showed that multi-service and sustainable early intervention are critical in supporting the educational outcomes of all learners.

Although there is a general absence of research on programming for children in care, positive results have been noted in areas where programming was available (Forsman & Vinnerljung, 2012). Such programs included group tutoring, teacher volunteer tutoring programs, and reading intervention programming. Further, individualized programming led to greater positive outcomes for children in care (Tordon et al., 2014).

Research has also demonstrated that trauma-sensitive practices in schools, self-regulation training for the parents and caregivers of preschool-aged children, and programs aimed at school stability can be key factors for improving educational outcomes (National

Working Group on Foster Care and Education, 2014). Self-regulated adults are vital to the healthy development of children as they support self-regulation through an interactive process called co-regulation (Perry, 2021). Self-regulation is recognized as foundational in promoting well-being across lifespan (Perry, 2021).

Refugee Children

The global context

The world cannot be understood only in terms of provincial or national interests. A truly global village must recognize international interests as being of primary importance (Mirbagheri, 2000). International relations can be viewed through a “cobweb model” of interactions between many actors (Burton, 1990). Wallerstein (2004) has argued that the world consists of interconnected social realities made up of nations, households, classes, and identity groups. The current world system features inconceivable gaps between states and people. Food security, energy access, and technological advances expose deep inequalities in the world (United Nations, 2014). There is a significant imbalance of power between the countries in the Global North and the Global South which has been described as the consequence of unequal relationships (Wallerstein, 2004).

The United Nations (UN), which acts as an overarching global institution, is based on strong principles of inclusion and cooperation. The UN can act as a strong agent for developing information-rich institutions. For example, in 1951, in response to the world’s failure to protect Jewish refugees during World War II, the United Nations Convention on the Status of Refugees defined the term “refugee” and outlined the rights of refugees along with the obligations of nation states to protect them (UNHCR, 2017). The UN is predicting hundreds of millions of refugees due to climate change which is the defining crisis of our time (UNHCR, 2020).

According to the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), half of the world’s refugees are children (UNHCR, 2017). Millions of children have been described as living targets, and have been killed, seriously injured, permanently disabled, and forced to witness atrocious acts (Machel, 2003). Children are also victims of genocide, sexual violence, hunger, disease, and have been exploited as combatants. Millions of children have been forced to flee their homes, and many have been separated from their families, parents, and caregivers. These children separated from adults face an increased risk of rape, sexual humiliation, prostitution, and other forms of gender-based violence in societies affected by the chaos of war (Machel,

2003). The impact of climate change, particularly on the most vulnerable countries will increase this suffering and hardship (UNHCR, 2022).

In 2009, the United Nations Security Council (2009) drew up a resolution concerning children and armed conflict, which affirmed a framework for protecting children affected by armed conflict. The resolution stressed the need for systemic dialogue between the UN and national governments over requirements to provide protection and relief to children. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (2012) and the UNHCR's Executive Committee Conclusion on Children at Risk (2007) are also important documents that identify the importance of protecting children all over the world (United Nations Refugee Agency, 2017).

Refugees in Canada

Refugees come to Canada disproportionately from countries in the Global South (Matas, 2015). Since refugees have been forced to leave their country of origin due to persecution and/or fear for their lives, they arrive in Canada through a very different process than people seeking immigration to Canada (Government of Canada, 2018). The Canadian Refugee Protection Program offer two routes to claiming refugee status: the Refugee and Humanitarian Resettlement Program and the In-Canada Asylum Program (Government of Canada, 2018). Under the Refugee and Humanitarian Resettlement Program, UNHCR as well as private group sponsors are responsible for identifying refugees for resettlement. Meanwhile, the In-Canada Asylum Program is for people who arrive in Canada seeking protection based on a fear of persecution or are at risk of torture or cruel punishment in their home countries (Government of Canada, 2018).

In 2016, Canada resettled 46,700 refugees, with Syria, Eritrea, Iraq, Congo, and Afghanistan listed as the top five countries of origin (UNHCR, 2018). Canada's current rate of acceptance for asylum seekers is the highest it has been in almost thirty years (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 2018). Over the last four decades, Canada welcomed approximately 700,000 refugees (UNHCR, 2018). Between January 2013 and September 2017 alone, almost 90,000 asylum claim decisions were made (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 2018). Further, a total of 23,577 claims for refugee protection from irregular border crossing were made from February 2017 to March 2018.

According to immigration and human rights lawyer David Matas (2015), supporting refugees is an intimidating task. Language barriers, cultural differences, and a failure to understand their stories and the broader stories of what was happening in their home countries

are some of the major barriers. Matas observed, “protecting refugees means helping people who need help... the judgment Canada makes about refugees, in the end, is a judgment Canadians make about ourselves” (p. 156).

Refugees in Manitoba

Many refugees have been resettled in Manitoba. For example, between November 4, 2015, and August 7, 2016, Manitoba welcomed 1,100 Syrian refugees (Statistics Canada, 2016). Manitoba settled 6% of government-sponsored refugees, while approximately 22% of privately sponsored refugees settled in the province (Manitoba Labour and Immigration, 2015).

On February 7, 2017, a Huffington Post (2017) headline read, “Refugees Fleeing U.S. Making Long, Cold Trek to Manitoba,” after former U.S. President Donald Trump signed an executive order to ban citizens from seven Muslim-majority countries. Another headline from the same time period read, “Surge of refugee claimants in Manitoba Border Town Prompts Temporary Shelter” (CTV News, 2017).

The Government of Manitoba has produced several documents geared towards teachers to help meet the psychosocial and educational needs of refugee and war-affected children. Several of these include comprehensive bibliographies, including: *War-Affected Children: A Comprehensive Bibliography*, *Life After War: Education as a Healing Process for Refugee and War-Affected Children*, and *Life After War: Professional Development, Agencies, and Community Supports* (Manitoba Education and Training, 2012). Topics highlighted in these documents include effective programming, educational needs and issues, resiliency, and cultural diversity. A question that requires asking is whether and how these resources translate into improving the experiences of refugee children in Manitoba schools.

Jan Stewart (2011) has done extensive research in supporting refugee children in the educational system. According to Stewart, “the reality is that schools are, for the most part, failing these children and contributing to their marginalization in society” (p. 8). While Stewart has advocated that education has the potential to be a constructive motor of change, she argued the problem must be recognized and understood in its complexities within the larger social structure and then addressed through conscious action. Accordingly, Stewart has presented an ecological theory that highlighted the necessity of collaboration between schools and community organizations to address the complex needs of children from refugee backgrounds. While she commented on some good programs, Stewart observed that overall, more support is needed to avoid risks associated with trauma. In an interview with CBC News, Stewart noted

that “Integration is a two-way process. It’s not just the refugees fitting into Canada. It’s what are Canadians willing to do to put the effort forward to really make a difference for these kids” (Dufresne, 2015).

Matthew Fast (2017) has highlighted the importance of research on the challenges faced by refugee children in his book *Finding their Way Again: The Experiences of Gang-Affected Refugee Youth*. According to Fast, it is imperative to listen to the lived experiences and stories of refugee children and youth in order to address the ongoing violence experienced by these children. Fast’s study identified numerous issues facing refugee children and youth, including challenges in school, with peer groups, in families, and with law enforcement. He urged organizations to work in collaborative, coordinated ways to meet the needs of refugee youth (Fast, 2017). Further, the need to address trauma is critical. Multi-track conflict intervention, including early prevention programs for newly arrived refugees, could be beneficial (Diamond & McDonald, 1996). Ethnic communities can also play a key role in providing a sense of belonging and cultural identity for refugee youth (Fast, 2017).

An example of successful programming for refugee students can be found in storytelling. Winnipeg teacher Marc Kuly organized an after-school, noncredit storytelling class for approximately twenty-four of his students (Levin, 2011). Students were from many different ethnic groups, including refugees from war-torn countries such as Sierra Leone, Sudan, and Afghanistan. With Kuly’s wise guidance, students in the class told their stories in constructive ways to empathetic listeners. The listeners respectfully acknowledged each other’s pain. Kuly’s storytelling class is available as a DVD that highlights collective responsibility and social justice.

The Issues Related to Gender and Sexuality

The global context

Around the globe, gender equity has not been achieved (Grayling, 2022). In June 2022, headlines around the world addressed the United States Supreme Court’s controversial decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade*. This was a decision that saw the constitutional right for a woman to have an abortion in the United States. In their dissent to the opinion of overturning *Roe v. Wade*, three Supreme Court justices wrote, “After today, young women will come of age with fewer rights than their mothers and grandmothers had” (NPR, 2022). Gender equality is essential because women make up approximately half of the Earth’s population. To undervalue

or deny half of the world's human resources is shocking (Grayling, 2022). It is understandable that gender equality is one of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals which act as a blueprint for prosperity and peace for people and the planet (United Nations, 2022).

Canada is known throughout the world for promoting the rights of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, queer, questioning, and 2-spirited (LGBTQ2) community. The Charter of Rights and Freedoms protects the rights of all Canadians. Under the Criminal Law Amendment Act, same-sex sexual activity has been legal since 1969 (Government of Canada, 2018). Same-sex marriages became legal in 2005, and in 2017, "gender identity or expression" was added to the Canadian Human Rights Act. On November 28, 2017, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau issued a formal apology to the LGBTQ2 community of behalf of Canadians. In his address, Trudeau (2017) shared, "To the members of the LGBTQ2 communities, young and old, here in Canada and around the world: You are loved, and we support you."

Egale Canada, an advocacy organization that works to advance equality for Canadian LGBTQ2 people and their families, has stressed the importance of understanding the terminology used to specify a person's gender and sexuality (Egale, 2022). The intention is not that terms are used to label a person, but rather that the terms act as supportive functional descriptors. Further, it is important that labels be self-selected by the person using those terms. According to Egale's (n.d.) comprehensive glossary, the term "gender" is "a system that operates in a social context to classify people, often based on their assigned sex. In many contexts this takes the form of a binary classification of either 'man' or 'woman'; in other contexts, this included a broader spectrum." Meanwhile, terms such as sexuality, as well as heterosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual, asexual, and pansexual, are all related to attraction. The broader term gender identity refers to "a person's internal and individual experience of gender," while gender diverse refers to an individual whose gender expression differs from stereotypical and cultural expectations based on their assigned sex and gender (Egale, n.d.). Different terms apply to the fluidity of genders, including cisgender, transgender, trans man, trans woman, gender fluidity, gender queer and transition.

LGBTQ2 people are persecuted in many countries around the world. This includes the United States where states are starting to implement law criminalizing transgender reassignments and parents who facilitate this for their children (Turban et al., 2021). Worldwide, the LGTBQ2 community struggle to protect their human rights including

harassment, arrest, discrimination, and violence based on their gender identity and sexual orientation. Homosexuality continues to be illegal in seventy countries (Grayling, 2022).

Issues and experiences related to gender continue to affect people worldwide. For example, a United Nations (2016) study identified that 43% of the world's poorest people live in regions affected by climate change or conflict—70% of whom are women and children. On average the women surveyed in this UN study performed 80 hours per week in unpaid care work.

Gender and sexuality issues in Canada

Issues related to gender and sexuality affect many Canadians. Canadian women are more likely than men to live in poverty. In 2004, 37% of Manitoban single female parents were living on low income (Government of Manitoba, 2007). Women also continue to be underrepresented in the fields of science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and computer sciences. In 2011, women aged 25-34 represented only 23% of graduates from engineering and 30% of graduates from computer science and mathematics programs (Hango, 2013).

In Canada, one in five LGBTQ2 students has reported being physically harassed (Egale, 2022). There are more than 6,000 homeless LGTBQ2 youth in Canada. LGTBQ2 youth are also fourteen times more at risk of suicide and substance abuse compared to other youth, with thirty-three percent of LGBTQ2 youth having attempted suicide (Egale, 2022).

A Canadian study reported that many trans- and gender-diverse students do not feel safe at school (Taylor et al., 2011). According to *Every Class in Every School: First National Climate Survey on Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia in Canadian Schools*, 90% of trans youth heard and experienced transphobic comments daily. Further, 44% of trans students reported feeling unsafe at school and were likely to miss school. Meanwhile, this same study found that almost all educators considered their schools to be safe for LGBTQ2 students. However, trans- and gender-diverse youth have poorer educational outcomes and reported feeling less connection to their schools (Taylor et al., 2011).

The Second National Climate Survey included an examination of the school-based experiences of 2SLGBTQ young people in Grade 8 or higher (Peter et al., 2021). It found that 64% of students reported hearing homophobic comments daily or weekly at school. Further, 57% of trans students had been targets of mean rumors or lies, and 79% of trans students who had been the victims of physical harassment reported that teachers and school staff were ineffective in addressing transphobic harassment. The study highlighted that harassment

happens in compounding ways, which must be understood and addressed. For example, students were targeted for their racialized and sexual gender identities, with approximately 77% of Indigenous 2SLGBTQ students reporting being harassed at school in the year leading up to the survey (Peter et al., 2021).

Gender and sexuality issues in Manitoba

LGBTQ2+ Canadians are disproportionately affected by violence (Statistics Canada, 2018). However, experiences across the country vary. Statistics Canada (2016) has revealed that people living in Manitoba, Saskatchewan or Alberta are less likely than Canadians elsewhere to know a person who identifies as LGTBQ2+. They are also less likely to have someone in their family who identifies as LGTBQ2+. These three provinces are also the least supportive of same-sex marriages.

In working with gender and sexuality issues in elementary school across Canada, geographical context is important. For example, in Manitoba, educators who taught in urban schools were more likely to report their schools as being safe spaces for lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) students than educators in more remote areas (Taylor et al., 2015). Urban schools in Manitoba were found to be more likely to have LGBT policy interventions (Taylor et al., 2011). In Taylor et al.'s (2015) study, 74% of LGB students in Manitoba reported feeling safe at school, while only 56% of transgender students reported feeling safe at school.

School administrators want policies designed to support LGBTQ students (Taylor et al., 2011), and Manitoba does have many resources for LGBTQ students. These include the Rainbow Resource Centre, Diversity Essentials, Trans Manitoba, and Klinik Community Health Centre. Manitoba Education and Training (2017) also published *Supporting Transgendered and Gender Diverse Students in Manitoba Schools*, the primary purpose of which is to highlight teachers' and administrators' collective participation in creating and sustaining safe and supportive schools.

Children Affected by the Barrier of Poverty

The global context

The current world system features deep and drastic inequalities in areas such as food security, technology access, energy access, and the effects of climate change (United Nations, 2014). The richest one percent of people in the world control 50 percent of the world's wealth

(Russell, 2015). Meanwhile, according to the World Bank (2015), approximately 902 million people live in extreme poverty, 67 percent of whom live in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa.

Global South countries disproportionately represent the world's most impoverished nations (UNCTAD, 2014). According to UNCTAD's (2021) *Least Developed Countries Report 2021*, global structural transformation is necessary in the context of sustainable development. Underdevelopment leads to conflict (MacGuinty & Williams, 2009). Currently, 85% of the least developed countries (LDCs) are commodity dependent (UNCTAD, 2021). UNCTAD has also recently reported on the ways the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed significant challenges to the world's most vulnerable people and the urgency of addressing the needs of LDCs:

A renewed and strengthened partnership for development cannot be disassociated from the urgent need to reassert, as global priorities, the importance of LDC development and of international support for it. This is a prerequisite towards giving a new lease of life to the notion of fair differentiation in the special treatment of LDCs within the group of developing countries. An authentic global partnership in support of LDCs goes well beyond the moral commitment to "leave no one behind." International support for structural transformation in LDCs is not an act of charity in favour of the weakest members of the international community. Ultimately, in an interdependent global economy, it is an investment in systemic resilience, because developmental successes among LDCs solidifies global systemic resilience. (pp. 120-121)

The North-South gap is considered a socio-economic and political divide and continues to be one of the most pressing moral issues of today (Wallerstein, 2004).

Children affected by poverty in Canada

In developed countries, poverty is a relative notion (Grayling, 2022). Poverty is prevalent in Canada. According to Campaign 2000 (2021), an anti-poverty coalition, nearly one in five children or 19% of children live in poverty. Although there is no official poverty line in Canada, Campaign 2000 has recommended that the Low-Income Measure After Tax be used as Canada's official poverty line. In 2017, approximately 1.2 million children were living in low-income households, with younger children being the most affected (Statistics Canada, 2017). According to Statistics Canada, in 2017, 18.3% of children under the age of one and 17.8% of children under the age of six lived in a low-income household. The likelihood of living in a low-income household rose with single parents. For example, 55.1 % of single-parent households with three children were considered to be low-income households (Statistics Canada, 2017).

The Canadian federal government's involvement is critical to reducing and preventing poverty (Campaign 2000, 2021). The current Prime Minister of Canada, Justin Trudeau, has declared that "Poverty is sexist" (Campaign 2000, 2016). In Canada, women working full-time jobs earned only 72% of men's annual income. Campaign 2000's *Report Card on Child and Family Poverty in Canada* has also linked the availability of childcare to women's equitable opportunities.

Until recently, Canada was one of the only wealthy countries that did not have a universal early childhood education and care program. The federal government is working to change that and is engaging in funding arrangements with most provinces to provide better access to affordable childcare (Government of Canada, 2021). Early childhood education and care programs have been found to be the most effective strategy in supporting families and children (Campaign 2000, 2021). In 2016, Campaign 2000 (2016) flagged that there was only enough space for 24% of children 0-5 in childcare, compared to 70% of working mothers.

Canada currently has a 7% unemployment rate (Campaign 2000, 2021). Almost one million workers hold more than one job and 37% of children who live in poverty have one parent who works full-time. A lack of affordable housing is an issue across the country, with an estimated 235,000 Canadians experiencing homelessness. Further, hunger and inadequate nutrition is a daily reality for approximately one million Canadian children (Campaign 2000, 2021).

Children affected by poverty in Manitoba

Manitoba has the highest number of children living in poverty in Canada (Campaign 2000, 2016). In Manitoba, one out of every 3.5 children live in poverty (Manitoba Child and Family Poverty Report, 2016). Forty percent of Indigenous children in the province live in poverty, and sixty percent of children living on reserves live in poverty. Poverty has a significant impact on children's health, development, and school readiness (Manitoba Child and Family Poverty Report, 2016). Studies have found a strong correlation between a child's developmental health at school entry and their academic success by Grade 3 (Brownell et al., 2015). Accordingly, improving school achievement involves improving socioeconomic status and prenatal and parental circumstances.

In 2007, the Healthy Child Manitoba (HCM) Act was developed to guide the Healthy Child Manitoba Strategy (Government of Manitoba, 2007). In 2012, the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy published a report titled *How Are Manitoba's Children Doing* (Brownell et al.,

2012). This report concluded that children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds consistently carry the burden of more illness, endure higher use of provincial health care and social services, and have lower educational outcomes. Further, the report highlighted a strong correlation between developmental health at a child's school entry point and their outcomes for Grade 3 reading and numeracy assessments (Brownell et al., 2012).

According to Epstein (2001), parental involvement in education, both at home and school, can influence students' academic achievement and help develop positive attitudes towards learning. Provincial governments have also recognized parental involvement as an important factor in school performance (McKenna & Willms, 1998). Many provinces require schools, by law, to have parent councils. Parents from higher socio-economic conditions are often more constructively involved in their children's schools (Epstein et al., 2002). Parents' socioeconomic status is also highly correlated with their children's participation in post-secondary education (Schaienks & Gluszynski, 2009).

There are many global and national policies that serve to outline participation in a democratic society. Examples of these include *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and *The United Nations Declarations on the Rights of Indigenous People* (United Nations, 2017). In 1991, Canada demonstrated a very important policy commitment to children by signing and ratifying the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (How & Covell, 2003).

Many provinces also have strategies to ensure success for all learners. The Government of Manitoba authored a poverty reduction strategy entitled *All Aboard: Manitoba's Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion Strategy* (Government of Manitoba, 2012), as well as an education strategy, *Multicultural Education: A Policy for the 1990s* (Government of Manitoba, 1990). These policies acknowledge the importance of preparing children for life in a diverse, inclusive, and multicultural society. While these policies may inform educational leadership, it is unclear how these policies translate into action,

Conclusion

Winnipeg elementary schools represent a unique context within Canada. Considerations such as a colonial past and many newcomers to the province add to the complexity in schools. This chapter has highlighted some of the current and urgent challenges facing Indigenous children, refugee children, gender diverse and LGTBQ2 children, and children living in poverty. As described, children's developmental trajectories are set early and are influenced by many

factors, including parental health, individual health, family context, and socioeconomic considerations (Brownell et al., 2012). Research has shown that improving educational outcomes requires all of these factors to be addressed. The education system has been challenged to examine what might work for children in the province. Manitoba children do not need to be on a vulnerable path—alternatives are possible. Most importantly, the complexities and challenges facing children need to be understood, which could contribute to the reduction of inequalities, and expand human capacity.

A 2013 report by the independent, non-partisan organization People for Education (2013), entitled *Broader Measures of Success: Measuring What Matters in Education*, identified that literacy and numeracy have become the “shorthand” for identifying achievement (p. 2). However, this report highlighted the importance of schools in developing the whole child. Academic achievement, physical and mental health, social-emotional development, creativity and innovation, citizenship, and democracy along with school climate were highlighted in the report as significant dimensions of student learning (People for Education, 2013).

Equality means opportunity for all children. Equity, meanwhile, identifies that people are positioned differently in society and need a fair chance to thrive and meet their full potential (UNICEF, 2015). Equity requires cooperation for mutual and equal benefit (Galtung, 2012). Human rights as outlined by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), are universal rights which range from the most fundamental (the right to life) to those that make life worth living (dignity, health, education and freedom). Exploring justice outside the realm of the judicial court system provides a creative freedom to explore avenues for equity.

Michelle Fine (1992), whose work has played an important role in developing the use of the participatory action research (PAR) framework within the field of education, has highlighted that marginalized people and those who have experienced injustice have brilliant insights into the origins and factors contributing to the injustices. Knowledge is rooted in social relations and is powerful when it is put collaboratively into action (Fine, 1991). Stoudt, Fox, and Fine (2012) observed that privilege has been ignored or separated from systems, structures and ideologies. They argued that critical justice scholars must document the “social, psychological hinge of privilege and oppression” (p. 188). Further, Fine (2012) identified that the challenge of social justice research is to document the social dynamics of surviving, resisting, and transforming an unequal global landscape.

Because of their experiences and participation in the school system, teachers' voices are necessary in understanding and transforming the experiences of vulnerable children, and all children in schools. As Fine (1992) has pointed out, it is important to rethink *who* has knowledge. How are inequalities being resisted and negotiated by those who are working with, paying attention to, and connected with young people? In providing a public service, teachers are confronted with these social problems and their knowledge as adults working with young people is imperative.

With these factors in mind, this doctoral study explores how Winnipeg elementary school teachers think about and define their everyday work. While many studies have addressed teacher perspectives, these studies were often prescribed to a particular subject area, teaching method, teaching strategy or challenge. This study instead casts the net wide and is concerned with broader narratives to examine how teachers think about their everyday experiences.

CHAPTER 2

Peace and Conflict Studies and the Four Assumptions of the Study

Introduction

Education in Manitoba is often front-page news. Headlines include, “Coalition Wants Pledge to Create Manitoba Office to Ensure Diversity, Equality in Education” (CBC News, 2022), “Manitoba Education Reform Should Include Focus on Child Care, Adult Learners to Fight Poverty” (Silver, 2021) and “Manitoba Education Minister Laments Poor Student Performance as 2021-2022 Funding Announced” (Bernhardt, 2021a). The reality is education is a contentious issue in Manitoba. As discussed in the previous chapter, not all people are participating equally in the educational system. There are social determinants and conditions in the environment that impact educational success within our current structure.

Today’s education system has evolved in a particular way. Baldwin (2008) noted that formal educational practices and institutions, such as schools, were then designed to provide relational and social opportunities between people. As a result, schools became powerful agents of socialization (Parsons, 1959). The way information and knowledge is exchanged and shared in these social networks/institutions is a crucial consideration. Patterns of social interaction, social relationships and how people exchange information within a context is necessary to consider while thinking critically about social issues in society.

This thesis is grounded in four assumptions. These assumptions were not used to hypothesize, but rather to cast a light on overarching broad frames of discourse. The four assumptions provide a point for investigating and emphasizing building a culture of peace. This chapter first examines the word, “peace.” This is followed by a discussion of building a culture of peace with an emphasis on the work of sociologist Elise Boulding. Finally, the four assumptions are presented.

What is Peace?

In 2014, UNESCO, through the *Yamoussoukro Declaration on Peace in the Minds of Men*, shared the following definition of peace:

Peace is reverence for life. Peace is the most precious possession of humanity. Peace is more than the end of armed conflict. Peace is a mode of behaviour. Peace is a deep-

rooted commitment to the principles of liberty, justice, equality, and solidarity among all beings. Peace is also a harmonious partnership of humankind with the environment.

What is “peace?” Perhaps the definition of peace is dependent on who is being asked. Individual experiences shape our understanding and construction of the world (Khanal, 2018). For example, is peace between individuals or states? Is peace related to security, or an emotional state such as a feeling of calm and tranquility?

Johan Galtung (1969), a mathematician, shared that peace is always based in relationships. He described his understanding of peace through his descriptions of positive and negative peace (Galtung, 2012). In exploring the concepts of peace and violence, Galtung (1969) highlighted three guiding principles in discussing the word ‘peace.’ These principles include the term ‘peace’ being used for agreeable social goals, these goals are complex but attainable, and peace is the absence of violence. Galtung therefore linked the terms ‘peace’ and ‘violence,’ wherein violence is defined as “the cause of the difference between the potential and the actual” (p. 168). Galtung (1990) examined violence in three ways, particularly direct or visible violence, structural violence, and cultural violence. Violence has been discussed by many other scholars and writers. Arun Gandhi (2010), grandson of Mahatma Gandhi, identified that in addition to physical violence there is also the more insidious, extensive passive violence.

If peace is always relational, then it takes place between actors. Galtung (2012) has described peace as positive and negative. Positive peace involves a peace that is cooperating for mutual and equal benefit and harmony. Galtung was quick to warn that equal benefit does not necessarily exist in a capitalist worldview. According to him, Western countries always want to benefit. He also added that harmony, an internal feeling, means we suffer or empathize with the suffering of others. Accordingly, positive peace is threatened by trauma, violence of the past and unresolved conflict. Negative peace involves decreasing trauma and conflict and is the absence of war and direct or physical violence (Galtung, 2012).

Building a Culture of Peace

Sociologist Elise Boulding (2000) examined peace and peace cultures. Boulding highlighted that there is a need to move beyond a static image of peace. Rather, peace is a process characterized by exploration and venturing into the new, creative, and unknown (Boulding, 2000). In short, peace is an active and diverse process. As Boulding describes, “nature never repeats itself” (2000, p.2). According to Boulding, history including how it has

been recorded (moving from pictographs and hieroglyphics to alphabets) is commonly a history of power, who controls whom. War history has recurred in present time. War is a social invention and is not a biological necessity (Boulding, 2000, p.27).

What is missing from history, Boulding argues, is the day-to-day existence of human life (2000). Building a culture of peace incorporates the past and the future and is inclusive of the present. Boulding suggests that “it is how we deal with differences that determines how peaceable society is” (2000, p.2).

Cultures of peace are born from images and hopes of a world of caring, sharing and where basic human needs are met (Boulding, 2000). Promoting a culture of peace recognizes that people must act upon a shared vision of peace. It takes a broad view of the world and stresses the importance of understanding the world, so change becomes a possibility. Boulding asserted that human beings have the capacity to build a culture of peace, just as they have the capacity to build a culture of violence (2000).

Boulding (2000) advocated for “peaceableness,” which she described as the personal and interpersonal promotion of peace as a daily process. According to Boulding, a culture of peace is a listening culture that allows space for problem solving. Solitude, respect, partnership and imagination are essential ingredients for creating a better world. Differences and conflict must be dealt with creatively. Boulding recognized that issues are nested in patterns. Promoting a culture of peace recognizes the importance of families, local communities and schools. New, good partnerships based on maturity between individuals (marital, parent-child, etc.), and groups (work-related, civic, etc.) are essential to the process of developing a culture of peace.

In showing the construction of a peace building process and the development of a utopian society, Boulding advocated for human beings to embrace a ‘Hoped for World’ (2000). A ‘Hoped for World’ also involves sustainable action (Boulding, 2000). In Boulding’s estimation, a culture of peace will grow when the world order is directed by respectful problem-solving partnerships (2000). Further, Boulding (2001) suggested that the human species has yet to overthrow gendered power structures. She advocated for women, because of their experiences in our world, to be sitting at decision-making and policy-making tables (Boulding, 2001).

John Paul Lederach discussed peace in divided societies (2010). According to Lederach, peace and peacebuilding must focus on the restoration and rebuilding of relationships (2010). People’s lived experiences are at the heart of conflict transformation (Lederach, 2010). Lederach states, “peacebuilding must be rooted in and responsive to the experiential and

subjective realities shaping people’s perspectives and needs” (2010, pg. 24). Embracing a painful past to move towards an interdependent future involves seeking innovation to engage with people (Lederach, 2010).

In their seminal work, “Multi-track Diplomacy: A Systems Approach to Peace,” Diamond and McDonald (1996) argued that consistently, non-governmental organizations have been effective peacemakers. They contend that diplomacy consists of a nine-track system, which includes education. Further, they suggested that there are commonalities in building peace. These include peacemaking as an altruistic activity rather than one of financial gain and an understanding that peacemakers are affected by the pain they witness (Diamond & McDonald, 1996).

The Four Assumptions of this Study

There are huge gaps in the literature and in our understanding and programming for Indigenous children, refugee children, LGTBQ2 youth, and children living in poverty in the Manitoba public education school context. Working within the current framework, many children are failing and do not have the same access to opportunities to flourish and reach their full potential as human beings. Perhaps there is a way to expand our understanding of human potential. Is there a way to move towards “success” for all students?

The four assumptions of this study include:

- 1) the education system in Canada is complex and there are many competing interests and voices;
- 2) building a culture of peace and collaboration requires attempting to meet human rights and basic human needs;
- 3) education can be a means of reproducing society or a means for social change; and
- 4) teachers’ voices need to be heard in the complex educational system.

Competition, collaboration, social change and the importance of teachers’ voices as the adults at the forefront of the elementary school system are imperative considerations while trying to understand lived experiences within these social institutions. These four assumptions are salient and foundational components of the Canadian education system.

Assumption 1: The education system in Canada is complex and includes many competing interests and voices

Education is everyone's concern. Elementary teachers work every day with the public to navigate the social world in the school context. Education often means different things to different people or groups. Parents, students, teachers, and administrators may all assign different meanings to the term "education" and the processes of learning and socialization.

It is critical to consider different interests when evaluating the education system. Interests are concerned with the needs, values, and motivations behind a position. In other words, position is something that has been decided on, and interests are the reasons for the position (Fisher et al., 2011).

In the previous chapter, the complex challenges of four specific groups of people were discussed. These included the inequities faced by Indigenous children, refugee children, the issues related to gender and sexuality and children affected by the barrier of poverty. In fact, the climate in which teachers work is more expansive and nuanced than these four current and urgent issues. For example, are teacher interests different from administrator interests? Are children's interests different from their parents? Is the societal focus different from individual populations? What are the conditions that lead to different needs, values and motivation? This type of problem-posing exposes the complexity of interests and voices.

It has been argued that knowledge precedes power. Knowledge is not a gift bestowed on someone, but rather knowledge is co-created (Freire, 2012). Senehi (2009) observed that when "only those in power have access to producing knowledge ... authoritative discourses may serve the interests of power rather than truth" (p. 47). Culture and conflict are intertwined (Lederach, 2003). Culture in conflict resolution is "overstating the differences and separateness of cultures and the operation of colonial-style hierarchy in our ways of knowing which lead us to devalue cultural differences" (Loode, 2011). In other words, cultural violence acts as a backdrop to devaluing particular populations (Galtung, 1969).

An examination of Indigenous knowledge can serve as an example. Indigenous knowledge is a critical area of study for Canadian educators. What we don't transform, we transmit (K. Lamoureux, 2017, personal communication). Knowledge is linked to power and identity (Harrison & Greenfield, 2011). Educators must explore the possibilities for mutual understanding, relationship, and positioning for inclusive spaces. Non-Indigenous teachers must

move beyond teaching about Indigenous people from a knowledge of the past. As noted by Harrison and Greenfield, we can no longer “gloss over” an understanding of culture.

Building relationships at the cultural interface is complex (Kearney et al., 2014). Culturally responsive teachers include cultural knowledge, language, and ceremony as part of the school curriculum to improve student outcomes (Papp, 2016). Quality teaching includes using appropriate language, a complex form of cultural reproduction (Senehi, 2000). Jessica Senehi (2009) observed that storytelling shapes and transmits knowledge. If the current narrative of education is for the individual child to meet the requirements of the educational system, for equality to exist the question must be asked if this narrative is sustainable. Further, when they position themselves as learners, teachers can become social change educators (Kearney et al., 2014).

Rahman (2013) contended that curriculum and structures aligned with the home culture of students allows for greater student success in schools. Incongruence between the culture of students and the school environment contributes to school failure and dropout rates (Reimer, 2013). From an Indigenous perspective, Ball (2012) has brought attention to the pivotal role of heritage language, literacy of the land, the right time, and nurturing the child’s spirit. Indigenous knowledge includes teachings from Elders, spirituality, traditional teachings, community, and identity (Hansen & Antsanen, 2016).

Strategies proven to improve educational outcomes for Indigenous students include relationship-based pedagogy that builds and repairs relationships, classrooms that are student-focused, feedforward and feedback to students, highlighting culture in the classroom, and administration leadership (Papp, 2016). Encouraging inquiry and exchange about values and beliefs is important for mutual understanding and building relationships. Developing culturally responsive teaching practices involves creating an inclusive space for all people. Rahman (2013) suggested that Indigenous students should be taught about “power” to give them the necessary skills to navigate the dominant culture.

If conflict and perceived differences is ubiquitous to human experience and human relationship, then mechanisms to understand conflict and its resolution is critical (Lederach, 2003). As Boulding suggested, in building a culture of peace, it is how human beings are able to deal with differences that matter (2000). Human beings need constructive ways to deal with conflict that will lead to collaborative processes between individuals and the international community (Boulding, 2000).

Formal, or informal procedures and arrangements with the intention to resolve differences is a necessary consideration for the education system. “Principled negotiation” has been cited as the best way for people to manage their differences (Fisher et al., 2011). Principled negotiation is based on four inclusive principles: “Separate people from the problem,” “focus on interests, not positions,” “invent options for mutual gain,” and “use objective criteria.” This model avoids becoming restrictive and prescribed, since as noted by Ury (2014, personal communication), “what is important is the search for a solution that addresses the needs of all parties.”

Lederach (1997) has proposed the use of an integrated framework in building peace. His work considers the nested framework of levels of response and time, and includes root causes, crisis management, prevention, vision and transformation. The key to a sustainable, transformational approach to peacebuilding rests in the relationships of all individuals and parties involved. Local participation is critical. Lederach (1997) noted that conflict transformation is based on an understanding of “a fair, respectful and inclusive process as a way of life and envisions outcomes as a commitment to increasing justice, seeking truth, and healing relationships” (p. 22).

Transforming conflict sees people as active participants in designing intervention strategies and finding solutions (Lederach, 1995). Unlike a prescriptive model, Lederach’s elicitive approach regards the interaction among the trainer and participants as imperative. The trainer acts as a facilitator to create a learning environment for participants to develop models for dealing with conflict. In this model, people are resources (Lederach, 1995). Rigorous consultation at the community level strengthens relationships and builds capacity (Denborough et al., 2006).

Mapping and designing models are tools used by scholars in analyzing conflict and strategizing for its resolution. Dennis Sandole (2012) developed a three-pillar framework for mapping conflict and conflict resolution. The first pillar of this framework examines the elements of conflict (parties, issues, objectives, means, conflict-handling, orientations, conflict environment). The next pillar is concerned with the conflict causes and conditions (individual level, societal level, international level, global/ecological level). The final pillar examines conflict intervention approaches (conflict prevention, conflict management, conflict settlement, conflict resolution, and conflict transformation) (Sandole, 2012). Jay Rothman’s (1992) ARIA

model and Byrne and Carter's (1996) "Social Cubism" are other examples of models used to describe the complexity of conflict in search of resolution or transformation.

The context in which elementary school teachers work is complex and includes competing interests and voices. While Chapter One highlighted urgent and complex challenges of four specific groups of children, the interests and voices of people are further nuanced between teachers, students, parents, administrators, school boards and society. Dealing with differences and competing interests is a critical study for teachers who are working daily to navigate this context. Inclusive practices that address the needs of all participants is what is important (Fisher et al., 2011).

Assumption 2: Building a culture of peace and collaboration requires attempting to meet human rights and basic human needs

In April 2021, former Manitoba Premier Brian Pallister said, "I've watched teachers invest their own money out of their own pocket for decades now and I just think this is a good, fair incentive to encourage other teachers to do the same" (Bernhardt, 2021b). If teachers are helping to fund the educational system to improve the educational experiences in Manitoba classrooms, a question that must be asked is: *Why?* Could this be related to the inequalities faced by particular populations of students such as Indigenous children, refugee children, LGBTQ2 youth, and children living in poverty? Not all students arrive at school with the same experiences, resources and needs. Students may arrive at school feeling stressed or powerless (Hyde, 2021). How is the dilemma associated with diversity and unity being balanced (Senehi, 2009)? Are Winnipeg elementary schools designed only for an "ideal" student, while ignoring the needs of students who fall outside this box?

Human rights

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), drafted by the United Nations, outlines human rights based on the dignity, freedom and value of all people. Human rights are rights people have simply because of existence regardless of sex, ethnic origin, nationality, color, religion, language or any other status (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948). It has been observed that The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is framed in legal discourse (Hunt, 2007). In Canada, human rights are protected by federal, provincial and territorial law (Human Rights Commission Canada, 2021).

Schaber (2014) has argued that human rights are not grounded in basic human needs. At a local level, human rights require respect for diversity and human dignity (Nader, 2007). If local rights exist for Indigenous people in absence of state recognition, does this mean that an individual or group must be culturally different to be entitled to human rights (Merry, 2007)? Nader (2007) suggested that human rights are in need of “a new tapestry borrowing from different cultures and peoples” and that “human rights are ripe for reframing.” (p. 127). Reconfiguring power relations so that power is exercised in a way that is more socially just for all deserves a much closer examination (Speed, 2007).

Samantha Power (2013) suggested that ignorance and indifference are among the most lethal influences on human rights. How does emotion intersect apathy and indifference? Perhaps an example of this is found in examining genocide. According to Power, The Genocide Treaty is worded in factual, reasonable, and unemotional terms. Power argued that although Americans overwhelmingly agree with the treaty, it does not emotionally move them to action. In other words, emotions must be engaged in order to be moved to act.

Power (2013) ascertained that Americans were more likely to move towards an “American mood” of positive, hopeful feelings. The popularity of the dramatization of the “Diary of Anne Frank” provides an example. If people were unable to process what they were reading and hearing, apathy was the result. If genocide is “outside the realm of expression,” the question becomes how can people be emotionally moved to action (Power, 2013)? In the Canadian context, this suggests that closer attention needs to be paid to inclusive, collaborative, and hopeful language in advocating and maintaining human rights.

Another interesting question is how have human rights or natural rights and human obligations shifted to legal rights in modern society? Leve (2007) noted that Buddhists have a theoretical understanding of the idea of coexisting levels of truth—an interesting concept when applied to the social scientists’ assertion that people use different logic and standards in different areas of their lives. Questions such as human rights violations versus ordinary crimes (Merry, 2007) and the concept of “worthy victims” must be examined (Warren, 2007). Perhaps the lived experience of individuals and collective groups can be a key to unlocking an understanding and protection of human rights and human obligations.

In her book, *Inventing Human Rights: A History*, Historian Lynn Hunt (2007) traced the history of human rights back to the rejection of torture. Hunt revealed how ideas about human relationships in novels and art, particularly in the second half of the eighteenth century,

facilitated the communication of human rights. Hunt argued that human rights are supported to grow out of timeless truths on an intellectual level, but emotional adherence is key. People understand that rights exist when they *feel* something has been violated (Hunt, 2007). Emotional connection is compulsory for human rights.

Threats to human rights include violence, security threats, poverty and a lack of education (United Nations, 2022). Factors that hinder the protection of human rights include historical, political, legal, economic, social, cultural, religious, and technological considerations (United Nations, 2022). It has been said that the discourse of human rights is foundational to genuine democracy, a key component to peace (Grayling, 2022). Philosopher A.C Grayling explained the urgency of human rights:

Genuine democracy is the means to get selfless cooperation among governments; genuine democracy is the embodiment and enactment of human rights; the answer to the question: Can there be a system of universal values that all could share, enabling global cooperation to deal with global threats? Is therefore: Yes; it is the framework of human rights (p.197, 2022).

The promotion of human rights is congruent with peace (Galtung, 2012). It could be that promoting and advocating for human rights is the best avenue human beings have to confront the world's greatest challenges (Grayling, 2022).

Basic human needs

As Boulding described, building a culture of peace requires that human rights are met. Day-to-day experiences are pivotal in building a culture of peace. Meeting basic human needs is a core tenet of human rights. Including Abraham Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs, a theory of motivation, the discourse of basic human needs is extensive.

According to Canadian psychologist Gordon Neufeld, Western society does not serve the needs of children (Neufeld & Mate, 2013). Children are often placed in situations and interactions that unwittingly "[erode] the only sound basis of healthy development: Children's attachment to the adults responsible for their nurturing" (p. 32). Human needs theorists identify human needs as not only objective and physical survival needs, such as water, food and shelter, but also as subjective and psychological needs such as self-esteem and belonging. A long and diverse number of scholars have examined human needs theory, including Virginia Satir and Abraham Maslow. Within Peace and Conflict Studies, theorists such as Johan Galtung and John

Burton have argued that violence and suffering are the result of unmet human needs (Marker, 2003).

Johan Galtung did not identify a list of basic human needs. Instead, Galtung (1980) recognized the usefulness of a needs theory to inspire people into awareness, rather than to prescribe a well-structured need set. According to him, needs are constantly in progress. He identified that if a verb is necessary, it would be a state of well-being and a sense of its absence. Based on dialogues around the world, Galtung (1990) identified four classes of needs: survival needs, well-being needs, identity and meaning needs and freedom needs.

John Burton (2001) examined human needs within the context of conflict and conflict resolution. According to him, the source of the problem must be understood and then eliminated. Burton (1998) argued that if conflict resolution is to be taken seriously, society must adjust to the needs of the people. In his view, aggression and conflict are a result of social circumstances and unmet human needs.

Burton identified certain universal human needs that must be satisfied (Rubenstein, 2001): 1) distributive justice, 2) safety and security, 3) personal recognition (belongingness/love), 4) self-esteem, 5) personal development, 6) identity, 7) cultural security, 8) freedom, and 9) participation (Marker, 2003). Burton viewed these universal human needs as a collection of developmental essentials that are not hierarchical but rather sought simultaneously. Further, he identified that some needs are frustrated by institutions and norms. For this reason, institutions become important in transforming conflict (Byrne, 2015). Burton (1998) highlighted the needs of personal recognition and identity as being more fundamental than food and shelter, and noted that a denial of recognition and identity will lead to behaviours to satisfy these needs.

Chilean economist Manfred Max-Neef (1992) understood human needs as being interrelated and interactive. Like Burton, he understood needs as a system. Further, needs are ontological. According to Max-Neef, fundamental human needs are: 1) subsistence, 2) protection, 3) affection, 4) understanding, 5) participation, 6) leisure, 7) creation, 8) identity, and 9) freedom. Max-Neef stressed the importance of distinguishing between needs and satisfiers—needs are non-negotiable, whereas need satisfiers are cultural, contextual, and negotiable. What changes over time and between cultures is the strategies people use to satisfy their needs (Max-Neef, 1992).

Increasingly, boundaries have been identified as helpful in supporting human needs and well-being (Brown, 2015). Boundaries see that individuals are the gatekeepers of their own lives (Peck, 1997). Social scientist Brené Brown (2015), whose research focuses on courage, shame, vulnerability and worthiness, observed that “setting boundaries means getting clear on what behaviours are okay and what’s not okay. Integrity is key to this commitment because it’s how we set those boundaries and ultimately hold ourselves and others accountable for respecting them” (p. 123). Setting boundaries includes finding a way to make generous assumptions and maintain one’s integrity. Brown (2012) shared that in her research, the people who are most connected and compassionate are those who set and respect boundaries. Issues such as feelings of unworthiness, anger and resentment arise when boundaries are not set (Brown, 2015). Boundaries are supportive of self-care. Throughout history, teachers have traditionally been single women willing to accept less pay and the conditions of their employment. History impacts the present day and our social reality. Setting boundaries could be an important consideration for elementary school teachers. Additionally, of equal importance is agreeing to and respecting boundaries.

Trauma

Many children in schools are affected by trauma. Trauma is described as “a traumatic event that involves a single experience, or enduring repeated or multiple experiences, that completely overwhelm the individual’s ability to cope or integrate the ideas and emotions involved in that experience” (Klinik Community Health Centre, 2013, p. 8). Trauma often leads to behavioural and mental health issues. Research on the neurodevelopmental consequences of trauma points to the direction of new, multidisciplinary approaches to improving human well-being (Anda et al., 2006). Perry and Winfrey (2021) asserted that the effects of trauma and in particular childhood trauma cannot be downplayed, and they noted that an understanding of trauma and the brain is vital for all people who work with children.

Today, trauma is often not identified or acknowledged (Klinik Community Health Centre, 2013); however, recognition and restitution are essential in the resolution of trauma (Herman, 1997). Mate (2021) has suggested that one of the main jobs of human beings is to learn to transcend trauma and suffering. Teachers could become constructive active agents in supporting the transcending of trauma. In the opening pages of her book, Judith Herman (1997) stated that the perpetrator simply asks the bystander to do nothing, while the victim asks the bystander to share the burden of pain:

In order to escape accountability for his crimes, the perpetrator does everything in his power to promote forgetting. Secrecy and silence are the perpetrator's first line of defense. If secrecy fails, the perpetrator attacks the credibility of his victim. If he cannot silence her absolutely, he tries to make sure that no one listens. To this end, he marshals an impressive array of arguments, from the most blatant denial to the most sophisticated and elegant rationalization. After every atrocity one can expect to hear the same predictable apologies; the victim exaggerates; the victim brought it upon herself; and in any case it is time to forget the past and move on. The more powerful the perpetrator, the greater is his prerogative to name and define reality, and the more completely his arguments prevail (p. 8).

Mate (2021) noted that teachers are often working with children impacted by trauma, yet many do not have the information they need to do this work. Accordingly, schools in Canada need to become trauma informed. Further, Herman (1997) identified that "The solidarity of a group provides the strongest protection against terror and despair, and the strongest antidote to traumatic experience" (p. 214). Survivors need the assistance of others. When a survivor's story is shared with a group, social and personal meaning can be the result (Herman, 1997).

Childhood trauma is important to understand to validate and normalize the survivor's emotional response (Herman, 1997). Neufeld and Mate (2013) brought attention to the ways that security and attachment to a caring adult are essential for child development and childhood patterning. Basic trust and a belief in a meaningful world are formed in early life. Some children seem to have a strong "internal locus of control" (Herman, 1997). Goleman's (1995) work has shown the ways that emotion and the emotional brain has the ability to hijack the thinking brain. The ability to regulate emotion has long been recognized as a virtue, although what Goleman argued is less noticed is that managing emotions takes the majority of our time as human beings.

Mate (2021) observed that working through trauma allows people to see the beauty of their existence. He also noted that it is important to recognize our collective trauma, since our societal systems are deeply traumatized. Arguably, one of the best examples of this is the Earth itself. The historical imbalance of power can be found physically in the deterioration of the Earth's environment. These issues are often driven by the activities of industrialized countries. As noted by Jeong, the environment as a boundaryless common heritage has emerged as a collective human right. Further, according to Mate (2021), "The disconnection from the body and the Earth really has to do with the disconnection of our own bodies. The two are together. The exploitation of the Earth as if it were something separate from us, has a lot to do with patriarchal domination. We talk about Mother Earth. Look at what we are doing to Mother."

Responding to climate change is directly related to self-interest and clearly reveals our interdependence (Grayling, 2022).

Trauma and teachers

Teachers are navigating an environment with diverse students. Trying to meet the needs for such diversity presses deeply on the needs of teachers themselves. For example, teachers are in a context where they are navigating trauma and are often hearing trauma stories. From this lens, teachers may experience vicarious trauma. Vicarious trauma has been defined as harmful inner transformation as a result of an empathic engagement with another person's traumatic experiences (Pearlman & MacIain, 1995). These transformations include changes to identity, world views and cognitive schemes (Pearlman & MacIain, 1995). Vicarious trauma has been described as an occupational hazard for helping professionals (Ravi et al., 2021). Vicarious trauma is different from compassion fatigue and burnout (Ravi et al., 2021).

Moral injury is a concept concerned with the trauma of wrestling with an ethical or moral dilemma. Moral injury is described as an inability to respond to a person's needs due to constraints that are out of the control of the individual (Dean et al., 2019). Litz et al. (2009) describe moral injury as, "the lasting psychological, biological, spiritual, behavioral, and social impact of perpetrating, failing to prevent, or bearing witness to acts that transgress deeply held moral beliefs and expectations (p.697). Moral injury describes a dilemma of knowing what a person needs and a failure to act. The symptoms of moral injury include shame, guilt, anxiety, depression, among others (Surgrue, 2020). Moral injury has been found to be a relevant concept for educators (Surgrue, 2020). It suggests a trauma of perpetrating significant moral wrong despite not wanting to harm another (Levinson, 2015). Levinson (2015), proposed that the key is for teachers to recognize that their actions may cause moral injury. Teachers are called upon to enact justice and require resources, knowledge and support to eliminate moral injury (Levinson, 2015).

Resilience and recovery

In the context of exposure to significant adversity, an understanding of resilience is important. Resilience can serve as an antidote to trauma (Lerner et al., 2012). Resilience has been defined as the capacity of individuals to navigate their way to the psychological, social, cultural, and physical resources that sustain their wellbeing (Ungar, 2015). Further, resilience involves the capacity of individuals and groups to negotiate for these resources to be provided.

Bruce Perry (2021) suggested that perhaps more important than resilience is the understanding that our brains are malleable. Daniel Goleman (1995) observed that trauma imprints on the brain—and specifically in memory. Trauma, uncontrollable stress or helplessness requires emotional relearning. After exposure to trauma, the human brain will never be the same, but people can learn to move forward in healthy ways (Perry & Winfrey, 2021).

Linda Lantieri (2008), who developed the “Inner Resilience Program” for schools, promoted the importance of cultivating inner resilience for both teachers and students. Graham (2013) noted that there are powerful processes in the human brain involved with resilience, including how resilience is encoded from a very young age and how neural pathways are formed. Neuroplasticity allows human beings to use their experiences to rewire these patterns.

In Dene and Cree communities, Hansen and Antsanen (2016) observed that resilience is understood as a process that can be acquired and developed. Flexibility and a vision of how to succeed are Indigenous concepts of resilience. Resilience has a broad meaning from an Indigenous perspective, which includes relationship with the land. Further, Indigenous resilience is linked to the decolonization of Indigenous education. According to Hansen and Antsanen, Indigenous students are required to balance positive and negative feelings about themselves and the world due to stereotypes. The dominant discourses of colonialism and Eurocentrism are embedded with the ideals of the colonizer and work to erode the foundation for Indigenous resilience (Hansen and Antsanen, 2016). It needs to be acknowledged that work on building resilience might inadvertently avoid addressing the root causes of trauma by focusing on symptoms.

Children need to be supported by community—that is, a group that is conscious of its shared identity (Senehi, 2000). Communities need to be grounded in one-on-one experiences. In developing community everyone needs the opportunity to produce knowledge. Developing a community is a necessary ingredient in feeling a sense of belonging, connection and purpose (Hardy, 2005). Accordingly, a child’s first community involves the family and attachment to a caring adult.

Responsive environments make it easier for people to negotiate and navigate resources (Ungar, 2012). In nurturing resilience, Michael Ungar (2015) has identified nine things children need: structure, consequences, parent-child connections, many strong relationships, a powerful identity, a sense of control, a sense of belonging/culture/spiritual life/purpose/rights and responsibilities and safety and support. Building social capital, connections, supports, and

networks are linked to resilience and building positive health (Smith et al., 2015). There are significant challenges in providing responsive educational environments. Disrupted educational experiences are common for children from Indigenous, refugee, and LGBTQ2 communities as well as children living in poverty. Research shows that schooling is not necessarily a consistent environment for these children—and from a teacher’s perspective, it is difficult to work with children who are not in the classroom.

The Harvard Study of Adult Development, which has tracked the lives of two groups of men over 75 years, is one of the world’s longest running studies (Vaillant, 2012). It found that good relationships were an essential part of what kept people healthy and happy. Social connections allowed people to be happier, healthier and live longer. Meanwhile, participants in the study who were more isolated were less happy, had lower brain function, and lower life expectancy. Further, the study found that the quality of relationships mattered. Securely attached relationships were critical to happiness, while unresolved conflict was found to be destructive. Accordingly, the study’s applicability to the lives of children is its revelation that it is possible to recover from a traumatic childhood and that memories of a happy childhood are lifelong sources of strength (Vaillant, 2012).

Other studies have also found that relationships are an imperative ingredient for a healthy and happy life (Reis & Gable, 2003). According to Perry (2021), relationships are central to human beings and the importance of connection and community cannot be understated. Perry observed:

The capacity to love is at the core of success for humankind. The reason that we have survived on this planet is that we have been able to form and maintain protective groups. Isolated and disconnected, we are vulnerable. In community, we can protect one another.

Furthermore, cooperation and a continuous process of connecting and reconnecting are essential to human wellbeing (Perry & Winfrey, 2021).

In their book *The Spirit Level: Why Greater Equality Makes Societies Stronger*, Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett (2009) examined inequality through a variety of indicators including educational performance, mental health, and violence. Their research found that thriving societies were those that shared resources equitably—that is, what mattered was not the country’s wealth, but how its resources were shared amongst its population (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009).

Jeong (2000) noted that competition is a driving force behind conflict. Adam Smith, who is associated with the ideology of capitalism and profit motive, was concerned with the impersonal mechanisms of the market (Schellenberg, 1996). Supply and demand, competition and self-interest are important to understand in an economic market. In *Value(s): Building a Better World for All*, former Governor of the Bank of Canada and of the Bank of England, Mark Carney (2021) highlighted that radical changes to the world economy are needed. Carney observed the need to infuse values such as a sense of solidarity, fairness, responsibility, resilience, sustainability, dynamism and humility into market capitalism. The forces of inequality are great, and world citizens are facing enormous challenges such as climate change and a fourth industrial revolution. Within this context, Carney asserted that there is a deep need to rethink market capitalism (Carney, 2021).

Empathy

According to Daniel Goleman (1995), because the human emotional brain is intertwined with all parts of the neocortex, our emotional center has the power to influence the functioning of the rest of the brain. He identified that although IQ and emotional intelligence are complementary intelligences, emotional intelligence adds more qualities that make us fully human. Goleman stated:

Some evolutionary thinkers see the moment for the emergence of interpersonal skills as the point where our ancestors moved from the treetops to life on the savannah...to where social coordination in hunting and gathering paid huge dividends...cooperation provided this advantage and with it a new challenge to the human race. (p. 199)

Goleman (1995) emphasized that empathy is a critical component to social connection. According to him, caring stems from attunement and the ability to empathize or to know what another feels. Goleman suggested that there are three different types of empathy, including cognitive empathy, emotional empathy and compassionate empathy. Cognitive empathy is a desire to understand, at an intellectual level, how a person thinks about things. Goleman warned that people who have only cognitive empathy can use it to manipulate people to their own advantage. In other words, they use the right language but for self-serving and perhaps twisted purposes.

Meanwhile, Goleman (2015) identified emotional empathy as having to do with feelings. Specifically, emotional empathy is connected to feeling *with* another person. Emotional empathy is needed to create rapport with other people and has to do with harmony and synergy. Goleman

warned that emotional self-management skills are needed to balance emotional empathy, since emotional empathy needs to be metabolized. Finally, he articulated that compassionate empathy is a desire to help, which involves supporting people for the benefit of the whole. Compassionate empathy involves taking action to alleviate suffering (Goleman, 2015).

Systemic psychotherapist, Esther Perel stresses relational intelligence (2022). According to Perel, relational intelligence is “the set of skills that we bring to knowing how to live our relationships. And I prefer it to emotional intelligence because I like the systemic approach” (2022). If thriving relationships are directly correlated to the quality of our lives, focus must be on the network of relationships (Perel, 2022). This begins with an understanding of family systems.

A concept emerging from the social sciences is the burden or hardship related to caring. There is a cost to caring and caregiving (Liu et al., 2020). The cost of care can include physical, mental, social and financial consequences (Liu et al., 2020). The construct of emotional empathy or feeling with another person is a complex study. Increasingly, research is pointing to the importance of compassion, or compassionate empathy (Stevens & Taber, 2021). In the three separate processes of cognitive, emotional and compassionate empathy, it is compassion that translates for people to engage in pro-social behaviour (Stevens & Taber, 2021). According to Stevens and Taber (2021), the process of compassion acts as a mechanism for self-regulation which allows a person to manage their own emotions, the subjective distinction between themselves and another, and then effectively care for another person. The same authors identify that a closer look at compassion is necessary for caregiving professions to prevent burnout as they are often navigating the larger challenges of promoting prosocial behaviour.

Empathy is highly complex and multifaceted. For example, there is a significant amount of neuroscientific research on the mirror systems in emotion, or the affect sharing of empathy (Bastiaansen et al., 2009). A comprehensive investigation of empathy could include not only interpersonal and contextual factors, but also neurological and biological factors (Lamm et al., 2019). According to Lamm et al., (2019), the neuroscientific investigation of empathy is in its infancy stage.

Although many scholars argue about what role school plays in social and emotional learning (SEL), some programs have highlighted the importance of SEL (Katz, 2021). “Roots of Empathy” is one evidenced-based program that promotes increasing empathy while raising the social and emotional competence of children (Schonert-Reichl & Smith, 2012). Katz (2021)

reported that Roots of Empathy, in which a parent brings their baby to visit an elementary classroom throughout the school year, alongside a trained instructor who uses a specialized curriculum, has been shown to reduce participants' aggression while increasing caring, resilience, and well-being.

Assumption 3: Education can be a means of reproducing society or a means for social change

The United Nations (2021) recognized education as a basic, foundational building block to healthy, equitable and abundant societies. Manitoba Education (2021) framed its mission statement around the importance of living rewarding lives—specifically stating that its mission is to “provide a high quality and sustainable kindergarten to Grade 12 educational system, through leadership and collaboration, for all students to develop the knowledge, skills, and attributes they need to lead rewarding lives.”

The lines below are recognizable to more than four hundred million readers in 200 countries and in 69 languages (Rowling, 2015):

Mr. and Mrs. Dursley, of number four, Privet Drive, were proud to say that they were perfectly normal, thank you very much. They were the last people you'd expect to be involved in anything strange or mysterious, because they just didn't hold with such nonsense. (Rowling, 1997)

In Rowling's (1997) novel, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, 11-year-old Harry Potter begins his education at Hogwarts School of Magic. As noted by Joseph Campbell (1949), the hero's journey has recognizable, familiar patterns of creation and destruction. Harry Potter can be understood as an archetypal figure, a hero, who follows a path located in legends and myths. Author J. K. Rowling (2015) recognized that the greatest gift Harry Potter could give the world was the freedom to use our imaginations.

Are imagination, curiosity and creativity the attributes that young people need to lead “rewarding lives” and to address our world's greatest challenges? The term “education” itself is a social construct that has been linked to growth and life-giving processes. However, as discussed in Chapter One, the current education system is not working the same for all people.

Education reproducing society

French sociological pioneer Emile Durkheim (1897) argued that education is “only the image and reflection of society. It imitates and reproduces the latter ... it does not create it” (pp. 372-373). It is impossible to have a full understanding of the Canadian and Manitoban

elementary education system without an understanding of the much larger social structures within which the system is situated. The personal is political and this includes cultural patterns of power (Bishop, 2015).

Ain't No Makin' It by Jay MacLeod (2009) was an ethnographic study of the ways social class is reproduced over generations. In examining social reproduction between two groups, the “Hallway Hangers” and the “Brothers,” MacLeod drew from the work of Bowes and Gintis, Bourdieu and Willis. He concluded that, “No matter how clearly they understand their lives, no matter what cultural innovations they produce, no matter how diligently they devote themselves to school, [the children] cannot escape the constraints of social class” (p. 150). In developing an understanding of social reproduction, the impact of social inequality over generations is reflected in a person’s lived experience. Historically, MacLeod noted, the social position into which we are born greatly impacts our “success” within societal structures (p. 242).

Freire (2012) noted that human lives are lived in a relational context. Children are born into a social identity (Harro, 1997). We are first socialized by the adults we love and trust (Neufeld & Mate, 2013). Socialization happens both intrapersonally and interpersonally (Harro, 1997). Children replicate the patterns of the adults in their lives (Hardy, 2005). Hardy observed that the social environment in which children are received is critical to their positive development and can influence their biology within a critical period of development. Further, the patterns of how children are loved by the adults who are responsible for their care will contribute to their world view (Perry & Winfrey, 2021). These interactions have the ability to build resilience or contribute to a more vulnerable child.

French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1986) examined the diverse and subtle dynamics of power in society and the ways in which power is transferred generationally. According to Bourdieu, social class is reproduced over generations, and history and capital, or accumulated labour and must be explored with social class in mind. He noted that class structures are embedded with inequalities. Further, cultural capital identifies that cultural background, knowledge, and skills are passed from one generation to the next (Bourdieu, 1986).

Social class is a powerful shaper of our social reality (Hardy, 2005). In *What Money Can't Buy: The Moral Limits of Markets*, Michael Sandle (2013) questioned accumulated goods and whether markets are the primary instruments for creating the common good. He also questioned whether we have moved from *having* a market economy to *being* a market economy.

Historically, as noted by MacLeod (2009), the position into which people are born greatly affects their ability to thrive within structures. Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* described how people learn to act and react from experience. For example, working class people have low aspirations for social advancement resulting in social immobility (MacLeod, 2009).

Identity

According to Terrell Northrup (1989), identity can be described as “an abiding sense of the self and of the relationship of the self to the world. It is a system of beliefs or a way of constructing the world that makes life predictable rather than random. [Identity] is extended to encompass a sense of self-in-relation-to-the-world” (p. 55). Lederach (2003) claimed that identity is “deeply rooted in a person's or a group's sense of how that person or group is in relationship with others” (p. 55). The intersectionality of identity is important and must also be acknowledged. For example, a child could be a refugee, identify as transgender, and be from a low-income household.

Based on Erik Erikson's theory, James Marcia (1966) examined identity formation and achievement. According to Marcia, those who have an identity “know not only who they are, they know how they became that, and they have a hand in becoming. Furthermore, they have developed skills useful in the adaptive process of further self-construction and self-determination” (Marcia et al., 1993, p. 10). Marcia maintained that to achieve identity, individuals must experience moratorium, or questioning the alternatives in their life. Some individuals, however, experience foreclosure, wherein they take on the roles of others. Other individuals experience identity diffusion in which they give up an active search for a clear identity. Marcia (1966) noted that once an individual has obtained identity achievement, their self-esteem is less vulnerable to negative information. According to Marcia (2013), gender and the social-cultural context must be considered while looking at the meaning of identity status.

Social identity is a self-concept derived from group membership, and can replace personal identity (Cheldelin et al., 2003). Attribution theory examines the judgement people make about their own behaviour. Attribution theory identifies that people overestimate the degree to which behaviour is caused by the traits of the individual and underestimate the degree to which it is caused by external factors.

Individuals are nourished by their communities (Lederach, 2003). A community can be defined as “any collectivity that is conscious of a shared identity” (Senehi, 2000, p. 14). A community may identify itself by a shared history, language, environment, and so on. Senehi

noted, however, that it is the shared perception of these qualities that construct a sense of community. Further, a community is shaped by structural and cultural forces. The role of family and community cannot be underestimated (Gordon & Mate, 2013). Family and community form the template for nurturing and are essential for who we are and how we live.

Another important consideration within this study is that teachers teach who they are. Baloché (2014) observed that teachers' "personal, practical knowledge shapes what happens in their classrooms and how they perceive the students with whom they work" (p. 208). In considering social and emotional needs, teachers must have the emotional knowledge and strength to appropriately manage their own emotions while simultaneously managing those of another (Hardy, 2005). Listening—deep listening—must move beyond pattern recognition. Humanistic psychologist Carl Rogers (1961) advocated for active listening which includes empathy, congruence and unconditional positive regard.

It is difficult for teachers to separate their understanding of education from the culture in which they grew up (Powell & Powell, 2010). For example, research involving brain scans has confirmed that different cultures process information differently (Goldberg, 2008). Nisbett's (2003) study found that Western teachers were much more outcomes based than Asian teachers. When educators and parents come from different socioeconomic, racial, sexual orientation or ethnic/cultural groups, there is often a disconnect between what it means to participate in a child's education (Lindsey et al., 2009).

Emotion

Some questions arise, such as why is reading a skill that is privileged over nutrition? Who is creating the knowledge, information and skills acquired by children in schools? Perry (2014) observed that teachers teach subject areas with intention. He questioned why relationship building and culture are not taught with the same intention, since if we are not teaching with intention, culture can go away. Learning rules, the hidden curriculum reflects the white dominant culture values, practices and world views (Rahman, 2013). If culture acts as a way of satisfying basic human needs, culture is an essential consideration.

In North America, many children grow up in a culture that ignores emotional education (Greenspan, 2004). People are taught that our wide range of emotions is only appropriate in intimate personal relationships, not in broader contexts. We are not taught to understand emotions as information which has something to teach us. However, Greenspan noted that if we can identify emotions through an "inescapable web of mutuality," they have the power to

strengthen and enlarge us (p. 26). Emotion is a key component to protecting and advocating for human rights (Power, 2013).

Howard Gardner's (1983) work *Frames of Mind* identified a variety of intelligences in an attempt to acknowledge the multiplicity of human talent. Multiple Intelligence Theory challenges humans to reconsider our understanding of what it is to be "smart." Gardner identified diverse intelligences including Musical-Rhythmic, Visual-Spatial, Verbal-Linguistic, Logical-Mathematical, Body-Kinesthetic, Interpersonal, Intrapersonal and Naturalistic intelligence. Interpersonal and Intrapersonal are two of the intelligences identified by Gardner that highlight social and emotional intelligence. In working with inclusion and diversity, Jennifer Katz (2012) developed *The Three-Block Model of Universal Design for Learning*, which includes social and emotional learning, inclusive instructional practices and systems and structures.

Social psychologists have studied the effects of expectations on behaviour and have found that expectations can have a dramatic impact on behaviour, even within minutes (Snyder et al., 1977). Emotion impacts motivation, behaviour and relationships (Goleman, 1995). The importance of a teacher's expectations over the course of a year cannot be diminished. Highly effective teachers have characteristics that include placing a high value on student identity, having high expectations, viewing parents and communities as partners in education, showing resilience in the face of difficult situations, and caring, respecting and loving their students (Nieto, 2005). Emotion is essential to effective teaching.

Today, technology also must be considered. Recent research has shown that higher smart phone use by children has been linked to a higher risk of depression and suicide (Twenge, 2017). Social media scholar Danah Boyd (2010) identified that kids are addicted to each other. Technology allows for kids to connect and plug into each other in new ways (Boyd & Buckingham, 2010). Children and teens live their lives in a time when there is unprecedented possibility for connection and also publicity (Boyd & Buckingham, 2007).

Education for social change

Ted Talks are powerful, 15-minute video presentations from speakers around the world on a variety of topics. The most popular Ted Talk of all time was Sir Ken Robinson's (2006) talk titled "Do Schools Kill Creativity?" To date, almost 50 million people have viewed this video, in which Robinson asserted that creativity is as important as literacy in schools. His belief is that the only hope for the future lies in human beings' ability to reconceptualize our understanding of human capacity. The current education system is asking for commodities from

children—the current capitalistic structure requires schools to produce citizens who can fulfill labour requirements. Robinson (2006) declared that if children are the hope for the future, we need their creative imaginations. Furthermore, responsible adults are needed to make this happen.

Betty Reardon (1997) insisted that there is a distinction between peace education and human rights education. Peace education has been called names such as conflict resolution, multicultural education and environmental education. However, Reardon argued that peace education must ultimately stem from an understanding of violence, whereas human rights education stems from an understanding of human dignity and the recognition of its fulfillment. Arguably, human rights are aligned with the study of positive peace, since all forms of violence cause harm to human flourishing (Galtung, 1969). Human rights are described by Reardon (1995) as “a normative field of study to define and apply standards of justice to human affairs” (p. 5). Reardon saw education and education for human dignity as capacity building to deal with both traditional and unprecedented problems.

Critical peace education links education to the goals of social justice, since teachers and students are the agents of change (Freire, 2012). Critical peace education is described as non-hierarchical and action-oriented with a focus of social transformation (Huaman, 2011). The central tenets of peace education offer communities a deepening of local realities and peace as a possibility between citizens. Huaman observed that it is understood that building a sustainable peace is located in a historical and cultural context.

In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paulo Freire (2012) identified that education is “suffering from narration sickness” (p.71). He argued in favour of education as a practice of freedom as opposed to a practice of domination, which required a move away from a “banking” style of education to one of “problem-posing.” Freire’s problem-posing education recognizes people as beings in the process of becoming. Perhaps this addresses what Ken Robinson (2006) identified as “maximizing human capacity”—the children of today will be the adults of tomorrow.

Shared identity and cooperative interdependence

Most of the literature reviewed in this section has called for a move away from our current competitive culture towards a more inclusive way of being. However, moving away from a competitive, ‘eye for an eye’ process requires creating something different. A cooperative process allows for more resources, information, and skill (Augsburger, 1992). What

is involved in the move from scarcity to abundance? Conscious cultural change requires more gradual stages with deep connections to the past (Clark, 1989). What becomes important are the values that will be accepted to move life forward. Promoting a culture of peace requires building relationships. Shared identity and trust are a prerequisite of cooperative interdependence (Lederach, 1997).

The first step in any community transformation initiative involves rigorous consultation to develop trust and respect (Denborough et al., 2006). Consultation works to identify key themes that community members feel need to be addressed. Equally important during this stage is accessing the skills and knowledge of the community. It is imperative to find ways to richly acknowledge the experiences of community members (Denborough et al., 2006). Questions may be asked to elicit values, beliefs, hopes and dreams. Conflict transformation works best when it is elicitive and includes the perspectives of all stakeholders (Senehi, 2009).

Storytelling is a powerful tool for transformation. Creative initiatives such as storytelling have special powers to connect community members with a focus on the speaking-listening relationship (Coskie et al., 2010). Externalizing a story allows for a greater capacity to separate people from the problem and to gain an ability to access resources and acknowledge strengths (Senehi, 2015, personal communication). In storytelling, listening is equally as important as speaking (Coskie et al., 2010). Indeed, Miriam Greenspan (2004) identified the power of listening as the foundation of healing. Storytelling can build community because of a shared experience and can give expression to group identity (Senehi, 2002). It also allows individuals to be themselves without having to live up to an external value system. Storytelling also innately fosters empathy (Senehi, 2002).

Nelson (2003) observed that empathetic rapport between one individual and another is found in the oral tradition of storytelling. Senehi (2002) noted that constructive storytelling allows for dialogue and relationship-building. Dialogue is necessary for communication, and without communication there can be no real education (Freire, 2012). Storytelling is gentle and respects people and their knowledge. People are seen as resources, and storytelling promotes inclusion and empowerment (Senehi, 2009). Further, storytelling is feasible, low-tech, understood across cultures, and builds community because of a shared experience. Constructive storytelling is also non-controlling, involves self in context, is strength based, and allows for a shared identity without sacrificing diversity (Senehi, 2015, personal communication). Storytelling is powerful and offers a different way for language to come out in public transcript.

In the context of this study, the stories that teachers tell offer a different language to describe their lived experiences.

Storytelling has the ability to connect community with a focus on the speaking-listening relationship. Constructive storytelling is connected to positive peace (Senehi, 2009). It addresses perceptions, emotions and communication. Storytelling is “inclusive and fosters collaborative power and mutual recognition; creates opportunities for openness, dialogue and insight; a means to bring issues to consciousness; and a means of resistance” (Senehi, 2002, p.45). Storytelling initiatives can allow for more stories to be heard and made public, which in turn, can give people the opportunity to deconstruct and externalize problems and find personal agency.

The book *Night Spirits: The Story of the Relocation of the Sayisi Dene* is a compelling example of the power of storytelling (Bussidor & Bilgen-Reinart, 2006). In it, Ila Bussidor tells about the unimaginable suffering that resulted from the relocation of the Dene people away from their traditional land and community. In the book, Betsy Anderson recalled a time when she and her people were conscious of being creators with the world, rather than spectators. She stated, “I am still around to tell you these stories. I must have been a very strong woman” (Bussidor & Bilgen-Reinart, 2006, p. 144).

If a dominant group unknowingly holds the power that causes structural and cultural violence in the elementary education system, how can this be brought to consciousness? Lederach (1997) identified the importance of middle-range leaders in transforming conflict. Middle-range leaders have, among other things, an understanding of crisis issues and their connection to systemic roots, while they can also cultivate relationships with the affected population. Teachers are at the hinge of our educational system- they are in contact and are witnesses to student stories, both of triumph and oppression.

Assumption 4: Teachers’ voices need to be heard in the complex educational system

Teachers are uniquely positioned within the education system. They are uniquely positioned not only because of their educational background and their roles as educators, but also as the people who spend so much time with children. In fact, teachers may spend more waking hours with school aged children than anyone else in the children’s lives.

The position of the elementary school teacher has also evolved in a particular way. While many studies have addressed teacher perspectives, these studies were often prescribed to

a particular subject area, teaching method, teaching strategy, or challenge. This study is concerned with broader narratives about how teachers think about their everyday work. It focuses on the daily practices and experiences of teachers, and how they navigate, negotiate, and resist their experience(s) and their languaging around those experiences.

If schools are important sites of social and cultural reproduction, the language of teachers who are at the forefront of our educational system is vital. Language is a form of cultural reproduction (Senehi, 2002). True praxis is the right to say our own words and think our own thoughts (Freire, 2012). How have teachers contributed to discussions about education? Have teachers been a passive body or equal partners in the translation of knowledge? Language comes after thoughts and feelings—as Siegel (2011) observed, language comes last. Importantly, for children, the most important language is play.

Early years educational research, theory and practice have a long history which dates to the time of Plato (Pangle, 1988). In the 16th century, theologian Martin Luther is acknowledged as one of the first people to advocate for children to learn to read (Hendrix, 2015). Luther believed that everyone, including children should have access to reading the bible. From John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Fredrick Frobel, and Charles Darwin to Sigmund Freud, John Dewey, B. F. Skinner, Maria Montessori, Albert Bandura, Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky and Eric Erickson there is a long and diverse history of people contributing to educational philosophy and thought.

Throughout history, the practice of early childhood education has been a female dominated arena (Baldwin, 2008). Research being done and by women in education have traditionally been excluded from academic discourse (Woyshner & Tai, 1997). Kathleen Weiler (1997), in her article, *Reflections on Writing a History of Women Teachers*, raised the question about the nature of knowledge, the role of language in the social construction of gender and the significance of subjectivity in historical evidence. Deirdre Almeida (1997) examined educational experiences of Native American women and their efforts to resist policies which sought to assimilate them. Almeida argues that it is through education that Native American women will reclaim their power. Historian Barbara Solomon (1985) in her work, *In the Company of Educated Women: A History of Women and Higher Education in America*, presented a historical overview of women's higher education in America. Solomon's work identified that although women had access to the academy, they were asked to conform to existing economic and social structures.

Elementary educators continue to be predominantly female. Feminist psychologist Carol Gilligan (1977) has brought attention to the inadequate voice of women in theory and the feminine construction of reality. In working with leading psychologists, most notably Lawrence Kohlberg, it became apparent to Gilligan that women's identity and experience were not included in the research. In her later years, Gilligan (2014) attributed her insights to listening to pregnant women contemplating abortion following the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Roe v. Wade*. In her book, *In a Different Voice*, Gilligan (1977) highlighted levels of moral development, including 1) individual survival, 2) care and responsibility for others (goodness as self-sacrifice), and 3) balance of care for self and others (morality of nonviolence). Child psychiatrist Kerri Tomy (2017, personal communication) similarly highlighted the historical lack of the feminine perspective in the psychiatric literature, although that has begun to change. Women, because of their experiences in the world need to be at policy-making tables (Boulding, 2000).

In *Ambiguous Empowerment: The Work Narratives of Women School Superintendents*, Susan Chase (2003) examined the work narratives of women superintendents who have led public schools in the United States. She attested that while their stories were compelling, the primary area of interest was the contradictory experience of power and subjection. According to Chase, "the narrative process-making sense of experience and shaping self-understanding is at once a personal and a cultural endeavor" (p. 5). Chase's study was grounded in the belief that culture manifests itself in everyday practices, and she employed in-depth interviews as her method of collecting data. She noted that talking is a social action worthy of rich analysis. Chase highlighted that some people's stories are intriguing because they bring together "divergent strands" of experience and allow for new stories to emerge (p. 33). The women in her study were positioned as storytellers of individual tales against structural discrimination (Chase, 2003).

According to Jessica Senehi (2020), "knowledge making ... has been mainly driven by socially advantaged groups with more access to the academy" (p. 46). For example, Indigenous research methodology makes significant contributions in the production of knowledge. The broader principles of an Indigenous research framework are based in relationship (Wilson, 2008). Indeed, Wilson observed that the intent of an Indigenous research methodology is to adhere to relational accountability. Indigenous methodology acknowledges that epistemological

assumptions, values, and method are inextricably intertwined with the data gathered about the social world. The relationship is the reality (Wilson, 2008).

Indigenous feminist scholarship is another example of a critical area of study. The intersection of feminism and decolonization is found in the work of a growing number of Indigenous feminist scholars. Green's (2007) *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism* is a collection of essays, stories, and interviews from women around the world, which make visible the gap in feminist literature on issues related to Indigenous women. In it, Green shared, "Indigenous liberation theory has not been attentive to the gendered ways in which colonial oppression and racism function for men and women, or to the inherent and adopted sexism that some communities manifest" (p. 23).

Archuleta (2006) highlighted that Indigenous women's participation in community highlights a resistance to oppression. She shared that "our efforts to find a collective, self-defined voice appear in writing and activities that bring women together in friendship, family relations, or organizations of women with like-minded goals, forming a 'theory in the flesh' made up of Indigenous women writing to survive" (p. 88). Indigenous women are being challenged to take lead roles in revolutionary transformation of their communities, and Indigenous scholars are pressing for Indigenous voices to be heard (Dion, 2016).

Shannon Cormier's (2017) qualitative, participatory action research project, *Walk with Me: Sharing Space Along the Path*, provided an example of working toward collaborative alliances. Cormier noted that building relationships takes time. In her research, six Indigenous and six non-Indigenous women met around a kitchen table to share and identify key elements that would best support peaceful and productive relationships and alliances between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. The results were seven principles for walking a path together and highlighted Indigenous feminist theories, including: 1) relationship, 2) perspective and power, 3) words matter, 4) get comfortable with being uncomfortable (Western perspective can be good at denying differences), 5) intention (motivation, values, assumption)/finding common ground, 6) the gift of conflict, and 7) openness for courageous conversations (Cormier, 2017).

Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg scholar Leanne Simpson (2020) shared her understanding of Indigenous theory building this way:

Theory works a little differently within Anishinaabe thought. Theory is generated and re-generated continually though embodied practice and within each family, community, and generations of people. Theory isn't just an intellectual pursuit. It is woven within kinetics and spiritual presence and emotion. It is contextual and relational. It is intimate and

personal with individual themselves holding the responsibilities for finding and generating meaning within their own lives. Most importantly, theory isn't just for academics. It's for everyone.

If voices are an essential aspect of humanity and the construction of knowledge, the question must be asked, "who's voices are being heard?" Teachers are uniquely positioned within the educational setting. Teacher knowledge, because of their education and experiences, is pivotal. Teachers are navigating and negotiating a particular context, during a particular time, and with particular people. The voices of teachers, from their own frame of reference is important to educational thought and practice.

Conclusion

Developing a socially meaningful understanding of education is a challenging endeavor. As in all social contexts, schools are not neutral in their origins or impact (Wotherspoon, 2014). This doctoral study is based on four assumptions: 1) the education system in Canada is complex and includes many competing interests and voices; 2) education should be for the people served and should attempt to address human rights and human needs; 3) education can be a means of reproducing society or a means for social change; and 4) teachers' voices need to be heard in the complex educational system. Trauma, resilience, empathy, identity, emotion and cooperative interdependence are topics embedded in these assumptions.

These assumptions were not used to hypothesize. Rather, these theoretical assumptions act as bridges to link existing knowledge and relevant theory to the salient themes of competition, human needs, social change, and the voice of stakeholders. The four assumptions are connected to and provide a link between the fields of Education and Peace and Conflict Studies. The assumptions are linked to building a culture of peace. Specifically, Galtung's (2012) understanding of positive and negative peace, and Boulding's (2000) understanding of building a culture of peace.

In Canada, individual human rights are protected by the Canadian Constitution, as well as federal, provincial and territorial law (Government of Canada, 2022). The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms protects basic human rights and has the ability to influence Canada's democratic society by interpreting laws and policies (Government of Canada, 2022). The Charter of Rights and Freedoms is entrenched into the Canadian Constitution. In 1991, Canada

ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Government of Canada, 1991). The Convention on the Rights of the Child not only recognizes children as full people who need to be protected under the law, but also as people who need protection based on their vulnerable status.

While Canada may be a country that is globally recognized as having a leading school system, what is important is the experiences of the people within the school system. The social injustice and hardships in society affect young people's daily lives and also affect the elementary school environment. The knowledge and experiences of elementary school teachers as the adults at the frontlines of our school system deserve close examination.

CHAPTER 3: Education and Peace and Conflict Studies

Introduction

Teachers are navigating a public context, and teacher identity and knowledge are important considerations while sharing space with young people. The literature in this chapter is drawn from cross-curricular scholarship in the fields of Peace and Conflict Studies, Education, Indigenous Studies, and Sociology. It is a critical integrated review of the literature.

According to Parker Palmer (2007), good teaching is always rooted in the identity and integrity of the teacher along with the quality of connection to their students and subjects. The space that teachers hold for young children is pivotal (Perry, 2021). In his beloved classic, *The Courage to Teach*, Palmer (2007) highlighted that understanding the anatomy of fear is essential to deepening the capacity for connectedness. Palmer shared:

The external structures of education would not have the power to divide us as deeply as they do if they were not rooted in one of the most compelling features of our inner landscape—fear, afraid of failing, of not understanding, of having their ignorance exposed or their prejudices challenged. (p. 38)

Ultimately, Palmer (2007) described that attachment to ideas can lead to competitive processes which can result in losing one's sense of self or identity. He called upon teachers to become powerful agents in shedding light into dark places by allowing students the opportunity to translate feelings into knowledge and actions. Clinical psychologist Jody Carrington (2019) shared that kids are never a problem, but rather while dealing with issues, it is the people that are holding a space for children that require attention.

This chapter will first discuss education as well as education and culture. This will be followed by a discussion on education and conflict, and education, structural violence and power. The chapter will conclude by highlighting that our educational system is located in global realities. Elementary school teachers, because of their position in our school system have unique knowledge. If teachers are to become powerful agents as Palmer (2007) suggests, their perspectives and words need to be included in societal and political public discourse.

Education

Education concerns everybody (John Wiens, 2017, personal communication), and can be defined and understood in many ways (Westover, 2018). The Merriam-Webster online dictionary (2017) defines education as “The action or process of educating or of being educated, the knowledge and development resulting from an educational process, and the field of study that deals mainly with methods of teaching and learning in schools.” On a macro scale, education is often associated with formal institutions, including elementary schools, junior and senior high schools, and universities.

In 1948, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed The Universal Declaration of Human Rights for all People, which framed education within a human rights perspective:

Education shall be directed to the full development of human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial and religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace. (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948)

At the launch of the Global Education First Initiative (GEFI), UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-Moon identified that:

Education must fully assume its central role in helping people to forge more just, peaceful, tolerant, and inclusive societies. It must give people the knowledge, understanding, skills, and values they need to cooperate in resolving the interconnected challenges of the 21st century. (Global Education First Initiative, 2015)

In discussing intelligence, Maturana and Verden-Zoller (1996) observed:

We humans are loving animals, and our intelligence and creativity in the domain of human well-being depends on our being loving animals. Thus, as we said above, all the emotions that entail the negation of the other, such as ambition, competitiveness, envy, or aggression, reduce intelligence. The only emotion that expands intelligence is love, and this is so because intelligence has to do with the acceptance of the legitimacy of the other and the expansion of the possibility for consensuality that such acceptance entails. Love is visionary. We think that other lineages of the human kind may have become extinguished through the negation of love in mutual destruction or ecological blindness in their domain of existence.

Education, theory of knowledge, reflecting on the nature of knowledge and how we know what we know is a complex area of study. In *Thrive: The Purpose of Schools in a Changing World*, Valerie Hannon and Amelia Peterson (2021) argued that the story or narrative we tell ourselves about education must be examined. Some stories say that education is “good”

and allows individual children to compete in the job market. Hannon and Peterson argue that education needs to be concerned about supporting children's ability to flourish in a transforming world. Looking at how societies thrive, Hannon and Peterson asked questions such as what kind of education allows students to build relationships and how can students become engaged in society with the experiences of their everyday life. They suggested that education needs a powerful new narrative to replace outdated and old narratives (Hannon and Peterson, 2021). These old narratives include that education grows prosperity (usually measured by GDP) and education is good for people to compete as individuals.

On October 8, 2014, the front page of the *Winnipeg Free Press* read, "Education System in Crisis" (Stokke, 2014). Another headline read, "Update: Manitoba Students Rank Dead Last in Reading, Math, Sciences" (Puxley, 2014). The Council of Ministers of Education Canada (CMEC) had just released their report on the Pan-Canadian Assessment Program of Science, Reading and Math (PCAP). The aim of this assessment was to "inform Canadians about how well their education systems are meeting the needs of students and society" (O'Grady & Hourne, 2014). The report offered a comparison among provinces as well as the changes in each province over time. Manitoba placed last in the country in all three areas (reading, math, and science). Overall, the results showed that 14% of Manitoba Grade 8 students were not meeting expectations. Reading achievement in Manitoba was significantly lower than the Canadian mean score, and the province had demonstrated a significant negative change in reading since 2007.

Public Education in Canada is a provincial government responsibility. Currently, in the Province of Manitoba, there are 618 Public Elementary Schools (Manitoba Education and Training, 2021). Public schools are governed by locally elected school divisions/district boards. There are 54 school divisions/districts in the Province of Manitoba, nine of which are in Winnipeg. First Nation Band-operated schools, evening and summer schools, as well as independent and private schools are not governed by these divisions/districts (Manitoba Education and Training, 2021).

Curriculum development in the Province of Manitoba was designed in collaboration with other ministries of education, with the goal of aligning the curriculum with those of other "leading" countries (Government of Manitoba, 2021). The Western and Northern Canadian Protocol (WNCP) created a common curriculum for Mathematics, Language Arts, and Social Studies. The Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) was responsible for the

creation of the common curriculum framework for science learning outcomes (Government of Manitoba, 2021).

The Government of Manitoba has a document, *Provincial Assessment Policy Kindergarten to Grade 12: Academic Responsibility, Honesty, and Promotion/Retention*, which outlines the policy for early childhood learning assessment (2015) According to the Government of Manitoba (2021), the primary purpose of assessment is to “enhance teaching and improve student learning.” Students are individually assessed in each subject area. Formal provincial report cards with a numerical grading system are written three times a year beginning in kindergarten (Winnipeg School Division, 2017). A “Learning Behaviour” section is included at the end of the report card (Government of Manitoba, 2021).

In 2021, the provincial government proposed Bill 64 - The Education Modernization Act (Manitoba Education and Training, 2021). If Bill 64 had received proclamation, it would have replaced three separate Acts: The Public Schools Act, the Education Administration Act, and the Community Schools Act. However, Bill 64 was met with considerable public concern—including being identified as racist by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives Manitoba Office (Braul, 2021)—and was not passed.

Education and culture

In *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind*, Yuval Harari (2011) identified that first there was Physics, with the Big Bang Theory approximately 13.5 billion years ago. Three hundred thousand years later came Chemistry, which was followed by Biology approximately 3.8 billion years ago. Approximately 70,000 years ago, human beings began forming complex structures called “culture” (Harari, 2011). Solomon et al. (2015) argued that the formation of culture may have been a direct response to death anxiety. In simple terms, culture refers to the way of life as a group of people. History, Harari (2011) noted, is the study of culture.

Canadian elementary classrooms are filled with students from many cultural backgrounds. Cheldelin, Druckman and Fast (2003) defined culture as “the socially learned ways of living found in human societies” (p. 168). Culture identifies the shared values, language, and traditions defined by a particular group of people which involves the socially determined mental framework of the cultural group’s concept of reality (Clarke, 1989). Culture is not static. Human beings create culture and can also bring about change through interpreting and reinterpreting culture (Avruch, 2003).

In Manitoba (and in Canada more broadly), young children are required by law to attend school (Government of Manitoba, 2021). Manitoba teachers are required to follow provincial curriculum and school policies. Azaola (2012) argued that schools act as powerful tools for socialization; schools are responsible for the transmission and preservation of culture. Social class is reproduced over generations (Bourdieu, 1986). Pierre Bourdieu argued that the most privileged groups in society are able to impart and legitimize a dominant culture (Azaola, 2012). Schools are embedded with the ideologies and values of the dominant class. The result is that lower-class students and students who do not fit into the cultural competence of the education system are at a great disadvantage (MacLeod, 2009).

Syers-Walker (2010) observed that “Schools have historically favored the values associated with capitalism over those values that allow for improving the psychological and emotional well-being of students” (p. 174). Inequalities and hidden curriculum have greatly impacted students in public schools. Marc Kuly (2021) stated that in a very real way, residential schooling continues into the present day.

As Indigenous author, educator and activist Vine Deloria (1976) observed, culture is used to justify the modern education system. Scholar Mary E. Clark’s (1989) work uncovered that there are three primary interacting components that every culture shares—material culture, social culture, and ideological culture. Regardless of individual personality, behaviour is largely constructed by society and institutions. Cultural patterns provide unity and predictability for the group. Culture reinforces social wisdom, a memory bank which guides decision making processes (Clark, 1989).

Mazuri identified the following seven fundamental functions of culture (Tuso, 2015):

- 1) acts as a lens of perception and cognition,
- 2) provides a motive for human behaviour,
- 3) provides criteria for evaluation,
- 4) provides a basis for identity,
- 5) offers a mode of communication,
- 6) provides a basis for stratification
- 7) presents a system of production and consumption. (Tuso, 2015)

Culture also defines gender roles (H. Tuso, 2016, personal communication). Women have had to address generations of patterns of conflict suppression (Augsburger, 1992). History has revealed systemic discrimination, inequality, and many forms of cultural oppression

(French, 1992). More recently, women's movements have allowed women to have stronger voices. There is a link between women's rights and oppressed nationalities (Tuso, 2015). It is important to identify that the women's rights movement was born from the campaign to end slavery (Grayling, 2022).

Lederach (1997) noted that conscious cultural change requires gradual stages and deep connections to the past to be sustainable. When an environment changes quickly, culture is often unable to adapt (Clark, 1989). Cultural destruction usually results when the threat of outside forces leaves societies with institutions that are not able to deal with change (Tuso, 2015). Cultural destruction can also be linked to cultural genocide. According to the United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect, to constitute genocide, "there must be a proven intent on the part of the perpetrators to physically destroy a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group" (United Nations, 2021).

The United Nations offers a significant amount of data and resources that align education with nurturing peaceful societies. The UNESCO (2007) "Guidelines for Intercultural Education" is one such document, which explores education and multiculturalism, the international legal framework, and guidelines on intercultural education, and highlights that attention must be paid to culture and education. Another important UNESCO (2013) document is "Intercultural Competences." This document shines a light on the importance of teaching, promoting, enacting, and supporting intercultural competencies. Perhaps what becomes most important is how these documents and knowledge translate into the lived experiences of people and the Earth. How are people moved to behave? As Paulo Freire (2012) observed, true words must be followed by action.

According to UNESCO's (1945) Constitution, "peace must be founded, if it is not to fail, upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind." Indeed, UNESCO has described education as "the instrument both of the all-round development of the human person and of that person's participation in social life" (UNESCO, 2007, p. 6). If the intention of education is to encourage human potential, human rights and promote inclusive societies, then an analysis of the barriers facing students is necessary. As highlighted in Chapter 1, research has shown that many students continue to suffer. The strategies used to promote equity and human flourishing must also be examined. Teachers are uniquely positioned to witness and address these challenges and strategies.

Education and conflict

To build a culture of cooperation within a system, it is imperative that the conflict within the system is first understood (Lederach, 1995). According to peace scholar Johan Galtung (2012), a conflict, in its simplest form, is a system with incompatible goals. Conflicts indicate a contradiction. Therefore, conflict and its resolution is not a simple study. There are many definitions, theories and models used to describe conflict. As Tusso (2015) has pointed out, conflict is a social construction. Assumptions about conflict include ideas of winners and losers, and conflict as a simple incompatibility between two parties without looking at processes, consequences, and outcomes (Reimer et al., 2015). These assumptions are harmful and can lead people and parties into cycles of violence.

Social conflict

Social conflict and culture, a lived experience, are interconnected. In other words, “conflict is connected to meaning, meaning to knowledge and knowledge is rooted in culture” (Lederach, 1995, p. 8). Conflict is ubiquitous to humans, and it manifests differently in every culture, while also offering a comprehensive view of a culture’s social construction of reality (Augsburger, 1992). Conflict is inherent in human relationships and Lederach (1995) noted that it can be viewed as a motor of change. Further, Schellenberg (1996) observed that conflict has been described as neither good nor bad, but rather a necessary part of human social life. It is a visible sign of human energy, and results when shared meaning breaks down (Augsburger, 1992). To understand conflict, it is necessary to understand culture (Lederach, 1995).

Social conflicts are complex and involve the struggle for agency and power in society (Senehi, 2009). Social conflict can include structural and psychocultural components. Social conflict describes how society is structured in particular ways to benefit particular people while others are marginalized. In other words, according to Senehi, “power relations between and within societies are reflected in what are seen as more legitimate or politically powerful discourses” (p. 203). Race, gender, class, and age are examples of how particular groups of people can be linked to social inequality.

Identity and group identity are also related to conflict. According to Lederach (2003), “at the deepest level, identity is lodged in the narratives of how people see themselves, who they are, where they have come from, and what they fear they will become or lose. Thus, identity is deeply rooted in a person’s or group’s sense of how that person or group is in relationship with others” (p. 55). In other words, identity is best understood in relationships. Kreisberg (2003)

noted that identity conflict is deeply rooted in identity issues, and identity issues need to be dealt with directly. Further, Jay Rothman (1997) observed that identity conflicts are contrasted with interest-based disputes that deal with more concrete issues such as material resources.

According to Rothman (1997), identity conflicts are almost intangible as they are based in psychology, history, culture, values, and ethics:

[Identity] conflicts are deeply rooted in the underlying individual human needs and values that together constitute people's social identities, particularly in the context of group affiliations, loyalties, and solidarity... Identity-driven conflicts are rooted in the articulation of, and the threats or frustrations to, people's collective need for dignity, recognition, safety, control, purpose, and efficacy. Unfortunately, they are all too rarely framed in that way. The hypothesis ... is that group identity conflicts are an increasingly important and identifiable class of conflict, with patterns and characteristics that run within and among all levels of social organization, both domestic and international. These conflicts are often destructive, but with the right analysis and approach they may become enormously creative and transformative. (pp. 6-7)

Rothman (2011) noted that identity conflicts require special handling as they are deeply rooted in fear, trauma, and history. What has become increasingly important in resolving identity-based conflict is the extent to which the intragroup have navigated agreements. In other words, intragroup negotiations must be done first in order for negotiation to be done across sides (Rothman 2011).

According to Kreisberg (2003), three factors are responsible for shaping collective identities, including 1) internal factors of the group, 2) the relationship with adversaries, and 3) the social context of interaction. The diversity within the context, including different racial, linguistic, ethnic, religious, and class, adds complexity and possible social cleavages. Integrated problem solving and problem-solving processes such as the ARIA approach have been highlighted as useful in transforming identity conflicts (Rothman, 2012).

Identity and identity membership are important considerations, as conflict resolution and transformation must include all people (Augsburger, 1992). Conscious cultural change must take place within a historical context. Galtung (1969) noted that sustainability is another imperative discussion, since sustainability involves meeting the needs of current and future generations. It also involves such things as the environment, social society, and economic resources.

The latent stage of conflict

Avruch (2003) argued that culture is very rarely the cause of conflict; however, it is often the lens through which conflict is projected. Galtung (1990) identified cultural violence as

“those aspects of culture, the symbolic sphere of our existence—exemplified by religion and ideology, language and art, empirical science and formal science that can be used to justify or legitimize direct or structural violence” (p. 291). Cultural violence makes direct and structural violence seem right and legitimate—it acts as a backdrop which blurs reality (Galtung, 1990).

In all cultures, conflict is characterized by multilevel communication, both visible and subtle (Augsburger, 1992). Networks of subjective perceptions of realities construct social realities. The nature of conflict can have a constructive/creative dynamic, or a destructive dynamic. Augsburger noted that constructive conflict processes can be described as those in which all participants are satisfied with the outcome and feel advanced because of the conflict. Conversely, destructive conflict processes are competitive in terms of solutions, attitudes, or actions. All conflict requires clarification and needs to be transformed (Augsburger, 1992). Transforming conflict processes into peaceful processes require deep examination into the underlying conditions that create a space for conflict (Lederach, 2003).

Human rights and interests resolve conflict at the most basic human level (Augsburger, 1992). Basic needs, values and interests are essential to human beings. Augsburger noted that security and identity are needs that cannot be resolved in win-lose processes. Humans bring emotions, values, background, and perspectives to conflict and problem-solving (Fisher et al., 2011). Suggestions such as put yourself in others’ shoes, don’t blame others for your problems, listen actively, and speak to be understood are outlined to encourage a positive working relationship. People need to be positioned together, on the same side to solve the problem.

Conflict scholars have described various stages of conflict. Lederach (1995) noted that the latent stage of conflict is the first stage, which exists when individuals or groups have differences that are bothersome. Power differentials which may involve resources, interests or values can produce latent conflict between individuals and groups (Brahm, 2003). As frontline workers in the Winnipeg elementary school context, teachers’ daily experiences with children in schools may shed light on conflict processes or to the latent stage of conflict. To understand the experiences of teachers, it is imperative to understand the context in which they work. In other words, their experiences cannot be decontextualized.

Wallerstein (2000) stated that households are the most neglected institutional pillar of the capitalist world. Elise Boulding (2000) shared that families are the primary agents of social change. There is a great demand to re-imagine the way basic institutional spheres, such as families, workplaces, and state, relate to each other in the modern world (Wallerstein, 2000).

Lederach (1997) highlighted the need for conflict prevention during the untapped stages of conflict.

Winnipeg elementary school teachers are often the first contact for young children outside their immediate family or caregiver(s). Children's early socialization is critical to maximizing their full potential (Hardy, 2005). In this context, subjective perspectives and constructed realities must be made visible. Honest dialogue is critical for clarifying mutual interests. However, honest dialogue and navigating conversation can be challenging and complex. Patterson, Grenny, Switzler et al., in their best-selling book, *Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking when the Stakes are High* (2002), identify necessary communication tools for important and difficult conversation.

Honest dialogue can further be complicated when examined through different lenses. For example, honest dialogue may be complex when examined through the lens of gender identity. Early years teachers tend to be predominately women. Boulding shared that under stress, women's response is generally to "tend and befriend" (2001, p. 55). There is frequently a cultural expectation for women to work collaboratively and put others' needs ahead of their own for the purpose of being perceived as nice, kind and accommodating (Kolb & Porter, 2015). This tendency to be overly responsible can be seen as a form of relational malpractice as women fail to have agency, and use their expertise. The creation of interdependence is key (Kolb & Porter, 2015).

Wolfe (2007) noted that Socrates did not write in words, but instead held the belief that to grow as human beings, people required dialogue with examined words and analyzed thought. Research has shown that when children share a meal together with one or more parents or guardians, there is an increase in school grades and psychological health (Luthar & Latendresse, 2005). Perhaps it is not the actual meal that is of importance, but rather the factors that lead up to the meal that are essential considerations (Damour, 2016). In other words, what are the prerequisites within the social context that allow for a meal to be shared, and for the creation of a social context for communication.

Former Deputy Justice Minister of Canada and Chair of the Task Force on Public Service Values and Ethics, John Tait (1996) shared:

We do not learn about the good from abstractions but rather from encountering it in real life, in the flesh and blood of a real community, and real people. Values are sustained by a community that believes in them and sees them acted out daily, in both concrete and symbolic actions. This points to the importance of leadership and of role models. (p. 2)

People can be devalued either in a situational context by being disrespected or in a societal context of becoming dehumanized (Hardy, 2005). Freire (2012) stated that dehumanization is a “distortion of the vocation of becoming more human” (p. 44), that is deeply impactful not only for those whose humanity has been taken, but also those who have robbed the humanity of another.

In *Because We Can Change the World: A Practical Guide to Building Cooperative, Inclusive Classroom Communities*, Mara Sapon-Shevin (1999) called for classrooms, schools, and a society that values community. She proposed a civics curriculum grounded in six values that serve to inform our interaction with others: courage, inclusion, value, integrity, cooperation, and safety. Sapon-Shevin identified exclusion and competition as barriers to building constructive communities. She also stated that only by converting theory into practice can we create cooperative, inclusive classrooms and schools.

Nel Noddings (2007) argued that the current education system is motivated by competitive economic factors. She highlighted that education is a social institution being driven by social values. Further, she stated that currently the aim of education serves to keep the country strong economically and to give children the opportunity to do well financially. Elsewhere, Noddings (2014) asserted that if society is truly interested in alleviating inequality, the factors that sustain inequality must be addressed. Caring relations in teaching are of central importance (Noddings, 2012). According to Noddings, care and trust include listening, dialogue, critical thinking, reflective response and making connections to life itself. Additionally, she has highlighted the importance of ‘better adults’ in educating children and stated that “unity of purpose does not imply uniformity of programs and courses” (Noddings, 2015, p. 234).

Derrick Bell, an American lawyer, civil rights activist and legal scholar was a thought leader in critical race theory (2008). Critical race theory is a concept that describes how racism is embedded into legal systems and social policy (Bell, 2008). It argues that white people have been the main beneficiaries of civil rights legislation and examines how citizenship and race interact (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Competitive forces can be subtle. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995a) argued in favour of a critical race theory in education that is comparable to critical race theory in legal scholarship. They discuss school inequality as being based in three principles: race is a significant factor in inequality, society is based on property rights, and social inequality can be understood through race and property (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995b).

Critical race theorists identify that social reality is constructed and exchanged through stories in a particular context at a particular point in time (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Naming one's reality and 'voice' are important considerations. Curriculum and intelligence testing are viewed as cultural artifacts used to legitimize a dominant class. Ladson-Billings (2014) has shared that her biggest fears for education are the inability of educators to recognize the brilliance and creativity of children in favour of pushing children back into a framework of what it means to be "knowledgeable" and "creative." Accordingly, in the context of this thesis and Winnipeg elementary schools, Ladson-Billings's work points to questions about whether (and how) the curriculum acts as a cultural artifact.

Organizational psychologist Adam Grant (2013) used different terms to describe competition. In his book, *Give and Take: A Revolutionary Approach to Success*, he discussed the roles of "givers," "matchers" or "takers" in organizations. Within these contexts, success is established in how people interact with others. Through his research, Grant (2013) found that most people are "matchers," people who believe in a just world.

"Givers" share their gifts without expecting anything in return—they sacrifice themselves but they make their organizations better (Grant, 2013). "Givers" are overrepresented at the bottom levels of any success measure as well as at the top. Grant suggested that we need to create a culture that supports and protects "givers." "Givers" must have strong boundaries and recognize their own needs. Teams made up of "givers" and "matchers" promotes a creative culture, inclusive of self-care. Across all organizations, the most successful leaders are consistently "givers."

Promoting cooperation and collaboration is a central goal in conflict resolution processes (Augsburger, 1992). Augsburger brought attention to Robert Axelrod's five factors for promoting cooperation: 1) enlarging the shadow of the future, 2) changing the payoff system in relationships, 3) teaching people about empathy and caring for one another, 4) teaching reciprocity as the achievement of unconditional cooperation, and 5) improving the ability to recognize all people. Conflict is primarily rooted in social values that are not in short supply. The more security a group experiences and expresses creatively, the more security is experienced by its neighbours (Augsburger, 1992). This is evident by the fact that peaceful states do not go to war (Byrne, 2015).

Augsburger (1992) observed that conflict competencies include staying creative, positive, calm, positive and tolerant of ambivalence. Transforming attitudes is important so

parties are able to work collaboratively and cooperatively. Behaviour such as non-coercive styles of communication is necessary for building respect. Finally, creative design allows for options of mutual gain. Conflict can be uniting as most weaknesses and fears are common to all human beings (Augsburger, 1992).

Finland has been recognized as having one of the best education systems in the world. In Finland, teachers are well-educated, knowledgeable professionals (Sahlberg, 2011). Finnish educator and author Pasi Sahlberg noted that within the Finnish education system, rather than testing, assessment is embedded in the teaching and learning processes. Therefore, there is no competition between students and schools. Sahlberg attributed part of this success to Finland's social values of equality and cooperation. Finland serves as a model of an education system that meets the needs of children and society. Childhood—for all children in Finland—is highly valued (Sahlberg, 2011). It is important to note that the social contexts between Finland and Canada are very different. Finland has a relatively homogeneous population while Canada is a multicultural and heterogeneous nation.

In democratic societies, promoting collaborative social networks and institutional relationships must be proactively supported and protected (Gallagher, 2011). As demonstrated in Northern Ireland, social change to promote and construct collaborative structures and processes is a complex and challenging endeavor (Gallagher, 2021). One significant reason for this is that educational systems have been found to be risk-adverse (Gallagher, 2004). Further, collaboration within and across educational institutions requires agency at the local level (Gallagher, 2021). Gallagher (2004) has shown that in divided societies, there is not a single structure or processes that answers the challenges of diversity.

In Winnipeg elementary school classrooms, not all students participate equally. The social groups identified in this research reveal devastating inequalities. Teachers are active participants in the elementary classroom setting and their experiences narrated from their own perspectives is valuable knowledge. Teachers offer a public service intended to serve the members of the community. Working directly with the public in this way can offer new insight.

Education, structural violence and power

Unjust social structures can perpetuate oppression and dehumanization (Jeong, 2000). A question that must be asked is: can we discuss violence when it is not visible and experienced as a direct, personal infliction of pain or injury (Galtung, 1969)? In short, can violence be invisible? Galtung introduced the concept of structural violence as a means of expanding and

creating a greater understanding of violence. Structural violence is expressed in systems that provide unequal access to power and unequal life chances. Moreover, structural violence slowly erodes human values and has been shown to shorten a person's lifespan (Jeong, 2000). It has been described as invisible and handed down from generation to generation (Dilts, 2012).

Historically, structures through patterning, routine and ritual, position individuals and communities (Farmer, 2003). Hegemonic interests are maintained by legitimizing a method of conflict (Jeong, 2000). According to Jeong (2000), "The needs of the individuals are precedent to the requisites of the system the legitimacy of authority can be established by the creation of institutions that serve the needs of everyone" (p. 70). Mark Kuly (2021) highlighted that schools use inclusive language that thereby works to mask actions that exclude some students. Julie Hyde (2021) explained that the current educational landscape homogenizes diverse experiences, which works to delegitimize alternate conceptualizations of education.

Our current social structure is based on underlying historical paradigms including the Industrial Revolution where production- more, greater and faster became the narrative. If an underlying process of our educational system seeks to promote homogeneity, does this not cast aside and divide people? Does this homogeneity promote and protect dignity, diversity and human rights? External structures work by objectifying and dividing people (Palmer, 2007). People are not objects to be manipulated and processes should not drive them apart.

According to Galtung (1990), direct violence, cultural violence and structural violence are interconnected and all three need to be kept in view. Robert Jervis argued that individuals use "fuzzy logic" to invent reality through symbols such as metaphors and language (Avruch, 1998). Rubbery statements or "fuzzy logic" are important to consider as culture is socially transmitted or learned. Ellingson (2001) noted that "Power and privileged interests can manipulate symbols" (p. 386). Sociologist and journalist William Whyte (1950) cautioned, "the greatest enemy of communication, we find, is the illusion of it" (p. 174). Language can be used to manipulate if it is not followed by action (Goleman, 2015). Arguably, "fuzzy logic" could be connected to power relations and the ideology that underpins these relations.

Niccolo Machiavelli's (1532) *The Prince* is a classic analysis of the acquisition and maintenance of power. In it, Machiavelli advocated for a narrative of power that diminished or dissolved certain values. Machiavelli viewed lies, deception, and manipulation as legitimate methods to gain and maintain power and control. He described power as associated with such things as might, force, glory, and economic capital, in which power was understood as a

violation of the codes of civil society. Despite being written in the 16th century, this Machiavellian narrative continues to dominate the discourse on power today.

Bertrand Russell (1938), a scholar in mathematics, philosophy and logic, stated, “the fundamental concept in social sciences is power, in the same sense that energy is the fundamental concept in physics... The laws of social dynamics are laws which can only be stated in terms of power” (p. 10). In other words, Russell identified that in all social contexts, human lives are shaped by power dynamics. Foucault (1977) considered power to be relational and all people as having access to power. Sociologists such as Karl Marx, Max Weber, W.E.B. Dubois, and Dorothy Smith, among many others, have also contributed to the analysis of social power.

Etzioni (1993) noted that often, power is associated with conflict and control rather than cooperation and collaboration. As a result, power has been seen as a force to be either eliminated or minimized. In defining power, Dennis Wrong (1993) observed that “power is the capacity of some persons to produce intended and foreseen effects on others” (p. 8). Wrong shared that this definition required detailed analysis. Etzioni (1993) observed that “power is a capacity to overcome part or all of the resistance, to introduce changes in the face of opposition...power is always relational and relative” (p. 18). Contemporary societies also must consider the role of social power in mass media (Marger, 1993), technologies and the Internet (Fuchs, 2015). Forms, levels, and dependency theory of power are also further considerations (Olsen & Marger, 1993).

Power is increasingly a concept moving out of social hierarchies (Keltner, 2016). In his work, *The Paradox of Power: How we gain and lose influence*, Keltner highlighted how power is gained, used and lost through empathy. He illuminated the ways power is involved in all relationships. Keltner’s work was organized around the following important themes and principles:

- Principle #1: Power is about altering the states of others
- Principle #2: Power is part of everyday relationships and interactions
- Principle #3: Power is found in everyday action
- Principle #4: Power comes from empowering others in social networks
- Principle #5: Groups give power to those who advance the greater good
- Principle #6: Groups construct reputations that determine the capacity to influence
- Principle #7: Groups reward those who advance the greater good with status and esteem
- Principle #8: Groups punish those who undermine the greater good with gossip
- Principle #9: Enduring power comes from empathy
- Principle #10: Enduring power comes from giving
- Principle #11: Enduring power comes from expressing gratitude

- Principle #12: Enduring power comes from telling stories that unite
- Principle #13: Power leads to empathy deficits and diminished moral sentiments
- Principle #14: Power leads to self-serving impulsivity
- Principle #15: Power leads to incivility and disrespect
- Principle #16: Power leads to narratives of exceptionalism
- Principle #17: Powerlessness involves facing environments of continual threat
- Principle #18: Stress defines the experience of powerlessness
- Principle #19: Powerlessness undermines the ability to contribute to society
- Principle #20: Powerlessness causes poor health (pp. 16-17)

Keltner (2016) highlighted that throughout history, enduring power was the product of collaborative interaction, empathy and giving. Unfortunately, the paradox of power is that power can be abused and can corrupt. According to Keltner, “power makes us feel less dependent upon others, freeing us to shift our focus away from others to our own goals and desires. This simple shift in attention takes us away from the practices that enable us to gain and maintain power” (p. 101). Keltner also warned of the great costs of powerlessness, noting that stress defines the experience of powerlessness.

It has been shared that power relations are encoded in language (Foucault, 1972). Paula Denton (2007), author of *The Power of Our Words: Teacher Language that Helps Children Learn*, recognized the power that exists in verbal communication. Drawing on social constructivism and the work of psychologist Lev Vygotsky, Denton argued that language shapes the world. Paulo Freire (2012) also echoed the importance of naming the world. Among other things, language helps us understand who we are and shapes our relationships (Denton, 2007). Language is a very powerful tool readily available to teachers and is not in short supply. Laara Fitznor (2012) noted that it is critical to see into the world of words and listen to narratives.

The social groups highlighted in this study reveal unequal participation in the education system. As noted previously, structural violence can be understood as unequal access to power and unequal life chances (Galtung, 1969). At the macro level, unequal power relations can be seen in the extraordinary inequality between nations (Green, 2008). Unequal power relations are also found at the micro level, such as inside a Winnipeg elementary school classroom. These unequal relations are highlighted by the inequities faced by Indigenous children and refugee children, as well as in issues related to gender and sexuality and the impacts of poverty.

Education is implicated in global realities

A number of overarching institutions connect the global village, such as the United Nations, World Bank, World Trade Organization, International Monetary Fund and transnational corporations. Economic systems are concerned with the distribution of wealth and power (Jeong, 2000). Globalization has created both prosperous and marginalized countries. Capitalist prosperity requires industrialized states to continue seeking new markets and raw materials. Competitive capitalist advancement, military power and the creation of alliances, result in countries ruling over each other (Jeong, 2000).

Gross domestic product (GDP) is a measure economists use to determine the size of a state's economy. GDP is an important indicator that employment is increasing (Callen, 2012). Employment creates benefits that apply well beyond the individual (United Nations, 2014, p. 69). Not surprisingly, the United States, China, Japan, Germany, and the United Kingdom are the countries with the highest GDP (International Monetary Fund, 2015).

The richest 85 people in the world hold the same wealth as the poorest half of the world's population (United Nations, 2014). A competitive market, where only a dominant class gets richer neglects social harmony and the capacity to meet basic human needs (Jeong, 2000). Ninety-two percent of children live in developing countries where 7 in 100 will not survive beyond the age of 5, 68 percent will not receive early childhood education, and 25 percent will live in poverty (United Nations, 2014). The United Nations has noted that Indigenous peoples account for five percent of the world's population, yet 15 percent of the world's income poor and 30 percent of the world's extremely poor persons.

Dependency theorists have examined the unequal relationship between countries in the international community (Lacher & Nepal, 2010). Dependency theorists such as Andre Gunder Frank suggest that the Global South or periphery countries are underdeveloped by activities that promote wealth in the Global North or core countries (Thomas, 2001). Countries in the Global South are not able to lift themselves out of their situations because they don't have access to resources such as technology and are caught in a cycle of unequal power relations based in a hierarchy (Wallerstein, 2004). Dependency theory asserts that globalization works to exclude the Global South from economic benefit (Thomas, 2001). Further, alliances and interdependencies between industrialized nations allow for the exploitation of the Global South. Thus, the imbalance of power between the Global North and the Global South is the result of unequal relationships (Jeong, 2000).

Conclusion

Education greatly impacts society and has many stakeholders. As noted in Chapter Two, this study is based on four assumptions: 1) the education system in Canada is complex and there are many competing interests and voices, 2) education should be for the people served and should attempt to address human rights and their needs, 3) education can be a means of reproducing society or a means for social change, and 4) teachers' voices need to be heard in the complex educational system. The broader narratives of competition, human needs, social reproduction and change, and the importance of including teacher voice are linked to building a culture of peace.

Education can be evaluated through the lens of culture and conflict theory. This chapter examined education and culture, conflict, structural violence and power, and global realities. Peace scholar Johan Galtung (1969) introduced the concept of structural violence as a means of expanding the definition of violence. Power along with competitive and collaborative practices contribute to the social world. Enduring power is the product of collaborative, empathic interaction (Keltner, 2016).

Everyone's story needs to be told and heard, and working with local knowledge is essential. In their work within the context of elementary schools, teachers are the adults holding space with/for young children. Teacher experiences from their own frame of reference contribute in significant ways to the public discourse about education. Dialogue and critical thinking discern an invisible solidarity (Freire, 2012). As observed by John Tait (1996), former Deputy Justice Minister of Canada and the Chair of the Task Force on Public Service Values and Ethics, "truth, or the whole truth, is not known at the outset. It only emerges from dialogue itself" (p. 3). Accordingly, this study seeks to listen, lift and amplify teachers' knowledge, experiences and processes.

CHAPTER 4: METHODS

Introduction

This is a qualitative study based on phenomenology and atheoretical constructivist grounded theory. In this study, I am primarily interested in learning about how teachers think about and define their work. Everyday experiences in public elementary schools are often full of life-defining and life-altering experiences. Manitoba elementary school teachers and students are nested in a unique context, in which macro-level policies influence micro-level, everyday practices and experiences (Dutta et al., 2016). As frontline workers, teachers are in a unique position to offer specific knowledge.

This study seeks to understand how Winnipeg Grade 1-3 teachers think about what they do, from their own frame of reference. This question lends itself well to qualitative research because it deals with meaning (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). This study focuses on the words of Winnipeg elementary school teachers and their micro-level experiences of everyday life in Winnipeg elementary schools. Culture and education, creating inclusive spaces, and integrating identity and knowledge have been the sites of a significant amount of scholarly research. Canadian elementary school classrooms are complex- filled with diverse children from many socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. This complexity creates an opportunity to develop new narratives to offer creative, imaginative solutions in supporting people in constructive ways. The lived experiences of the teachers working in schools need to be understood within this context.

This chapter outlines the research design for this study. First, I describe this qualitative study, which involves a) in-depth interviews and phenomenology, and b) atheoretical constructivist grounded theory. Second, I discuss research design. In-depth interviews were the main research method used for this study. Finally, I introduce the teacher participants and outline how the data was analyzed and interpreted. I include some of the challenges of conducting this study during the Covid-19 pandemic including recruitment and conducting interviews on Zoom. The teacher participants in this study wanted to share their experiences. Confidentiality was a concern to teacher participants who, at times, became visibly emotional during the interviews.

Methodological Framework

Phenomenology

I was extremely interested in how Winnipeg elementary school teachers think about and define their everyday work. The teacher participants of this study understand and describe their work from their position, and I as the researcher was interested in their knowledge and thinking. I interviewed twelve Grades 1-3 elementary school teachers to investigate their lived experiences in the elementary school system. These in-depth interviews were accompanied by writing field notes rich in description, transcribing words, coding language, and listening for themes and sub-themes to emerge (as described by van Manen 1990). Each interview lasted approximately 60-75 minutes.

The qualitative design of this study can be framed along the line of phenomenology. Phenomenology is interested in how people make sense of the dynamics of a particular encounter or phenomenon and involves looking to understand our living experiences (Creswell, 2007). The underlying belief is that the best way to understand a human issue is to understand and reflect on the human experience (van Manen, 2014). As noted by Max van Manen (2014), “phenomenological research consists of reflectively bringing into nearness that which tends to be obscure, that which tends evade the intelligibility of our natural attitude of everyday life” (p. 4). Human beings are understood best from the context and experiences of their own reality (van Manen, 1984). Trying to capture the “now” is the project of phenomenology.

This study is concerned with coming to a deeper understanding of meaning and knowledge of elementary school teachers' everyday reality. In other words, knowledge is positioned around the human knower. In this study, teacher participants were being consulted for their knowledge. Phenomenology identifies that “situated freedom is an existential phenomenological concept that means that the individuals are free to make choices, but their freedom is not absolute; it is circumscribed by the specific conditions of their daily lives” (Lopez & Willis, 2004 p. 729). Phenomenological research is not nested in one specific truth, but rather follows the poststructuralist understanding of many ways of knowing. Experience itself is the source of knowledge (Creswell, 2007). In other words, our understanding of reality is based in the meaning of our experience and is therefore socially constructed (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

Atheoretical Constructivist Grounded Theory

This study is framed along the lines of atheoretical constructionist grounded theory. The intention of this research study was to cast the net wide. By this I mean, it was imperative to remain as open as possible and not to narrow the topic of how teachers think about and define their everyday work. I was genuinely interested in how Winnipeg teachers think about their work. I wanted to deeply listen to how teachers reflected on their everyday experiences at work. The findings of this study are based on teacher participants' reflections, meanings and knowledge and are therefore constructions of reality rather than an exact picture (Charmaz, 2006).

Although this study was based in four assumptions, it was not led by a hypothesis or a particular theory. In other words, this research is led from a form of non-paradigmatic or theoretical agnosticism (Miller, 2007). Miller (2007) explained that, “theories are narrower in scope than paradigms. They comprise well-structured explanations or organized systems of accepted knowledge that apply to a circumscribed set of phenomena. They both explain facts and suggest hypotheses” (p.178). Theory, or a particular theory or paradigm did not inform this research question as I wanted to remain as open as possible to emerging data from the participants. From this standpoint, it was important that I work with broad concepts of what the teacher participants shared. Illuminating the processes and patterns from the data collected is what was of importance (Miller, 2007).

Throughout the interviews, I wanted to listen to teacher’s stories, know their actions and to grasp their meaning. In other words, my intention was to attend to teacher participants language, meanings, and actions. Corbin and Strauss (2008) state, “I agree with the constructivist viewpoint that concepts and theories are constructed by researchers out of stories that are constructed by research participants who are trying to explain or make sense out of their experiences and/or lives, both to the researcher and themselves” (p. 10). From the lens of constructivist grounded theory, the processes of teacher participants were made transparent and were grounded in the action, practices, and policies of their everyday experiences (Charmaz, 2005). From this approach, the voices, knowledge, and perspectives of teacher participants could become part of the public discourse.

This process of phenomenological and atheoretical constructionist grounded theory research allowed me to flush out the complex dynamics of how teacher participants think about and define their everyday experiences. Storytelling methodology, Indigenous research

paradigm, and participatory action research are other appropriate research methods that could be considered in answering this question. From the field of Peace and Conflict Studies, the storytelling methodology could also function as a guiding frame for this study (Senehi, 2020).

Research Design

Study participants

The participants in this study were a heterogeneous group of twelve elementary school teachers, who taught Grade 1-3 in Winnipeg. Participants included both new and experienced teachers. Participants were recruited by social media posts (Appendix A). Recruitment posters were posted on Facebook and Instagram and interested participants who met the criteria were asked to contact me, the researcher, directly. I then provided potential participants with more details about the study (Appendix B). I obtained written consent from participants (Appendix C). There were no age, gender, or ethnicity requirements to participate in this study.

Although I knew the teachers' names at the time of the interviews, no real names were used in any written documentation. All participants were identified by pseudonyms in all written documents, including interview notes and transcriptions. Pseudonyms were chosen randomly to protect confidentiality. Documentation was kept in a locked office and a secure computer file until the completion of the study. Strict confidentiality was maintained, and all documents will be destroyed upon the completion of the study. It is important to note that seven of the twelve participants contacted me independently after the interviews to ensure that confidentiality would be maintained. Anonymity was of critical importance to all of the teacher participants. These teachers feared possible repercussions from their employer for sharing their thinking.

The following profile of the participants was written with consideration for participant confidentiality. There were eleven female participants and one male participant. Seven of the twelve participants had been teaching for more than 20 years. Three participants had more than 15 years of teaching experience, one participant had more than five years of teaching experience and one participant had more than two years of teaching experience. Of the participants, three were between the ages of 25-35, two were between 40-45, four were between 45-50, and three were between 55-60. The twelve teachers taught in various school divisions throughout the city

of Winnipeg, in both urban and suburban locations. Participants were not compensated for their participation in this study.

It is important to note that the teacher participants in this study were open and engaged in sharing their experiences. All of the participants noted that it felt “good” to be asked about their everyday work. The interviews had a natural flow, and all of the participants shared their experiences with ease and confidence. At times during the interviews, teacher participants shared an emotional response. This included sharing tears of joy, tears of sadness, excitement, and anger. There was an emotional aspect to all of the interviews.

According to Wilson (2008), research is not ethical if it does not improve the reality of the research participants. It can be argued that qualitative research methods such as in-depth interviews and focus groups can adhere to respect, reciprocity, and responsibility (key features in any healthy relationship), as dialogue recognizes the nature of reality, the ontology, as the consensus among researcher and participant on construction of knowledge. -

My hope is that participants benefited from participating in this study through a gained sense of empowerment in sharing their own stories and experiences. Further, participating in this study may contribute to peacebuilding, social change, and building healthier relationships in the Winnipeg elementary school setting. The aim is that teacher participants are included in describing a context and processes in which they are apart. This study will be published and shared with teachers, educational leadership and government.

My position as a researcher was also an important consideration, and there was a small auto-ethnographic component to this study (see Introduction). In undertaking this research, it was imperative that I examined who I am, my experiences, values, and positionality (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Who I am as a researcher—as a teacher/counsellor in Winnipeg schools—was inextricably linked to my research (Smith, 2005a). My role as a researcher also highlights how data is co-constructed during the interview process (Charmaz, 2006). Acknowledging this, and becoming more conscious of my own role, allowed me to limit my biases while also ensuring that my thinking was informed by the data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). I found that the data had led me into experiences of elementary school teachers that I had not thought of, and I was able to trace processes. The world depends on language to describe actions and processes that are happening, and the meaning cannot be taken for granted (Charmaz, 2006).

Ethics Process

Approval for this research was obtained from the University of Manitoba Joint Faculty Research Ethics Board. My initial application to the University of Manitoba Joint Faculty Research Ethics Board was amended due to the Covid-19 pandemic because rather than in person interviews, interviews needed to be conducted on Zoom.

Data Gathering

Each interview took approximately 60–75 minutes. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, rather than meeting in person, participants were interviewed via Zoom. It was important that participants felt comfortable, relaxed, and safe during the interview, and Zoom interviews allowed the opportunity for participants to remain in their own home and to be interviewed at a time that was agreeable to them. That said, Zoom interviews necessitated working through technology issues such as access, power, interruptions and malfunctions.

This study collected data by using in-depth interviews with broad, open-ended questions, which allowed for space and flexibility in participants' answers (Appendix D). Examples of the open-ended questions included: tell me about your typical day—what do you do? What are some of the challenges in your work? What do teachers need to be supported in their work? How are you finding the interview? Are there any questions that I should have asked? It was important to me, the researcher that I was mindful of what Shawn Wilson (2008) calls, “relational accountability.”

This study was open to any Grade 1-3 teacher in Winnipeg schools. Participants were not limited to a particular school or school division. As a result, no formal divisional research ethics process was necessary. Written consent was obtained from each participant prior to the interview. Through the consent form, participants were informed that they could obtain information about the results of the study by direct request. No deception was involved in any part of this study. Teacher participants were asked to review a copy of their transcript.

The identity of the researcher, contact details, the reason for conducting the study, risks, and benefits, as well as the dissemination of data was explained. The consent form was also explained. Further, participants were told that they could exit the interview at any time.

This study was led by four assumptions. These assumptions outlined in the literature review cast a light on overarching broad frames of discourse. It was the discussion with teacher

participants that informed the literature review. In other words, the literature review reflected the data derived from my study.

Data Analysis

This study describes the lived experiences of individuals around a phenomenon and within processes (Creswell & Creswell, 2013). Data analysis was done inductively. All twelve interviews were transcribed, and each transcript was read and reread many times, during which I made notes regarding significant impressions, coded language and followed processes. As the transcriptions were read, sticky-notes were used to begin to track words, sentences, and themes. Coding was based on repeating themes, significant statements, and surprising topics. T

Transcriptions were coded line by line. Materializing themes and sub-themes were tested against the collection of extensive qualitative data. Then I developed a list of significant statements, alongside clusters of meanings or themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data. Categories were arranged and rearranged, then grouped, connected, and organized until the point of data saturation occurred (Creswell, 2013).

In-depth interviews allow for the emergence of themes and sub-themes of the shared experiences among various individuals in a specific context. In listening to the teacher participants with a genuine curiosity about their lived experiences, I identified significant challenges facing Winnipeg elementary school teachers along with strategies teachers use while working in this context. Teacher processes and patterns were illuminated. The importance of relationships was evident throughout the data.

Casting the research question wide, and purposefully not following a particular paradigm or theory provided space for the emergence of patterns of processes. While teacher participants shared expansive challenges, they also shared processes that revealed social power connected to empathy. Data analysis was inductive, comparative, interactive, iterative and abductive (Charmaz, 2017). There was data saturation, and it became predictable what teacher participants would share.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed the research methodology, the research design, study context, data gathering techniques and data analysis employed. This was a qualitative study which drew

from phenomenology and atheoretical constructivist grounded theory. The constructivist research paradigm identifies that knowledge is socially constructed and there are many constructions of reality (Khanal, 2018). Open-ended semi-structured interviews were used to empower teacher participants respecting their knowledge and lived experiences.

CHAPTER 5: THE CHALLENGES

There is something really wrong with our school system and we're all too scared to say it.

—*Jamie, study participant*

Every day, Winnipeg elementary school teachers are asked to navigate a complex system that includes many competing interests, voices, and stakeholders. This study seeks to learn about the experiences of Winnipeg elementary school teachers in order to include teachers in a larger academic, societal, and political conversation about schooling and education. The findings from the participant interviews are organized in this thesis into three chapters. The final chapter of this thesis, identifies how the challenges and the strategies interrelate and connect. In fact, the challenges and strategies come together very clearly.

Table 1: The Findings

The Findings	Chapter 5: The Challenges	Chapter 6: Teachers' Strategies	Chapter 7: Relationships
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Security -Lack of resources -Negative workplace culture -Lack of skills and knowledge -Frustration with assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Individual agency -Multiple intelligences and multiple perspectives -Social and emotional needs - Growth mindset -Leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Trust -Time -Collaboration -Self-care (relationship to self)

This is the first of these findings chapters and focuses on the challenges that teachers identified in their work. Winnipeg elementary school teachers are situated in a culture of many pressures. Teachers identified alarming challenges in their daily work. The findings revealed five primary challenges. First, participants identified security as problematic. Second, participants identified lack of resources as a challenge. Third, participants shared that negative workplace culture was difficult. Fourth, teachers identified they experienced a lack of professional training to deal with these challenges. Finally, teachers shared their frustration with the assessment processes they were required to use with students. The challenge of security was identified through a) physical violence in the classroom; and b) trauma. The challenge of

insufficient and lack of resources was expressed in terms of a) lack of basic resources; b) lack of human resources; c) lack of time; and d) lack of technology. The challenge of negative workplace culture materialized as a) unsupportive colleagues; b) boundary challenges; and c) lack of being heard in the educational system. Teachers also identified that they lacked professional training for the daily work, which meant that they felt a) a lack of professional training and inadequate preparation for their work; and b) ineffective and unmotivated teachers or indifference among colleagues. Finally, teachers expressed frustration with the assessment process.

Table 2: Challenges and Sub-Challenges

Challenge (every day lived experience)	Security (violence inside and outside of school)	Lack of Resources	Negative workplace culture	Professional training	Frustration with Assessment
Sub-Challenges	a) Physical violence in the classroom b) Trauma	a) Lack of basic resources b) Lack of human resources c) Lack of time d) Lack of technology	a) Unsupportive colleagues b) Challenges with boundaries c) Lack of being heard in the education system	a) Lack of preparation b) Ineffective and unmotivated teachers	a) Frustration with assessment and meeting student needs

Security

Teachers identified an array of security and safety threats for themselves and for their students, which cast a shadow on their work. Teachers were concerned about direct violence impacting them. Further, they were aware that students were affected by past and current trauma, which contributed to their students' sense of safety and a need to ensure a safe environment for students.

Teachers experienced and witnessed physical violence in the classroom.

Eight of the teachers who participated in this study shared stories about physical violence in their classrooms, ranging from biting and hitting to throwing objects and flipping desks. Safety was described as a need that has to be met.

JAMIE: I sort of feel like there is something missing in the school system. There are kids who are putting other people in danger.

He is going to be in Grade Three. He's two hundred pounds. He is bigger than most of the teachers. And it is nothing for him to flip a desk. He bites. He swears. He spits. He threatens. He threatened to kill his teacher.

I am all for inclusion when it works. But when teachers and students are not feeling safe, there needs to be an intervention. That student needs to have their needs met too.

Although inclusive practices were highlighted as important, participants were clear that the safety needs and well-being of all students in the class must be considered and that wasn't always evident.

Physical outbursts in the classroom are problematic not just for safety and well-being but also for learning. Physical violence in the classroom was challenging for both the teacher and students.

ANDREA: I had a student this year who is very, very troubled. He was in multiple foster homes and he also has a global developmental delay, so he struggles to communicate. You know, he is just struggling on all levels.

And sometimes when he came in, you could sense already before he even entered the room, he was already agitated. And he would have to—if he became a little bit aggressive.... Sometimes he would go around and flip over all the chairs. Or if he was really agitated, all the rest of us would have to evacuate the room and then we would call crisis team and get them in there. But the crisis team are people that he doesn't have relationship with. So it was problematic. But it also disrupted the day for everyone else and their learning.

But more importantly, I think ... if we could have had somebody in the building who he knew and had a relationship—was consistently there, then maybe we would have had a better chance for him to settle and calm down.

Meeting children's needs is helpful to all children. Physical outbursts in the classroom is problematic not just for safety and well-being, but also for learning.

The same teacher, Andrea, described the importance of a safety plan:

ANDREA: There are so many challenges. I think, as I said earlier, if kids are in distress and they're coming [to school in distress] with nothing to do with what's happened in the school ... I feel like we don't have very effective ways of dealing with that.

It's virtually impossible to teach twenty kids when one is throwing a chair or is really agitated or upset legitimately. So that's always a struggle.

Andrea identified that it is challenging to teach a class of early years students when there is a student in distress who is acting out in physical ways. Teachers need effective ways to manage these situations.

Another teacher described that dealing with violent behaviour is not only time consuming, but also takes priority over academic support. She noted that physical safety was a real concern and should be addressed rather than downplayed:

SARAH: What happens is the students that have behavioural issues in a building consume the time. Right? And perhaps sometimes where we've had chronic behaviour issues, like where I was being assaulted by students. There's other interventions that should have been taking place. Looking at funding, things like that.

And I think sometimes the inability for some to recognize that these are serious issues and downplaying it because they're not in the room getting hit. But then when you've

witnessed violence, like I witnessed the student pick up a sharp object and whip it at the principal's head, and there was no consequence.

I think when you look at the behaviours ... all of the behaviours seem to get the support and the academics don't seem to get it.

Physical safety is a real concern for Sarah. These safety concerns must be addressed rather than minimized. Teachers need effective ways to deal with violence in the classroom.

Another teacher described a time when she was physically harmed by a student. She also described how this physical violence was traumatizing for the other students in her classroom as well as the teacher:

SOPHIE: You're by yourself most of the time. Like, how do you teach? Because you have all these flare ups. And then you have the kids that get stressed over that.

I had a student I would get stressed over—three or four years ago. I was almost rushed to the hospital where a student was so violent. He literally punched me in the face and almost broke my hand. And my student ... with this new teacher ..., he just attacked her and pulled her hair and kicked her. And she was away for a week. And I had a student that was just hysterical the whole time.... just freaking out screaming because of the trauma of this violence.

The behaviour of this young student sent his teacher to the hospital and was traumatizing for classmates. Teachers need a concrete plan for dealing with these challenges effectively.

One teacher described how violent situations, rather than being met with urgency, are not acknowledged or taken seriously.

SARAH: My colleague had mentioned to me that student had actually taken a weapon and pointed it at his family. So it's like, you know, there's a situation. But it's almost like it doesn't want to be heard. So, we kind of ... get to the point of you don't even want to bring it up anymore because it's not taken seriously anyways.

Physical safety needs are necessary to address.

As outlined by the participants above, a pressing challenge for early year elementary school educators is dealing with physical harm and safety in the classroom. Safety and security are basic human needs that are an essential ingredient to well-becoming. Elementary school children and teachers need to feel safe in their classrooms.

Teachers found that many students are affected by trauma

All but one teacher identified that students in their classrooms were affected by trauma. Further, teachers are trying to see that needs are met for such a diversity of students that this can

press deeply on the needs of teachers themselves. For example, a family might be dealing with serious illness:

KYLIE: I had a couple of moms going through chemotherapy and radiation for breast cancer.

Other students have experienced the death of a parent.

SARAH: I've had kids who've lost parents, right? So, an understanding of that part about them—like the compassion part.

And, I mean, I had a student the other year that lost her dad, and it was pretty tough. But [her] mom and I had a really strong connection. She would message me.

Teachers may feel that they need to address “the compassion part” in order to meet the needs of students affected by trauma and serious loss.

Sometimes the loss of a parent is layered with other serious problems, such as addiction:

SARAH: I had a student who was in grade two ... who had lost her mom, and I didn't know. No one had told me. And we were doing something the beginning of the year, which was about families and stuff. And the girl came to me, and she told me that she didn't have a mom anymore. And I had no clue.

So, I ended up going to find out what had happened, and it ended up that her mom had overdosed in the bed where she was sleeping.

Students' families may also be affected by alcoholism:

NICOLE: Yes, I had kids that—...a few times, I had to call CFS because there's some alcohol concerns. Parents with alcohol. And you kind of heard some sad stories from others in class.

Nicole shared that part of the work of teachers involves understanding the challenges students face.

Another example of a challenge students face was the separation or divorce of their parents. Children from divorced and separated families may have experienced trauma. The home environment may be unpredictable and difficult for a child to navigate.

NICOLE: One of the toughest students I had, the home environment was bad. The parents... they separated that year. It was just a mess ... sometimes I think parents just can't handle things. And that definitely adds to the problem.

Children from divorced and separated families may have experienced trauma. The home environment may be unpredictable and difficult for a child to navigate.

Some teachers identified the intergenerational trauma caused by the residential school system as present in their classrooms. Teachers can be tasked with reconciling generational perspectives and experiences of school. This involves working with families who do not come to the school often due to their traumatic past experiences.

ANDREA: I think that we know that teaching elementary kids especially, in poverty... It's like, the student, the teacher or the school, and the family. The family is the part that we have the least control over. But you can see that these families are doing the best, you know. They're absolutely doing their best. And there's so much love in these families.

And I wish there were ways that our school could bring the families into school. And we have tried, we do try. And it is getting better.

But a lot of families have very conflicted opinions about school. Because some of their—you know, their parents, my student's grandparents would have been at residential schools—so school is kind of like—they send the kids in but don't come through the doors very often.

Teachers are tasked with reconciling perspectives and experiences of school. This involves working with families who do not come to the school often due to horrific past experiences.

Teachers may also be unaware of the trauma experienced by a student, which may impact a student's experiences at school. Accordingly, the teacher-student relationship can also be affected by trauma in the family, as described by Claire:

CLAIRE: I think going back to—just the home and their relationships with family members in their home. If they already have some of those blocks in terms of being able to trust adults, then it is definitely more difficult for me to try to work on that ... If they're not able to trust family members or adults, then why would they trust me?

Early years students come to school greatly impacted by their experiences. The teacher and student relationship can be affected by trauma in the family.

Teachers in my study reported that many students are affected by trauma. The loss of a parent, substance abuse and intergenerational trauma were some of the challenges navigated by the teacher participants. Trauma is significant and impacts the well-becoming of children and their need of safety. Working with trauma impacts teachers and the school community. Trauma-informed care is a critical consideration for elementary schools in Winnipeg.

Lack of Resources

The participants of this study identified that not all children had access to the same resources. In other words, they pointed to an unequal distribution of resources among the

children within their classrooms. These inequalities included a lack of a) basic resources, b) human resources, c) time, and d) technology. This lack of resources at different levels impacted the ways in which students could participate in their classrooms and school.

Teachers need to ensure that students have adequate basic resources

All of the teachers identified meeting the basic human needs of the students as a daily critical consideration. These included a diverse set of issues such as food, medication, safety, internet safety, and clothing. All teacher participants identified meeting basic human needs as a challenge. As Janet pointed out, teachers need to make sure students' physical needs are met so they are able to learn. This includes ensuring students have taken their medication and making sure students have had enough to eat:

JANET: You always had to assess where the kids were in the morning, whether they're, you know, feeling good or are there... sometimes there are some kids that you could predict would always come in, in a certain mood. And so you're assessing how those kids are feeling that day.

Certainly, kids that were on medications—you're assessing whether they've taken their medications that day because often that will affect their school day, ... and the breakfast program. Do they need to go down to the breakfast program and have a quick bite before school starts? Just those sorts of things. Really, those basic needs need to be met before you can do any other teaching of curriculum or any of that.

Teachers need to make sure students' physical needs are met so they are able to learn. This includes ensuring students have taken their medication and making sure students have had enough to eat.

It is important for students to feel safe in their learning environment. Students need to be cared for and to also care for others. These observations were reflected in Kaylie's comments:

KAYLIE: I can't really help them as learners or move them forward as learners until I know them as human beings. And for them to be able to take risks and make mistakes and try new things, they have to feel safe. And they have to feel heard. And they have to feel a certain level of comfort.

I want our classroom to be like a home away from home for them. That's my ultimate goal. And just learning that kindness is just—it's so easy. Right? And it's a choice we make. And how we take care of each other and how we can lean on each other when we need to. Right? That that has to be something that's established really, really early on.

An ethic of care is an important consideration for teachers. Students have a need to be heard.

Identity formation is an important and challenging consideration for teachers. Further, at

the heart of teachers' work is the task of making sure students' fundamental needs are met. Dean highlighted students' need to feel a sense of belonging:

DEAN: They have a lot of needs, and as I said, it's my priority to attend to the their fundamental needs first before any teaching can take place. So, if ... students come to school and they haven't eaten yet, I'm going to make sure that their biological needs are met first before we get into their academic needs. Because they're not going to learn anything if they haven't eaten.

If a student is coming to school and they feel like they have no purpose for being there or they feel like nobody likes them, I have to attend to that need for us before we get into academics, because what's the point of learning anything if you feel like you don't belong anywhere?

Dean describes a student's need to belong.

Teachers identified that students know when they do not have access to the same resources as others. As a result, comparing resources, including clothes, for example, can breed feelings of inferiority. Sophie highlighted how students were aware of the resources and lack of resources available to them:

SOPHIE: It's also about fostering confidence and belief and not feeling like a lot of these children beat themselves up because they they're comparing and even with clothing and things like that. I'm always bringing them clothing.

I believe my goal for these children is to build confidence. Simple. To build confidence and have them think that school is an avenue for them to get out of their poverty... If they don't believe, then they're not going to succeed.

Sophie believes it is important for students to have confidence in themselves. She believes that comparing can develop feelings of inferiority in students.

Teachers also described how their work often expands beyond the physical school, wherein the academic aspect of teaching became only one layer of the work. One teacher described delivering hampers to her students and their families:

ANDREA: Our school was actually delivering hampers—like food hampers and they were received with ... You know, I was a bit nervous about bringing hampers, sort of assuming people don't have enough food. But people were grateful, and I felt like people were just kind of surviving on a more basic level. And that the academic piece was just on top of that.

Hampers delivered by teachers were well received by community members. Families were grateful for food hampers.

Internet safety is a timely and critical challenge facing teachers' work with students, and teachers are increasingly taking on the responsibility to help protect students from harmful

internet content. Dean suggested that teachers are being tasked to help ensure students use technology safely:

DEAN: There's so much dangerous content on the Internet and students need to be able to think critically about what they're consuming on the Internet. And it's become the teacher's responsibility now more than anyone to make sure that they're ready for that.

Dean describes there is dangerous content on the Internet. Young children need support to navigate the Internet safely.

The teachers cited in this section all pointed to the ways that children are entering the Winnipeg school system from diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds, as was also evident in the four critical issues outlined in the first chapter of this study. Understanding children's access to basic resources is an important area of investigation, and lack of basic resources needs to be considered and addressed.

Teachers identified a lack of human resources in the classroom

All of the participants identified the need for more people as resources—and the current lack of human resources—in the classroom. Specifically, participants highlighted the importance of Educational Assistants (EAs).

ANDREA: I think that would be one thing that almost every teacher in my context would say—the single most important thing or helpful thing would be for each classroom today be assigned a qualified, well-trained EA all day. With extra needs that would be an additional person.

But I feel like right now that's a complete pipe dream. Because we've had less—the EA support time has been clawed back a lot. So now there's not always someone else in the room. Definitely not. So that makes it difficult because you just feel always a little bit of heightened stress if something happens, or something goes wrong, how am I going to manage this?

Without a well-qualified EA in the classroom, teachers described feeling stress. At present, in the case of a classroom emergency, teachers often have to navigate the situation on their own while at the same time trying to support all students in the classroom.

While teachers do their best, another adult in the classroom could ensure that more student needs are being met. Teacher participants brought attention to the fact that many students would benefit from individualized attention, particularly students who are struggling and not meeting grade-level expectations:

NICOLE: Support with academics through resource is very helpful. Also support with kids with behaviour needs, like when they have outbursts ... I think one of my kids needed an

EA this year. He needed one. But it's impossible to get them unless you're—you really, really, really need one. So it's just kids aren't [getting that support].

It's sad because kids aren't getting what they need and they're going to end up falling through the cracks in the system because there's just not—there's no funding for it. And it's like teachers do their best in the classroom. But you can't have a kid who is at nursery level in a grade three class ... I did my best but ... he could have done way better if he just had one-on-one support every once in a while. It's just when you have kids with other things.

According to Nicole, it is very difficult to secure EA support in the classroom. EA support could allow for on-on- for students who are not yet meeting grade level expectations.

Several teachers identified that having an EA in the classroom for the whole day would be beneficial:

SOPHIE: I don't have good EA support. I think each class should have a wish. Each class should have a really strong EA in the class all day with you.

TYRA: I think—ideally, it's bodies. You know, ideally, if every class had an EA attached to it, regardless of separate from individual students who require them, just having another set of hands, another set of eyes, another set of ears would help teachers the most.

Teachers have many students who require their time and attention. The teachers in this study pointed to the lack of human resources in the classroom, and were asking for more student support.

Additional EA support is often given to students struggling with classroom behaviour. Teachers noted that they have both behaviour and academic challenges in the classroom, but that often, less attention is paid to academic work. Jamie shared the following insight:

JAMIE: There are so many huge behavioural problems, and you might get an EA, but for academics, that doesn't seem to be a priority.

Jamie believes that EA support is often connected to behavioral support rather than academic support.

Early years classrooms in Winnipeg elementary schools contain up to thirty students each. Within this context, teachers described the lack of human resources as a difficult challenge. Often teachers are the only adults in the classroom. Accordingly, teachers identified a need for more adults in the classroom, and specifically more EA support.

Teachers do not have enough individualized time with students

Community is built in personal connection and all the participants recognized the importance of individualized time with early year students. All of the teacher participants shared that they do not have enough time with individual students. Students require individualized time, but the lack of such time was a challenge identified by teachers.

JAMIE: Especially in the early years, kids need a lot of support.... They need individualized time. Time to conference one on one.

Working with young children one-on-one is important.

Teachers differentiate their instruction to meet student needs, such as learning English-as-an-Additional-Language (EAL), that require individualized time and instruction. However, with classes of twenty or more students, this is a challenge for teachers. One participant described her goal of spending more time with struggling students:

SARAH: The kids that are struggling—my goal is to get to work with them more. Right? So finding a way to get my kids that are independent, to be able to be on task and work on their own a little bit while I can spend time with my kids that are struggling. That's usually my goal.

I have a lot of EAL kids as well in my classroom. And we don't have EAL supports within our building, really. So they don't—there's no pull out. There's nothing like that. So finding the time. My goal is to work on the English language with them. So whether it's we're doing alphabet or we're playing a game—finding the time. Like one of the big goals is to find the time, to take that little group and work with them and give them more one-on-one time.

Students have specific needs that require individualized time and instruction.

One teacher acknowledged that there are layers of support for students, including psychologists and social workers. However, these support team members also have limited time for each student, since they often work in multiple locations and are not always available when needed:

ANDREA: We just sort of seem to be able to manage the surface level problems. But we don't really get a chance to dive much deeper because the school psychologists and support workers and social workers have such huge caseloads. They're often working in many schools. And I think they would love to do more, too, but they just can't.

Both absenteeism and students changing schools make it challenging for teachers to access individualized time with students. If students are not attending school regularly or are changing schools, it becomes very difficult to build a relationship and develop programming for that child:

NICOLE: I know there's research that shows that it's really beneficial for kids to be in one school and the more changes there are, the more disruptive it is. And we do have a very high turnover rate, high mobility rate in our schools. So, we're always getting new students and losing students and it's very transient. So that complicates things in terms of relationship. Right? It's hard to have strong relationships with kids and their families if it's always changing.

Nicole shares that there is a lack of time available among support team members. Support team members are often working in multiple locations and are not necessarily available.

As identified by the teachers in this section, time is an important resource—specifically, *where* time is focused is important. Lack of individualized time with students was identified as a challenge, since early elementary students benefit from one-on-one time with their teacher.

Not all students have access to technology

Increasingly, technology is playing a primary role in education. Although this is different from human resources, all but four teacher participants identified a lack of technological equipment as a challenge for their students. This became vivid as a result of the Covid 19 Pandemic. Funding for technology for students was also important. According to Deb, students in some schools have access to devices such as Chrome Books and iPods while others do not:

DEB: People always think that teachers are asking for more money for themselves because they're not listening to what we're saying. And we are asking for money for schools. We are asking for support staff. We are asking for technology.

You know, a big movement right now is digital citizenship, which is huge. It's always been a part of this new part of the curriculum. But there are schools that have the ability—the funding to have iPods and Chrome books and all those kinds of things—and then there are other schools that don't. And so there's an unfair balance of teaching digital citizenship. And I think we need to do a much better job of that. And we need to have more money for technology.

Deb describes that students have unequal access to tech equipment. Technology is important and students need access to devices.

Teachers also described helping to fundraise to make sure their students have access to tech equipment, since it is challenging when students do not have access to such equipment and resources. One teacher described her fundraising efforts to obtain technology for her students:

SOPHIE: The challenges of my work is not having the right equipment in the classroom... I mean, I had many, many iPads and computers donated. I'm still having money donated to the school. I think they're donating a huge grant now. I was going for a very, very big provincial grant ... I'm working on different things.

However, students might not only lack access to technology, but also to the services that allow these devices to work effectively. Beyond access to physical tech resources, Andrea described the services necessary for device maintenance as problematic:

ANDREA: For these kids in the North End, if they have Wi-Fi, it is not going to be good for uploading videos or anything that requires very much bandwidth. I feel like in the end, my students didn't have access to the technology.

Services that allow devices to work effectively is a necessary consideration. Although students may have devices, they may not function well.

The teachers in this section described how students in different schools do not have equal access to technology. Without access to technology, students can be left behind, which is a challenge for students and for the teachers responsible for their care.

Negative Workplace Culture

A negative workplace culture was another challenge identified by the teachers in my study—specifically, they noted that a lack of being heard, challenges with boundaries, and unsupportive colleagues have contributed to a negative workplace culture.

Teachers described a lack of being heard in the educational system

During the interviews, all participants identified the demands and “pressure” they experience during their everyday work, in which they are asked to address many competing interests and voices; however, the pressure and urgent demands of their daily work are not always acknowledged.

One teacher described how she felt “forced” into a certain way of working with which she did not agree. Accordingly, she was identifying her lack of voice as an area of challenge:

ANDREA: The challenge also for me is being kind of forced into a certain avenue of teaching medical models assessment when I'd rather be doing a lot of integrated science art projects and getting at kids' interior lives and having them grow as a whole person. So sometimes, I'll really be pushed in a certain direction that I don't really agree with, but I have to. So, I feel like there are these mandates and deadlines that are non-negotiable and that's a challenge.

Andrea shared that she can feel forced to participate in the educational system in ways in which she does not agree. This is difficult.

Teaching in early years education is complex with many competing interests and voices. Kaylie pointed out that teachers play many roles, including listening to students, their families, the administration, and the school vision:

KAYLIE: The scope of things. Right? We play a lot of different roles. Right? We're not just teachers. I feel like we're therapists in many ways or social workers or psychologists and I almost wish I had a psychology degree, actually ... Because sometimes you're faced very quickly with a situation or something a child or a family is going through. You know there's more—there's a deeper level to everything and you just want to help as much as you can.

I think just the feeling of wanting to do it all and do it all well. Right? Like there's the curriculum and sometimes you're faced with the reality that you're not going to cover every single part of the curricular content you're supposed to cover any year. Report card writing is stressful because you want to say what needs to be said. And you want to know the student well enough and share what you know with their family in a way that shows that you know them deeply. And you understand their strengths but that you recognize where they need to go moving forward. What their challenges are, but that you know them as people, too. Right? And that you see all the good in them.

I guess it's just doing the very best you can and as much as you can for every single one of your students, and every single one of your families while teaching curriculum and responding to your administrator's vision and goals for the entire school. And other projects that are being taken on.

In describing the pressures of their work, teachers highlighted competing demands of their daily work.

Another teacher shared that there are many stakeholders in early childhood education, which makes navigating relationships with stakeholders challenging. Teachers might not “please” everyone:

NICOLE: In the field of education, I feel that there's a lot of people who you have to please and you can't please everyone. And that's difficult...

When describing the challenges of her job, one teacher pointed to the demands on teachers and shared her perception that she can never “do” enough. The lack of resources in early years classrooms adds to this challenge:

JANET: Oh, there's just not enough hours in the day. Not enough. Not enough hands at school. Not enough adult bodies to help out at school. Not enough ... You, kind of just can do what you can. And that's sort of the hard part—sometimes you feel like you can't do enough. You can just. Can't do it all, right? There's not enough hours. So, you do what you can.

Janet describes not having enough time, resources and support in her work environment.

Teachers describe “pressure” that comes from the top, down. One teacher, Dean, highlighted the importance of educational leadership and the way that school administrators might understand the pressure placed on classroom teachers from outside of the school setting:

DEAN: The biggest challenge that I face is pressure, and like I say, that’s why I appreciate my administration, because they really understand that pressure and the pressure, as much as I hate to say it—always comes from the top you have.

According to Dean, educational leadership is important as school administration can have an understanding of the pressures placed on teachers.

Other teachers also described the academic pressure of working with students to build their skills to another level, which can be difficult because many early years students arrive in grade-level classrooms not yet meeting the curricular outcome competencies.

SOPHIE: I put a lot of pressure on myself to get them to move up. I put so much pressure on me. And it bothers me because I know that they don’t want to be working at grade one. I see the stress and the anguish in their faces. I see their little souls.

Teachers described feeling pressure to get their students to work at grade level, and identified that students feel “stressed” and know when they are not meeting expectations:

Due to the pressures of their daily work, the increasingly diverse needs of the students, and not feeling like they are competent in their work, three teachers in this study shared that they have considered leaving their jobs. Jamie described her own struggles:

JAMIE: It is getting harder and harder to meet everybody’s needs. So, I do the best I can, but I actually don’t ever feel like I am doing my job... I just find there are so many needs. It [has] become more, and more, and more diverse.

Jamie shared his belief that the needs of the students are becoming increasingly heterogeneous.

Another teacher who has also considered looking for a different job, shared that she struggles with students who are not meeting grade-level expectations. Andrea noted that students have to work at their own developmental and instructional levels, and that teachers cannot teach new skills without the student having the building blocks for those skills:

ANDREA: It’s just something in the back of your mind that’s always there—that you know these are the things that your kids are meant to know by the end of the year. We have struggles, if kids aren’t at grade level when they come in, it is difficult to do all those things. And just deep inside myself, I really know even if you wanted you couldn’t push a kid further than they can go developmentally. But I feel like that’s—that’s our job is to find out where is this child at and how can I move them forward in a way that is humane.

Andrea expressed that education should be a humanizing experience. Students can not be pushed to learn skills they are not developmentally ready to learn.

All of the participants in this study described a tremendous sense of pressure in their everyday work. Teachers are navigating pressures from many different stakeholders, including students, families, colleagues, administration, school boards, and governments. It is important to hear and understand these pressures and challenges experienced by teachers as frontline workers in the educational system.

Teachers have had unsupportive colleagues

While teachers in this study shared that they currently work with collaborative colleagues, all but one of the teachers identified competition among colleagues who saw them as rivals at some point in their teaching careers. In other words, teachers describe a negative competition where people are positioned. One teacher described how she was going to leave a position due to the competition between teachers and the creation of a toxic competitive work environment. Tyra noted that teachers need to work together to create a cooperative environment:

TYRA: I have almost left my job because of the toxicity between teachers. It is always teachers with each other. Some don't want to cooperate. They are competitive. But it is not clear to me what they are competing for. It is teachers complaining to teachers about other teachers often. You just can't have a cooperative environment if that is the case. It's rampant. It can be a really awful environment to be in. The focus always seems to be who is working more or less hard—it's a perception of inequality. Whether it is prep, workload... Too many people think they are getting the short end of the stick—everyone can't be getting the short end of the stick.

Competition between teachers is challenging. Tyra shared that a competitive work environment can be challenging.

One participant described competition between teachers as potentially trying to “outshine” each other and pointed to the ways that teachers need supportive colleagues who they can trust and ask for help. Teachers need to work together to support both one another and their students:

EMMA: Sometimes teachers have a tendency toward being territorial—a little bit competitive. And at a school that I was at for a period of time, my colleagues—it was competitive, not collegial. And for me, I just could not understand that. I thought, what are we competing for here? I don't get it. Why are people trying to outdo each other or outshine each other? And the focus became so much on that. Was anyone thinking about our kids here? Anyone paying attention to our students?

So, it's really important to have people that you can be vulnerable with that can offer practical help ... like real practical help. But also, I think the nonjudgmental sounding board. It's about colleagues. It's about saying I need to talk ... I'm having a hard time.

Teachers need to work together to create a cooperative work environment.

One participant highlighted that rather than being competitive, small gestures such as sharing an idea can be helpful in building a strong community and supporting teachers in their everyday work:

JAMIE: If the administration supports the strong community, ... then I think that helps. I mean, teachers asking, "how are you doing?" or "how's that child doing in your class?" or "do you need help with anything?" Even if it's sharing lesson plans, sharing ideas for teaching. All that makes a difference. How is that fostered?

I've heard that—I think that some people could be quite competitive in a school. Teacher versus teacher trying to see who can have sort of have the best class or the best lessons. But I think really, you know, we're all in this together and you have to help your neighbour friend. And just being kind. I mean, that's like a fundamental sort of thing, in my opinion, just being kind to your colleagues. And I think that helps.

Jamie suggested that supportive colleagues who can be trusted and called upon for help is impactful. Being kind to colleagues is fundamental.

Another teacher advised that collaboration requires a whole school approach and includes learning from each other.

SOPHIA: I think the whole school has to foster a collaborative model. OK. And I think this year it hasn't been collaborative ... I found that it was not collaborative and it's going more independent where it's like cliquy. I don't think it's good because I think you learn from others—other teacher styles. And you grow, like you're growing as a person ... trying to understand the parents and being, you know, supportive to the parents and their situation. And not feeling like you're better than them. That we're working as a team. I think it's important that we're all here, working as a team. In collaboration.

Sophia described how working in collaboration is important to students, teachers and families.

Teachers identified that collaboration is not only helpful, but necessary in their daily work. Collaborative colleagues have a significant positive effect on teachers. Conversely, teachers asserted that unsupportive colleagues who positioned teachers as rivals or in a hierarchy created a negative teaching and learning environment.

Teachers face challenges with boundaries

All the teachers interviewed identified challenges with boundaries in their everyday work. The teacher participants spoke about slightly different boundaries in professional conduct,

boundaries around safety and technology and the feeling of always being "on," and boundaries around voice. Professional conduct identifies what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour for teachers.

Sarah suggested that professional conduct is important in schools, and gave an example of parents speaking poorly about a teacher at a parent council meeting:

SARAH: We don't have boundaries. Parents come and go in our building. You know, we had a situation where parents were at a school function. After the function, they were trashing staff. And one parent, I guess, was upset and told a staff member. And it ended up being a massive issue because the staff member confronted the parents about what was said... And it was right after the school function, like right in the building. So, I think when you don't set the tone... That's why there's just the lack of professionalism in that. And I do believe those parents should have been spoken to. I don't go in the staffroom because I have been outside the staffroom and heard teachers talking about students like—you know what I mean? I just stay away from the staffroom because I think even that part. Let's say the administrators should be reminding staff about being mindful about what they're talking about in the staffroom. Because the door is open. There's, you know, some tables right outside where some kids have sat at lunch if they've needed to. And just what the conversations are. I think just a whole reminder of professional conduct.

Sarah also highlighted the role of educational administrators in modelling boundaries and professional conduct.

Technology is routinely used in all classrooms and schools, and teachers described how boundaries around technology use have proven troublesome. The teacher participants described that there are no limits placed on people's access to teachers. Teachers shared that they are expected to be "on" and visible without complaint. While technology allows for easy and often instant communication, it is important to set boundaries around its use. For example, difficulties with technology boundaries included getting calls at inappropriate times and sending inappropriate messages.

SARAH: [During the pandemic when students were learning at home] I was getting calls at all hours because we use Teams. It showed up to your phone. So, then I actually was getting calls at eight o'clock at night, nine o'clock at night—getting called at 7:30 in the morning—like there was no boundaries, I would say, for the parents.

And then when I did discuss that with admin, she wasn't willing to put boundaries on the parents, which made that really challenging because they forget that we're also trying to, you know, parent our own children as well.

A whole school approach to the use of boundaries and technology could be beneficial.

Although email makes communication easier between home and school, it also adds challenges. Claire shared the difficulty of receiving an email sent by a person who was upset:

CLAIRE: Emailing, just that quick easy communication ... I get a lot more emails about every little problem that might have happened during the day. Whereas in the past, like they also might not have felt the need to come and share ... Just because they are able to communicate in the heat of their emotions. So, I'll get that 1:00 a.m. email. Whereas maybe the next day when I see them and address it in person, it's like a totally different person that emailed me the night before. Because they've had time to think about it. Maybe it's not as big of a deal as they had thought. So that has sometimes affected relationships that I have with parents. Just because of the way email works. It has been helpful but sometimes hurtful.

Claire observed that more communication does not necessarily mean better communication.

At times, teachers described feeling fearful of setting boundaries and worried about how setting boundaries could affect their job and financial security. In other words, teachers need space to do their work and share their voice without being scrutinized. Deb shared teachers need to voice their thinking safely and many fear that speaking up could be detrimental to their jobs:

DEB: I think people are so afraid to say to go against the grain publicly for fear of repercussions, whether that's perceived or real ... Because there are a lot of times where administrators will say, here's what's happening. How does everybody feel about it? You know, and you have one or two people who will always speak up. And then you'll usually have a bunch of people who won't speak up. And I think there has to be more anonymous commentary so people can have their voices heard but not feel that they will be penalized or not mocked or looked down upon. I don't feel that way right now in the school I'm at. But I do know that I did feel that way previously and I know many people who do feel that way.

Deb also suggested that confidentiality could support teachers in sharing their thinking.

Generosity, caring and compassion are not sustainable without boundaries. Empathic connections need to be metabolized. This points to the need for teachers to set boundaries and be willing to reflect on what is and what is not okay for them.

Lack of Skill and Knowledge

A fourth finding highlighted by the teachers in this study was that they felt unprepared to do the challenging work they faced. Teachers pinpointed that they did not feel like they had adequate knowledge for their daily work. Many described the lack of professional training and unmotivated teachers as a challenge in their everyday work. Teacher participants were especially

concerned about their preparedness to work with children's basic needs, including behavioural needs.

Lack of professional training and inadequate preparation

Teachers face many challenging situations in their day-to-day work, such as working with a violent student; however, teachers often fear voicing their concerns about not having the proper training. The teacher participants shared that they are dealing with much more complex issues and situations than they were prepared for. This is problematic, since honest conversation is necessary for collaborative processes.

Indeed, of the teachers interviewed, all but one identified the feeling that they lacked the training or knowledge necessary for their work. One teacher explained her experience in this way:

JAMIE: When a student is spending most of the day screaming, crying, running through classrooms, it's obviously not good for them. It's not good for the teacher. It's not good for the school. And it's not good for the students. When it gets to that point, there is something missing that needs to be done. But basically, we are told you need to include everyone. And we are not given the supports to do it.

We have no training. I don't have training on this. So, you are going to give us students that are throwing desks, threatening your life, swearing, making everyone feel unsafe... and you're not properly trained... I just feel like something is really wrong in our school system and we are all scared to say it because then we look like we are not for inclusion. But everyone is saying it.

Young students are coming to school with many unique challenges. Jamie highlights that it is important for teachers to be able to respond to these challenges.

There are many newcomer families from diverse cultures and backgrounds who arrive in Canada and make Winnipeg their new home. Teachers need the skills to meet the needs of these students and families, such as English-as-an-Additional-Language (EAL) training. Sarah shared her experience teaching an EAL student:

SARAH: We have a lot of newcomers. So, we've had a lot of Syrian refugees settle in our area. I mean, there's been years where I actually... there was a year where I had Chinese students come. I had two Chinese students who had limited English. We are seeing a rise in EAL for sure, but then not the support to help. And this student, his English was like next to zero. Like, he would just nod at you... We don't get any EAL training. I would have taken a course in university years ago.

Sarah indicated that she was looking for more training or professional development to best support her students.

One teacher, Diane, directly addressed the Faculty of Education where she received her teacher training:

DIANE: I truly believe that our education faculties don't prepare us for the reality of the classroom. There are so many day-to-day things that you don't learn that happen in a classroom—that you don't learn about in the faculty of education. And I think that there needs to be more practical experience ... I think that's the starting point, is that the faculties need to look at what they're doing, and they really need to figure out how to better train teachers.

And secondly, I think we need more support for staff and schools because we all know that there is not one classroom that doesn't have challenges. There are students with academic challenges. There are students with behavioural challenges. There are students with physical challenges, mental challenges. And I think that if we had more support staff who are also trained properly with more practical experience, we would have better outcomes in classrooms.

Diane advocated for more training and resources to deal with the complex challenges of a Winnipeg elementary school classroom.

The teachers in this study identified that they did not believe they had the adequate training or education to meet the challenges they face with students who come to school from diverse backgrounds and with unique challenges. The observations of these teachers suggest that teacher education programs need to reflect on how teachers are being trained for their daily work, and specifically whether more practical training is necessary.

Ineffective and unmotivated teachers

Half of the teacher participants in this study identified indifference as a challenge in their work. Teachers described ineffective practices ranging from not adjusting teaching practices over time to teachers not wanting to support their colleagues. One teacher shared her perception about the ways that some teachers become indifferent to their day-to-day teaching.

KAYLIE: Some teachers are very used to doing their own thing, year after year. Or doing things the same way ... I can't imagine, you know, just pulling a unit out of a filing cabinet and doing the exact same thing, the exact same way, year after year. I don't know. I think maybe people take it personally. They feel like what they're doing is being seen as the wrong thing to do. But that's not what it's about... [it is about] being willing to make even just one small change or one small tweak. And then just seeing what happens and realizing it's OK to move beyond things that have maybe always been the known or the things that just feel comfortable. And just putting yourself out there, taking a risk like you're asking your students to do every day and try something new.

According to Kaylie, some teachers might do the same thing year after year because it is comfortable, but it is important for teachers to evolve their practices to ensure their students are

engaged in their learning. Kaylie also shared her experiences with teachers who chose to be left alone rather than being part of a team, perhaps simply because they lacked interest in connecting with other teachers or because they felt judged by other teachers:

KAYLIE: I don't feel it so much where I work. But I know that there can be a tendency for people, for educators to feel like this is my space and I'm gonna do my own thing and I'm gonna close my door and nobody needs to know what's happening in here and nobody needs to come in and watch me teach and judge me. And ... that feeling of defensiveness.

Kaylie described how teachers can be sensitive in their classrooms. Teachers could have the feeling of being judged.

Working with supportive colleagues is very important for teachers' everyday work. Teaching is challenging when teachers do not want to help each other. One teacher described a teaching environment in which the teachers did not acknowledge one another:

NICOLE: I think that what kind of makes a huge difference on the teaching environment, is if you have support and if you have like a welcoming staff. [That] really ... makes a difference. Like I know this past school year, it was just a bizarre—very bizarre where it was teachers just had no sense of wanting to help each other. There's no support. It was just like you walk past ... And it just really makes a difference when you have supportive colleagues and you like the people you work with. I think that kind of makes or breaks the job.

Nicole noted that lack of support from colleagues made a big impact on teachers. The teaching environment made a difference.

Half the participants in this study highlighted lack of care, disinterest and indifference as challenges related to their job, which ranged from teachers not adjusting their methods over time to not acknowledging a colleague. The participants pointed to how these experiences of indifference devalued people and eroded human connection.

Frustration with Assessment

Teachers recognized data and assessment (such as reading assessments and formal report cards) as an important and necessary function of student growth and teacher practice; however, early years assessment was identified as problematic. This was especially true when teachers were asked to use assessment reporting as a tool to compare or rank early years students who did not speak the same language as in-class assessment practices. One teacher shared that her

dilemma with current early years assessment practices involves the way the learning process is reported:

EMMA: Ah, the current way that we assess, we speak out of two sides of our face—what we know about science, what we know about how kids learn. All those things about brain development, and then, you know, the way we assess or the documentation that reflects how we assess are two different languages most of the time.

Emma's comment spoke to the disconnect between the learning process for students and the document reporting the assessment. Assessment and assessment reporting are two separate topics. In-class assessment processes can support student learning; however, grading students on a report card does not necessarily speak to the student's learning process.

As already noted, the early years classroom is a complex setting. There are many different processes that can be assessed, and assessment might be qualitative or quantitative. One teacher shared how current assessment practices are limiting since they highlight particular skills while ignoring others:

ANDREA: We as humans have the tendency to measure what's easy to measure. And we get all caught up in that—forgetting that there is more. Somebody said—I can't remember who—the things that are most easy to measure are the least important. And sometimes the things that are important are unmeasurable. We don't know what to do with that kind of uncertainty. We like it to be concrete. And the things that I think are really important aren't concrete. They are qualitative—not quantitative.

Andrea continued to share the ways that currently, early years education is driven by data:

ANDREA: We're very accountable. We are very data-driven at the moment. We have to report on academics in Math and ELA multiple times during the year. We are always collecting—you know, assessing students and those things are just non-negotiable. And they take up quite a bit of the day. So, it is difficult. And on top of that we are meant to teach Science, Social Studies, Health, Dance, Drama, Visual Art. You know, it's just a lot. So, we have to do all those things that our curriculum mandates. But yeah, if you look at the minutes we have in the day and over the year, all the things we are meant to do. It's hard to even fit them all in. Even if you're the most organized person in the world ... There are lots of demands. Because on top of that, there's a whole layer of the social-emotional state and development of the children. Right? So, the happiness of the children. Without that common happy vibe in the room, you can't do anything.

Teachers assess students in every subject area. Given the limited amount of time teachers have, it is challenging to teach, collect data, and share assessment while also tending to the social and emotional development of each student.

Another teacher questioned the lack of focus on health and happiness within current assessment practices:

DEAN: I feel like a lot of the emphasis is spent on academics. It's like, make sure your students are reading at such and such a level. Make sure your students are completing this many hours of Language Arts and Math every day. Make sure your students are doing this and that, the other. But they never, ever talk about—make sure your students feel happy and healthy and feel like they they're important.

It is important for teachers to assess students in reading and math; however, it is also important that children in schools are happy, healthy and feel a sense of belonging.

Furthermore, assessment practices that compare students are not beneficial. Comparing abilities with other students can impact students' learning, self-esteem and self-confidence out of fear that they don't have similar academic skills to their classmates. One teacher identified comparing in her classroom:

SOPHIE: Because they're working at A, B, C books or D books. They know. They know. I mean, as you get older, you just want to hide ... But that's where I do a lot of the social thing— "It's OK. It doesn't matter" or "You know, some kids read later" or ... "We're all here to learn." And I do so much of that. Give so much encouragement. It doesn't matter. It's OK because imagine how their little hearts and their little heads must feel. They tend to fear not knowing how to do this stuff and being in Grade Three. And some kids can read fluently. Some kids can't. They're aware of that.

Sophie described that students in her class feared not being able to do well on a task. Students know what they are able and not able to do. Validating individual student process is critical and comparison in a social environment can be hurtful.

One teacher warned that assessment cannot be viewed as a cookie-cutter model and assessment practices can take away time from valuable instruction time:

CLAIRE: There is an expectation to teach and carry out assessment exactly the same way across the board. And again, going back to that trust. I know that I don't know it all and I do need some of those structures in place and some of that is also necessary just for consistency, of course. But there are certain cases where you know—I feel like maybe just depending on the student's need, they don't need quite the same level of an assessment. Or a certain group of students that is very strong. Yet the same procedure and method of teaching and assessment is expected from the resource department or administration.

So, it can sometimes feel as though I'm doing it and there's not a lot of meaning, or meaning behind it. But it's just going through the motions to check off the boxes rather than really being able to gauge what they need and maybe spending less time on assessment. And more time on, you know, more valuable instruction.

It is important that teachers see the value in how and what they are trying to assess. This could mean differentiated assessment or different assessment strategies that better show the learning of individual students.

One teacher also brought attention to professionals called “literacy clinicians” who work with students specifically on literacy skills and assessment. As this teacher reflected, even the title of these professionals is problematic:

ANDREA: There’s some people who are the literacy clinicians—they are called literacy clinicians. Which right there is problematic. The word clinician implies there is some sort of problem, some sort of medical problem that needs to be fixed, right? When we are just dealing with kids who are on the pathway of learning. So, I think coming at it from the point of view of a clinician already assumes there’s some type of problem.

Young students on a learning pathway should never be identified as a problem. Rather, these students who are learning to read are discovering a new skill with targeted instruction and support.

As highlighted in this section, the teachers in this study shared their frustration with early years assessment practices. Teachers recognized the importance of using assessment to guide their teaching practices. However, they noted that report card documentation can be confusing and/or misunderstood by stakeholders.

Conclusion

Winnipeg elementary school teachers are frontline workers in the education system and face many challenges in their everyday work. As revealed in this chapter, teachers identified five significant challenges, including security (specifically physical violence in the classroom and trauma), lack of resources (basic, human, time, and technology), a negative workplace culture (unsupportive colleagues, lack of boundaries, and lack of being heard), a lack of professional training for their daily work, and frustration with assessment. Teachers expressed their inability to influence or control these challenges.

Schools are social institutions. Noddings (2012) observed that if society is motivated to alleviate the inequality faced by young people as they enter school, the factors contributing to the inequality must be addressed. The most salient finding uncovered during my interviews with teachers was the deep lack of resources, a scarcity of resources. This included the teachers’ ability to deal with the challenges from within their own learning and experience. Teachers are navigating a complex social environment that is both expansive and nuanced. The challenges outlined by teachers are extensive and deserve close attention.

CHAPTER 6: TEACHERS' STRATEGIES

We need to expand our thinking.

—Tyra, study participant

In the previous chapter, early years teachers described significant challenges in their daily work, including security, lack of resources, a negative workplace culture, unsupportive colleagues, lack of boundaries, lack of being heard, lack of professional training, and frustration with assessment. The teacher participants also identified patterns of activities and thinking that serve as strategies or supportive practices to help their students succeed and to support their wellbeing and learning in the classroom.

This chapter explores five overarching strategies or pedagogical blueprints that teachers described as serving their everyday work with early years students: a) strategies for promoting individual agency through voice and creativity and play; b) strategies for inclusion which includes working with multiple intelligences and different perspectives; c) strategies for meeting human needs which includes taking social and emotional needs into account; d) strategies for thinking which include developing a growth mindset; and e) the pivotal role of leadership is pivotal in early years education.

Table 3: Strategies for hoped-for outcomes and Sub-Strategies

Strategies: Hoped-for outcomes	Strategies for promoting individual agency	Strategies for inclusion	Strategies for meeting human needs	Strategies for Thinking	Vision
Sub- Strategies	a) Student voice b) Creativity and play	a) multiple intelligences b) Different perspectives	a) Social and emotional needs b) Mindfulness	a) Growth mindset	a) Leadership

These strategies provide a general direction for the hoped-for outcomes of elementary school teachers.

Individual Agency

The teachers identified individual agency as essential to their teaching practice and emphasized that promoting individual agency is humanizing for both children and their teachers. Individual agency acknowledges the thoughts, feelings, and experiences of a person. It ensures that students are active participants in their education and are not objectified. Individual agency was promoted by teachers in two ways: 1) individual student voice, and 2) creativity and play.

Student voice

All the teachers identified that acknowledging the perspective and voice of their students was critical to their teaching and empowering for their students. This was expressed in different ways. Teacher participants shared that giving students a voice is inclusive and encourages students to be involved in their learning. Giving students an opportunity to share and express their learning through different forms of expression builds student confidence and student engagement. For example, when one teacher was asked about what makes students feel included and excited to learn, she shared:

JANET: I think giving them [students] a voice makes them excited and included and asking them what they want to learn about—giving them some choice always helps. I use inquiry a lot in my classroom and so giving kids options on what they want to learn about and how they want to learn, how they want to display their knowledge or share their knowledge helps. And certainly finding what the child is good at or what they really like to do, and allowing them to do that. If the child's a great artist, letting them show what they know about plants, let's say through art. Some kid's talent might be writing or a dancer and letting them show what they know through different forms of expression.

Janet shared listening to students is an important process of acknowledging student voice.

Rather than teachers making assumptions about their students' experiences, listening to students' stories and their life experiences is important. One teacher shared the importance of listening to the stories of her students:

JANET: Sometimes you assume that everyone's life story is similar to yours. And then you talk to different people, and you learn how many different places people come from and situations that some children experience. And it's just amazing sometimes to talk to a child and hear their story. And realize how much they've gone through and how resilient children are. I can't think of a specific story, but—well, there's all these children along the way that you meet. And it's just interesting to hear what other people go through.

Janet explained how listening to a child and their stories can identify their strength and resiliency.

Another participant, Sophie, described herself and her students as “storytellers,” and explained that in her classroom, storytelling is an important everyday activity:

SOPHIE: I’m a storyteller, so I tell them stories all the time about my day and what I did at night. And if I slept, and if I fell asleep on the couch or what I ate and what my cats were doing. So, I’m always telling them stories like that. I tell them stories. When I was young and I’m always giving them things like that.

We have sharing all the time. First thing in the morning the kids are sharing. I get them excited because this is ... our home for five hours a day. I really believe that the only way—this is me, to get the children engaged in an inner-city school, well most any children, but specifically inner-city kids, because they are resilient and they’re smart and they are there... And I tell them that all the time... I do a lot of pumping them up because a lot of these children need that pumping up. So, we share things.

Sharing stories can be used for “pumping students up.” Sharing and storytelling can also be a way to speak to a student’s resiliency and intelligence in everyday life. Storytelling is inclusive and involves both listening and speaking. Storytelling allows people to have their own voice.

When asked about her goals for her students, one participant shared that through individual conferencing and support, she encourages students to set their own goals.

JAMIE: We get the kids to do a lot of their own goal setting... And some of them, once they have achieved it, they will set a new goal. Yeah, I’m trying to conference with them and look at their pieces and look on the rubrics to see where they were, where they are coming along, and where they need more work. So, yeah, I would say they sort of individually make their own goals. They can do that by Grade 3, with lots of support though.

Jamie has encouraged students to set their own goals. This has supported student voice.

The teachers in this study all described the importance of student voice. Students come to school from diverse backgrounds and experiences, and listening to students authorizes them to share their lived experiences into the classroom. Listening to students’ voices is humanizing. Listening to students’ stories, encouraging students to set their own goals and express themselves in a variety of ways engages students and promotes inclusion.

Creativity and play

During the interviews, all but two of the participants identified that creativity and play are critical in their teaching practice. Teachers are writing, producing, collaborating, drawing, and playing with their students every day. One teacher described working with her students through the arts:

KAYLIE: I'm very thankful for my job. And thankful for the human beings that I get to interact with every day. And I feel like all the education I have had, I get to put to use every day. Like I get to use my theatre background, my creativity—you know, getting to write, produce and collaborate with the kids and read with the kids and draw with the kids and play with them. It's just a really amazing profession.

Another participant stated her belief in the transformative power of the arts:

EMMA: I really believe in the transformative power of the arts and arts-based education and how it applies to everything. And our kids always need to discover who they are. And we have to give them, in schools as much opportunities as we possibly can to do that authentically. And so my goals are that kids will begin to—not even begin to, that's presumptuous...—that kids will grow in their understanding of who they are, their identity and what they can contribute to the world.

The arts and art-based education have the power to support students in understanding their identity. Emma shared that schools must provide students with an opportunity to express and understand who they are as contributing members of the world.

A holistic approach to education is crucial. While academic levels are important, outcomes such as happiness are also critical. In sharing her hopes and dreams about her work as a teacher, one participant shared the importance of a holistic approach to early years education:

ANDREA: Now my dreams would be that we would be encouraged to be more holistic in our approach and that we would be given the green light to involve the arts—and whatever we do and to look at the children as a whole. And to stop doing all this assessment. It is almost like the accountability pieces are taking over. Like the tail wagging the dog, you know? It's important to know the academic levels of your kids, but it's not the only thing.

And so, my dream would be that we—our division—would relax a little bit on the data, with little kids especially and focus more on the whole child. And goals like happiness—I don't know if you know her, Nel Noddings, she's someone I read my when I was doing my Master's. And she talks about happiness as legitimate—you know ... happiness as a legitimate outcome or goal for kids in education. And we sometimes skip over that one because it's difficult to measure. Whereas reading levels and math levels are super easy to measure. But maybe they're not the most important thing. So, I'd like to shift away from that towards a more holistic approach.

Andrea described constant assessment and collection of data. She suggested that including happiness in education is important.

Andrea also described teaching as an art:

ANDREA: I think teachers need to feel like they are trusted and valued. And that what they are doing is sort of an art. And it can't be overly prescribed by a division—or shouldn't be, I don't think.

If teaching is an art, each teacher brings their own technique and craft to their work, and it is key that they feel valued and trusted.

One participant, who has been teaching more than 20 years, shared her thoughts on the importance of students reflecting on their own work. She described how it is imperative that teachers diversify from paper-and-pencil tasks towards creative ways to show learning:

TYRA: We do a reflection because I think that's part of it. But they often reflect in different ways. They can videotape themselves reflecting. They can reflect in a conversation with the part where sometimes we do a group conversation—the odd time I ask them to write, and it might be because of time. If we go too long in a period and I know I only have seven minutes, I might say, jot down three things that you learned or one thing that you're proud of and one thing you would change next time. But a lot of what we do with the projects, the end result is building something or making something. You know, it's making a movie. It's creating a video game through coding. It is building a tower, making an invention.

While there is a place for paper-and-pencil tasks, Tyra asserted the importance of moving beyond only the traditional ways for students to show what they know. Paper-and-pencil tasks may produce significantly different artifacts than projects such as a videotaped reflection or creating a video game through coding.

Tyra highlighted a “design challenge” that she uses in her teaching to offer students an opportunity to collaborate. She noted that students learn by watching others, and described the ways that listening, speaking, consciously borrowing ideas from classmates, and coming to a consensus are helpful in learning about cooperation:

TYRA: They'll get, you know, a meter of masking tape, twenty sticks of spaghetti noodles, a marshmallow and a piece of string. And they have to build the tallest structure they can that stands independently. So right off the bat here, they all have different ideas of how it should go. And you don't get new supplies, so you can't say, “let's do it my way, then do it your way.” Because once your tape is used, it's used. So they have to use their words or draw to show their idea and they have to all agree on the same idea.

So at first ... we practice how to listen and how to take, how to share your idea and then how to come to a consensus. ... And I often make groups of three because they're super hard ... And so then they have to come up with an idea and actually do it. And while they're doing it, they have to learn to communicate because they might need to make changes along the way.

And another interesting concept is I tell them that there's no such thing as cheating. It's interesting. I don't know if it comes before they even come to school, but the idea that copying is cheating... Everything we learn is copied. So I teach them—you learn to walk by watching other people. You learn to talk by listening and watching other people. Almost everything we do, we learn from watching somebody else. So right away we tell them that copying is not a bad word. And you want to copy. You want to look over there.

And if their tower is way more successful than yours, then what are they doing that's different? And use those ideas and make yours even better. So, it's all the cooperation... It's teaching them skills that are useful in cooperation.

Tyra highlighted that communication, listening, sharing ideas and cooperation are important to learning in her classroom.

When Dean was asked what he felt best about in his work, he described the ability to be creative with technology, and using technology to support students and the school community:

DEAN: Technology, innovation, new ideas really excite me... In the last 10 years, I've really, really, really loved being able to experiment with technology in my classroom and being able to create things, you know, using technology that can benefit my students and also using technology to aid the school.

Dean expressed that innovative, creative teaching combined with technology is exciting and supportive to the school community.

Another topic that came up with teachers was the importance of humor and joy in teaching young students. It is important to have fun with students as a class and also make time for individual conversations. One teacher shared that it is important that she not take everything so seriously.

NICOLE: I honestly think you have to joke around with them and not take everything so seriously. I remember one kid, a kid was cleaning up and they kept their putting blocks away and they kept... just kept falling out. And this was in front of the class. And all the kids looked at me like I was going be mad. I just started laughing. And so just like having fun, like humour, kind of having humour with them, I think greeting them, every kid, at the door is really important, having side conversations ... The main thing that works for me is joking around with them and kind of having humour.

Humour and joy are important while working with young people.

Another participant shared that she has been teaching Grade 1 for almost 20 years. In her experience, teachers must work beyond what might be comfortable and take risks to try new things to engage students. Teachers must reflect on their teaching practices and consider not only their effectiveness but also if their students are excited to be learning.

KAYLIE: It's about taking all the possibilities that are out there and taking that time to reflect on your priorities and really figuring out is everything you're doing still working? Is it as effective as it can be? Does it spark joy? Does it spark joy in your students? Are your students excited about learning?

Kaylie identified that students must be engaged in their learning, and excited to learn.

For young children, creativity and play are the work of childhood—they promote the cognitive, social, emotional, and physical well-becoming of a child. Indeed, play is so important that it is recognized by the United Nations (2012) as a right of every child.

Strategies for Inclusion: Multiple Intelligences and Multiple Perspectives

Multiple intelligences

The school system is part of a larger social structure. Teachers are mandated to teach to the provincial curriculum outcomes. The curriculum in Manitoba was designed in collaboration with other Ministries of Education, with the goal of aligning practices with those of other “leading” countries (Manitoba Government, 2017). All the participants in this study identified that building academic skills, in particular literacy and numeracy, are important in their work. Teachers cited programs such as Cafe 5 (Boushey & Moser, 2014), Guided Reading (Richardson, 2016), Reading Recovery (Clay, 2000), Literacy Pathways (Fountas & Pinnell, 2022) and Math Pathways (Math Pathways, 2022). Most participants also cited Fountas and Pinnell as a literacy assessment tool.

While sharing current educational practices, all the teachers called attention to valuing multiple intelligences and knowledge perspectives. In other words, teachers felt good about expanding the idea of what it is to be “smart.” Teachers were looking for ways to acknowledge students’ strengths and experiences.

While describing the importance of moving away from only paper-and-pencil tasks, Tyra shared an example of valuing kinesthetic intelligence while working with students in science and technology. Students who might not be successful in a traditional classroom activities, such as reading, writing and arithmetic, might become leaders in hands-on areas:

TYRA: The kids who really excel are sometimes the lowest classroom academic kids. I’ve had kids come to my class who in grade five or six are reading at maybe a grade one level—are really not coping academically in the classroom. And are leaders with this programming, because it’s hands on ... it’s problem solving. They don’t have to necessarily read, write or do that kind of math, arithmetic math. It’s abstract math. It’s more physics. It’s more the principals ... I never have behaviour problems.

Teachers need the opportunity to learn how to engage students in meaningful ways. Physical literacy is impactful to students.

One participant identified a professional development session that focused on kinesthetic intelligence as having great impact on her teaching practice:

EMMA: I attended a PD [professional development day] with a presenter who is differently abled. And it was just so inspiring and practically helpful to think about the school where I teach. And how [engaging children's bodies] can just be really engaging and is meaningful for children who are differently abled or in wheelchairs, who have who have less limbs than the average person and who communicate differently.

Consideration of multiple intelligences is important.

The importance of musical-rhythmic and harmonic intelligence, and the ways it helps to support areas such as literacy and math, was described by another participant:

DEB: Phys Ed teachers—they don't get a lot of money in their budgets. So you go to any school and you see the balls are all ripped or broken or, you know, there's a whole bunch of stuff missing. And I mean, the problem with that is that people don't think Phys Ed is a class. But it's one of the most important classes. You know, it's physical literacy, which is super important... Which we all know helps us mentally and physically. So I don't know where the miscommunication is between the importance of Phys Ed and the classroom, if you will. But I know on days where my kids don't have Phys Ed, they're worse. They're way worse because they haven't had the movement.

So why is there no money being put into that? And the specialties.... This year ... we took away music because we needed a classroom teacher. But, you know, music is huge, and we know that. And we know that musical literacy helps with classroom literacy, math and science. And all of these things are scientifically proven. And yet we're not seeing the money for schools.

Another form of intelligence identified as central to teachers' practices was interpersonal intelligence, which is characterized by an individual's ability to work cooperatively and as part of a group. Interpersonal intelligence can also be understood as emotional intelligence.

Teachers are witnessing students becoming positive school citizens and describing how students work together to create belonging. When Kaylie spoke about what teaching meant to her, she described witnessing the emotional intelligence of a former student:

KAYLIE: And she kind of recognizes ... others when they're feeling those same insecurities and that same lack of confidence. And I've seen her stand up can be such a kind role model and school citizen. Especially when kids are new to our community—they're coming in they don't know anybody. And it doesn't matter if they're in her grade or not. I've seen her step up and just spend her recesses with them and tour them around the school. Just do anything within her power to make them smile and have a good day and go home at the end of the day this feeling like they belong.

Three of the teachers interviewed identified specific programs they used to support interpersonal or emotional intelligence.

Claire described "Kelso's Choices" as a program used to support early years students work through conflict and decision-making processes, and helping students get along:

CLAIRE: It's a little character that's a frog. And his name is Kelso. And so, he guides them through, and there are videos that they watch that have kids working through these ... some of the choices and deciding when they are faced with a conflict. So, they decide which choice to use. And the premise of it is thinking about a problem and deciding if it is a small problem or a big problem. So a small problem would be something [where] you don't need an adult to intervene. A small problem would be something where you are feeling annoyed or upset. But a big problem is where you're feeling afraid. Or someone's breaking, you know, a really big school rule. And so that's when you do need to go and seek an adult for help.

We teach for a small problem, some of the choices they could choose would be to talk it out, go to a different game, choose to leave that game and just go play with someone else—kind of removing yourself and cooling down so just walking away and giving yourself some time to breath and then returning once you feel a bit calmer. So those would be a few examples. Compromising, like making a deal when you are playing with someone and you both want to do something.

The teachers in this section all identified the ways in which emotional intelligence is key to cooperation, and that it is important in their teaching practice to have a good understanding of multiple intelligences.

Multiple perspectives

Including different knowledge systems was also identified as important the teachers in this study. Teaching at the cultural interface is complex (Kearney et al., 2014). One participant shared her experience teaching students from culturally different backgrounds:

ANDREA: We have we have a handful of kids from the Congo and Vietnam and Philippines, but mostly the bulk of the kids are Indigenous. I'll just use that blanket term Indigenous. And I feel that, you know, here I am a middle-aged white woman, middle-class white women, teaching them in that school. And it feels like it would be so much better if I was an Indigenous person teaching in that school.

So, my thought is that the goal would be to have more guests, more visitors. I mean I would love it if our school could have an Elder attached just to our school. To do ceremony, to just tap into the culture. Because, you know, there are those issues around—I don't feel qualified or able to do those things myself. I'm not Indigenous so that has a whole layer of complexity to it. But I feel like our school could be doing a much better job of involving Indigenous guests and participants and field trips and all types of Indigenous content, that we're not doing well enough.

Inviting Elders, guests, and participating in field trips can support including Indigenous content. Indigenous knowledge includes teachings from Elders, traditional teaching and communities.

Inviting guests into classrooms to share their knowledge is enriching for students and improves programming. Another participant highlighted the importance of inviting guests into her classroom as an inclusive practice:

KYLIE: Something that I've really valued over the years too are the opportunity for guests to come into the building. So, whether that's like an expert parent or grandparent or aunt and uncle who comes into the room... like I'm so open to any kind of volunteers coming in and teaching and sharing their knowledge. And if they find out it's in connection with something where we're studying, it's perfect. Also, to have guest artists come in.

We've had knowledgeable educators come in and share what they know about teaching and learning through inquiry. That's been pretty huge. Then we've had Indigenous Elders and Indigenous artists come in as well. So that just always enriches any kind of programming that I already put in place. It always just adds on and adds another element. That's typically... like as a kid those were the things that stuck out in my mind too. When a special guest came in to teach us something or play their instruments for us. So, I think it's the same for our kids now.

Cajete (2010) argued for an educational consciousness that includes deep ecological connection, which would consist of not only treating other humans with respect but treating all creatures and the planet itself with respect.

One teacher described the importance of embracing and celebrating differences in the classroom, and that listening is an important practice.

KAYLIE: And just to learn to listen to one another. And recognize all the things we have in common with one another. But that it's also OK to be different and celebrate those differences. So that's the big thing it's, it's about connection and how we treat one another, and how we treat all the creatures on this planet. We're not here just for ourselves.

Kaylie shared the importance of treating others with respect. Further she shared that it is also important to treat all the creature of the planet and our planet with respect.

Emma highlighted the importance of a breadth of knowledge and of seeing teachers as a collective of people with different strengths and interests:

EMMA: Our children learn so differently... If we want our kids [from nursery to grade 12 and beyond] to be prepared to know and love who they are, to live in the real world, they need to be exposed to different passionate people, different enthusiastic people with different skills. I think that's so juicy and awesome. And when we just say ... all of you have to learn about this one thing. I think that really limits the depth and breadth of what our kids deserve.

Students benefit from being exposed to different teachers' unique skills and experiences over the course of their schooling, and, as Emma pointed out, deserve to encounter different passionate people and perspectives.

All the teachers in this study highlighted the importance of multiple intelligences and acknowledging and incorporating diverse knowledge systems into their teaching. Further, they

pointed to the ways that validating a student's strengths is essential and evaluating what it means to be "smart" is necessary. In other words, they highlighted that what we know about multiple intelligences and knowledge systems must be incorporated into daily educational practices to expand human consciousness.

Social and Emotional Needs

Social and emotional needs must be taken into account

Throughout the interviews teachers highlighted the curriculum and many different programs designed to support learning. However, all teachers identified that the social and emotional needs of students are a prerequisite to building academic skills.

JANET: I mean the curricular needs are there... They need to learn multiplication; they need to learn division. But you can't get to any of that unless the social emotional needs are met. And the social emotional needs—for some students, you can't even get beyond that. You have to deal with all that before you can get to the curriculum. So that's sort of what I didn't realize would be such a big part of teaching, I guess initially. It doesn't take long to realize that that's what it is.

While the curricular learning goals are necessary, the social and emotional needs of the child must be met.

Early years students must develop the social skills needed for learning in a classroom and school community.

CLAIRE: I feel like a lot of early years is just teaching social skills and routine and how school ... works. Like how you practice these learning skills that will help in future grades.

Teachers must find a way to use emotion in a classroom context to strengthen the social context. Although reading and writing is important, it is also important for students to be kind to themselves and each other.

Along these lines, Claire highlighted that she would like her students to be good members of society:

CLAIRE: I'm always just wanting to, well, definitely be a better teacher. I think as I've taught, I've focused less on ... the importance of them really being the best readers or the best addition and subtraction. And more just wanting my students to be the best member of society that they can be. Just work on...Oh, I'm going to cry. Just work on being kind. Especially just now a days, right? Like, you look out at the world, and you think, we need kindness. And yes so, not that I don't teach reading and math—of course I do. And that's a lot of our day but just finding those pockets of time all through the day, where we just

talk about how to be a team and work together and again reminding them that's something that they can do long after I'm their teacher.

Claire identified that she encourages her students to be kind to each other and to work collaboratively. These skills will support her students over the course of their lives.

One teacher shared the importance of checking in with her students to see where they are emotionally:

ANDREA: I feel like you can't really start cold into the academics with these kids or any kids. I think that you need to check in. And just getting sort of an emotional gauge on what's going on with them first... and then gradually launch... And then we usually start with reading—read to self or individual reading for 15 minutes where they can really choose their favourites. So it's sort of a gentle way to start the day. And then we moved into more active, more intense ELA. So, English language learning is in the morning... Checking in with students, and having an emotional gauge is a good way for students to start the day.

Being open to sharing knowledge and learning different perspectives is significant. Feelings are as important as thinking.

Kaylie shared that a long-term goal she has for her students includes emotional connection:

KAYLIE: I think one of the most important things that I want my students to leave with is to remember that people won't always remember what you said or what you did but they'll remember how you made them feel. So I want them to carry that within their whole lives. That it's not about what you know. It's about have you shared their knowledge and how you let people into how you see the world. And how you're open to seeing the world from their perspective.

Kaylie identified her belief that being open to share knowledge and learn different perspectives is significant. Feelings are as important as thinking.

While working with children and youth, adults require the emotional knowledge and strength to appropriately manage their own emotions while managing another's. Difficult emotions, such as sadness and loss, need to find a way to enter the collective conversation. When not dealt with in constructive ways, powerful emotions such as rage can be denied the opportunity to serve as a life-saving force.

Mindfulness

The practice of mindfulness as part of daily programming was identified by all but three of the teachers. When asked about mindfulness programming, Dean identified mindfulness as a

self-regulation tool, and described different programs and breathing techniques he uses to teach self-regulation:

DEAN: There's no training on it, but our school has put an emphasis on mindfulness since I've been there... We used to have a mindfulness period once a cycle where we'd have a guest teacher come in and do mindfulness activities with the students for a full period... And they used to adhere to a curriculum called the "Mind Up" curriculum. And teachers now are still strongly encouraged to subscribe to this "Mind Up" curriculum.

I've just started getting into the "Mind Up" curriculum. But as of now, we're sort of taking strategies that we've learned from the teachers that we've observed doing the mindfulness activities in our classrooms. These focus a lot on breathing techniques, on different ways of framing your feelings and emotions, putting your emotions on a five-tier scale where you can communicate clearly how you're feeling at that time of day and maybe setting a goal for yourself.

So, for example, I use a system in my class called the "Zones of Regulation," where five colours represent five different feelings. So the green, blue, yellow, orange and red—green being that I'm good and ready to go and red being like I'm out of control, my feelings have taken over me. Students can communicate to me ... "today I'm feeling yellow." And then I usually ask them to justify why do you feel that way right now, if they're comfortable. Because it's all about comfort during mindfulness. I never pressure them to do anything they're not comfortable with. And then we always say, OK, well, maybe we'll make a goal to try and get you down to blue today, or maybe we'll make a goal to try and get you down to at least yellow today. And then we try to apply a lot of the breathing or emotional framing techniques that we use in mindfulness in our real-life situations.

So if I notice that a student is struggling or frustrated somewhere outside of the context of mindfulness, I remember the breathing techniques that we've used. Take five deep breaths with me. And like I say, there's a lot of different breathing techniques. We use the things we call pushing and pulling breathing, or we do five fingers breathing where you breathe in when you go up your finger, and you breathe [out when] you go down your finger. Square breathing or you breathe in and out each time you make a different edge of the shape, things that are kid friendly, but still things that can help them to focus and relax themselves. Yeah. So it's really varied. But like I say, there is a curriculum that we do follow in conjunction with the ad hoc mindfulness lessons that we teach them.

Emotions take time to be metabolized. Teachers noted that mindfulness is important not only at school, but in students' everyday lives.

Along with breathing strategies, teachers used yoga practice for self-regulation:

ANDREA: Mindfulness is another thing that our school or I feel is really important. So, we have been doing a lot more mindfulness and yoga practice and breathing and techniques of self-regulation. To help to get kids tools to help themselves in their lives not just at school.

Andrea identified mindfulness as a tool for self-regulation.

There are many resources, including apps that combine body movement, breathing and stretching, that teachers use to support mindfulness programming in their classrooms. One teacher shared some of the resources that she uses to strengthen mindfulness:

DEB: “Smiling Mind,” which is awesome. It’s from Australia. It’s great. The kids love it. They like that one the best because the ... person [has a] very calming voice. So I use that. And there’s also connected activities for each session. So that’s been really good as well. The other one, “Go Noodle,” now has a whole bunch of mindfulness activities or lessons ... “Go Noodle” has added those in the last few years. They always had a couple, you know, stretching, breathing..., but now they’ve added in quite a few. So it’s been really good. And the kids love how after every session you do, whether it’s mindfulness or just, you know, a dance one or a movement one, you get points and then your character changes and they love that.

And so there’s “Smiling Mind,” “Go Noodle,” and then “Cosmic Kids” is good because it’s yoga based and ... it’s geared towards kids and it’s fun and it’s active and the kids love “Cosmic Kids.” And there is a whole bunch ... like they have to listen and they have to focus and they’re focused on body movements and breathing in there. So it connects. It’s mental and physical health. And it’s amazing.

Deb highlighted that there were many good resources available to teachers to support mindfulness in their classrooms.

One teacher reported her belief that mindfulness is a response to the increase in anxiety amongst her students. Sarah noted that a mindfulness practice helps to relax students and can help bring focus to a growth mindset:

SARAH: Like in 20 years of teaching, I’ve noticed that there are more anxious kids. So I find that doing that and teaching them the strategies and that we talk about that it’s normal that everybody gets anxious from time to time. And the “Positive Kid Yoga” probably. But I’ll pick ones that I think they’re going to like and lots of breathing and things like that. I do find that it helps them be more relaxed, and it helps, you know, bringing in growth mindset and the fixed mindset, things like that, things they want to work on.

The teacher participants in this study shared that mindfulness is useful in daily programming for elementary school students. There are many mindfulness resources available to elementary school teachers. Among other things, teacher participant highlighted that mindfulness activities supported self-regulation, and decreases stress. Mindfulness practice was identified as supportive to students by allowing them to decompress and put them at ease.

Growth Mindset

A growth mindset is important in early years education

All the teachers in this study identified the importance of a growth mindset for their early years students in learning new skills and information. Children with a growth mindset understand that with practice and focus, they have the ability to grow and learn. A growth mindset is compatible with human needs such as self-esteem, personal development, identity and participation (Marker, 2003).

One teacher described a growth mindset as a goal for her teaching to foster children's own beliefs in their capacity for learning.

DEB: My goal is always for kids to learn. And, you know, to come out of grade one, reading, writing, but loving to read, loving to write and enjoying the process and understanding mathematical concepts in an engaging way. So the reason ... so much of my teaching is based around math and L.A. games is because I don't ever want them to feel like school is not fun at night. I don't ever want them to feel like just because they got a wrong answer, it's the end of the world. Right? And part of mindfulness. And I always do the growth mindset, which is ... a lot of, "I can't do this *yet*. How am I going to help myself get there?" So for them, it's a lot of ... learning to set their own goals for themselves.

Another teacher described a growth mindset as an overarching goal in working with her students. Emma highlighted the importance for students to develop metacognitive habits around understanding how they learn to reflect on, retain and transfer information:

EMMA: I want ... all of my students to come to understand that life is *now*. You know, I think sometimes we talk about what are you gonna do later? What you gonna be when you grow up? ... And we forget to notice who these humans are *already*. And so, I think I want all of our kids to know that and really experience ... to just explore all of these different elements of building confidence and understanding that they have great power and great impact in them, in our communities, outside of school and inside of school.

So, I guess a dream, a big dream, is just the kids. Yeah. They start to grow in their knowledge of who they are and they love that. And that metacognitive piece about knowing how they learn and knowing what they like. That growth mindset piece of: 'I'm really great at all these things.' And then I think those springboard for going into these other things that are really hard for me. You know, 'how can I explore those really difficult things,' instead of 'these are all the things I suck at.'

Emma highlighted that is important to engage in life at the historical moment. Students have power to explore their interests even when they are difficult.

Although Sophie did not use the words "growth mindset," she also described the importance of a growth mindset for her students:

SOPHIE: My main goals with these children in grade two/three is to really foster a belief in themselves. Even though at home it may be hard and it's a struggle, but they can make a difference if they start to believe in themselves. That's, I think, what you have to do to reach children.

Sharing examples of the positive impact of having a growth mindset can be useful and supportive. Students must have confidence in themselves in order to learn. Sophie continued to give examples of how a growth mindset can be useful for a learner.

SOPHIE: And I tell them that when I was in grade four ... I had difficulty and now I can add! Is it because I'm smarter? It's because I think I can ... And so I tell them things like that. So my classes, lots like that.

Learning can be scary for students and adopting a growth mindset allows students to work through their fears and believe in themselves.

One teacher, Kaylie, highlighted the importance of a growth mindset at key moments:

KAYLIE: When kids are able to take the lessons they've learned throughout the year—that are connected with resilience and drive and showing determination and ... going into the learning pit. Like that moment of discomfort or terror or fear as they're approaching something new and just moving beyond that fear to try something new. You might recognize that even if they aren't figuring something out right away that they're determined enough to get there. So that kind of change in mindset, I guess. Like having more of that growth mindset, instead of a fixed mindset.

When I see students recognizing strengths in themselves. Or kids who maybe started off the year not as confident in math. Right? Realizing that they've got a concept that they didn't have before. Right?

And excited to share that and excited to move beyond that and learn the next thing. Or seeing kids who really get to take off as readers or writers while you're there. You know you are on that journey with them. So those "ah-ha" moments in learning. Those are amazing.

And any time I see them comfortable to share their emotions and demonstrating empathy and kindness. Those are the moments that stay with me. Like when they just offer words of encouragement or support to one another. Or, you know, just put an arm around somebody who is not having the best day. Even though they haven't been asked or encouraged by me or anybody else. Seeing them rise as role models for the nursery school kids. Witnessing them help somebody at recess time who is maybe from a different grade and who again they weren't encouraged to help.... they just—something in them told them to do it. They are stepping up not just as learners but as citizens of the world. Those are the moments that make it all worthwhile for me.

The same teacher brought attention to the importance of resilience and determination in working through problems and indicated that how students work through problems is often more important than the curricular content. Students need to learn how to learn with confidence:

KAYLIE: For me it's not about curricular content so much. It's about how they approach problems and how they're willing to just show resilience and determination and work through problems. And then just how they see themselves as learners. That they're lifelong learners and they're never going to stop. Right?

Kylie shared her belief that there is a rigor to learning. In other words, working through problems is learning.

All the teachers in this study identified that a growth mindset is critical in working with early years students. Through a growth mindset, challenges and vulnerabilities are viewed as the constructive agents of learning. A growth mindset set allows students to worry less about the learning process—and, as a result, it enables students to focus on learning.

Leadership

Leadership is pivotal in early years education

All the participants identified the importance of leadership in early years education. While participants referred to the leadership role of school administration primarily, other leaders such as school superintendents and government were also mentioned.

Many of the teachers highlighted the role of trust between teachers and administrators, since trust builds confidence and a sense of freedom for teachers:

CLAIRE: I feel like trust is huge. I have worked in situations I haven't felt trusted as a professional. Maybe a little bit more micromanaged. That's difficult. You do question yourself then as a teacher, as a professional. When, you know, a lot of your choices and actions and methodology [are] being questioned. And then I've also worked in situations where I have been trusted and just, you know, when that switch first happened and it was a change in administration—just the amount of freedom that I felt and just confidence that was rebuilt with the trust that was given to me.

Feeling trusted meant freedom and confidence for Claire as a teacher. When Claire did not feel trusted, she felt more controlled by the educational leadership.

When another participant was asked about what teachers need to be supported in their work, her response was straightforward.

Emma: Trust. I think, I feel.

One teacher also identified the importance of school administrators being attuned to teachers' and students' needs:

DEAN: Strong leadership, I think, is so important ... I was interviewed by my administration last year and they asked me, "What is it that makes you want to stay at this

school?” And my sole answer was with the leadership. Anywhere you go, you’re going to have challenging students. It doesn’t matter if you’re in the inner city. It doesn’t matter if you’re in affluent neighborhoods. You’re going to have challenging students wherever you go, but you’re not always going to have a good staff and good administration wherever you go. So I’d say if you can find that, stay there. And so I say, if I can be a part of that, if I can be a part of a school culture that says we have a great, empathetic administration, that that is really in tune with our needs and isn’t just simply caving into the demands of the province and division and succumbing to their every whim. I like an administration that stands up for their teachers and really understands what they need.

Listening and honesty are also characteristics of a leader that are valued by teachers.

Listening to teachers’ ideas and working as a team is important for school leadership, as is the ability to have difficult conversations:

DEB: Someone who is fair to all staff and not just fair to whoever they deem most important. ... And someone who is open and honest, a lot of times, you know, you have administrators who keep things hidden and then you hear things. We often hear things from our friends at other schools saying, “oh, did you guys hear this?” And “our principal told us this” ... So why is it that one principal is honest about the things that are going on, whatever that may be? And another principal isn’t. So I think there has to be that openness. And also willing to hear criticisms. Like I think you have to be willing to hear criticisms of your choices. Sometimes teachers will have a better option. And you have to be willing to ask that and know that you’re not always right. You know, we had a PD day ... and our principal had said, you know, here is what we came up with. She and the vice principal—here’s what we came up with for new classroom ideas. But what do you guys think? And so we talked through what might be the better options and we ended up coming up with a different option that worked better for everybody ... I think that shows the trust of your staff, which you hire for a reason. I think it shows that you understand that maybe you don’t have the best ideas, but that’s what we do. We’re a team, work together. So I think that’s what makes a good leader. I think someone who recognizes that they should utilize everyone that they have on staff.

Cooperation and a willingness to work as a team is important for educational leadership.

Communication and honest conversation, even if it is uncomfortable, is necessary.

A willingness to try new things and include different perspectives was highlighted as another aspect of being a supportive school leader. Kaylie noted that leadership involves action and including all school community members to bring life and creativity to an idea:

KAYLIE: I think having a really supportive administrator is key as well. So, there just feels like there’s the right balance right now between... I feel like we get pushed as learners and we move out of our comfort zone quite a bit. And we take on different initiatives and things—like will do whole school journeys or explorations into things. Right? Whether it’s human rights or sustainable development or The Seven Teachings.

There’s just a willingness to learn and to try new things—to try to get different perspectives. And then see how we can make that whole learning experience not just for

us as a staff, but for all of our kids. You know, how are we going to learn about this big topic together? So I feel like ... people are just on board for our administrators' vision and we find a way to put things into action and to just bring life and creativity to the ideas that we want to try and take on as a whole school.

According to Kaylie, educational leadership is essential to creating creative space for teachers to act on different educational initiatives.

Consistency and maintaining the dignity of all people were also highlighted as desirable characteristics of school administrators:

EMMA: And one of the things that I have appreciated about my leader is how consistent, she is—she's just so consistent. And I know that these last few months have been incredibly difficult. She's had no holiday at all. I feel as though she makes everyone feel like she's approachable... You don't ever feel like you're inconveniencing her... She's just very fair and she's a great listener. And I think that's huge. Because if I want to go and voice a concern or have a question, even ... if it doesn't go the way I want it to go or the way I'm hoping it will go, I know she heard me and I trust her.

I trust that she is making the decisions with way more puzzle pieces than I can even imagine, but that she's heard me and that really goes a long way to inspiring some confidence. And she's very innovative—and I mean that in like, maybe that's not even the word I want to use. She doesn't just talk, talk, talk. If she thinks something is of a value, she leads by example. Right? ... She's not about things just looking pretty. She's serious about authentic relationship.

She maintains all students', all parents', all staff members' dignity in speaking about them as well. And I know that she's got so many things she could say. But she just doesn't. She's very inspiring ... and she's also got a great sense of humour. She uses that sense of humour in her leadership. Like in the email she's been sending out to family members, she's warm, she's open. She doesn't say things she's going to have to backpedal on. She's transparent without it being so vulnerable that she gets scared she's going to get taken advantage of.

Emma's comments highlighted many of the characteristics that teachers appreciate and respect in educational leadership, including humour, confidence, honesty, authenticity and a willingness to listen.

Nicole observed the ways in which leadership and role models can be impactful:

NICOLE: The principal, the people at the top—how they manage the school makes a big difference. So, if you have one who emphasizes professionalism and ... has high expectations for that and has the desire for first staff to get together and work together ... Then that makes a difference. I think the administration makes a big difference. If the school principal values collaboration and professionalism, this will have an impact on teachers.

Educational leadership is also important because it drives the vision of the school and the school division. Andrea's words bring attention to the ways that confidence in the direction of the school division can be impactful to teachers:

ANDREA: I wish I could have confidence in the direction that our division is going. And I feel a little bit like I don't. Especially in this time with so much change. And who knows what the future is going to be like?

The vision of educational leadership is of vital importance. Educational leadership drives the intention and direction of education. Teachers should have confidence in intention and vision of the educational system in which they are participating.

Conclusion

This chapter highlighted five practices that teachers identified as significant and supportive while working with early years students, including: a) promoting individual agency; b) working with multiple intelligences and different perspectives; c) accounting for children's social and emotional needs; d) developing a growth mindset; and e) the importance of leadership. These strategies are humanizing and express the importance of validating the student. This includes mutual recognition and sharing knowledge.

Although teachers shared and stressed the importance of skill building such as learning to read and write, they expressed broader tenets of a philosophy of education. These included strategies such as including student voice, which is humanizing. The strategies highlighted by the teacher participants did not allow for students to be objectified, but rather for students to be recognized and included in the classroom. The strategies promoted recognition of students rather than a deficit based or manufactured model.

CHAPTER 7: RELATIONSHIPS

It is not about what you know. It's about have you shared your knowledge, and have you let people into how you see the world? And how you're open to seeing the world from their perspective.
—Kaylie, study participant

As the people working on the frontlines of the education system, teachers are pivotal actors in society. How teachers define their everyday work, alongside the challenges they face and their hopes and dreams for their work, are important knowledge. Teachers spend up to eight hours a day with young people. In some cases, children spend more time with their teachers than with their parents, guardians, and families. Entrance into the public elementary school system is the first time many children are in the care of adults other than their immediate caregivers.

The third and central finding of this study was the critical role of teacher relationships. The concept of relationship as a fundamental building block in education was continuously revisited during all the interviews. Relationships with teachers is nested in a complex web of human relationships including with students, parents, guardians, colleagues, administration, and beyond. Ultimately, the findings revealed that teachers care deeply about their connections to others. Teachers care about their students, and their intention is to support their students. Teachers also care about their students' families, and the broader world. Accordingly, the teachers interviewed in this study might also be identified as "givers" (Grant, 2013). As described by Grant, "givers" are willing to share their gifts and resources without expecting anything in return.

This chapter focuses on the importance of relationships within the education system. According to the teachers in this study, building relationship involves developing trust, investment of time, and the practice of collaboration. Trust building was promoted in two ways: a) demonstrating care and concern, and b) developing routines, structures, and flexibility. The importance of the time required in relationship building was salient and recognized in two ways: a) teachers' long-term view of their relationships with their students, and b) students' past relationships. Collaboration and competition were also recognized as factors in teachers' relationships. Finally, there was a significant lack of data highlighting teachers' own needs.

Trust

Trust is a fundamental building block for building relationships. The participants in this study identified trust as important in their daily work. Participants pinpointed that in the elementary school classroom, trust is built through showing care and concern and developing routines, structures, and flexibility.

Teachers build trust by showing care and concern

All the participants highlighted that what they felt best about in their work was the relationships that developed. They identified the centrality of caring relationships in their everyday work, and getting to know students as people. In this process, teachers also observed the importance of dialogue with students:

JANET: I think it's making the personal connections with the kids and learning about them and their lives and just getting to know them as people and then learning what they think about the world and... talking to them.

Janet observed that taking the time to get to know students and caring for them is important.

One teacher expressed a genuine interest in getting to know her students as individual people. She shared the importance of knowing and caring for her students:

SARAH: I think every kid in that class thought they were my favourite... Like every single one of them, because I took the time to get to know them. But to me, that's what it's about. It's about the kids and the connection because we don't know what's going on in their homes. And, you know, some need a little more TLC than others. But it's always been about the kids to me. Like, you know, everyone teases and says, why do you teach grade one? It's the hardest grade to teach. Right? But I think it's probably [one of] the more important grades to teach.

Another primary teacher who has taught in primary arts education in the Winnipeg public school system also stressed the importance of having genuine affection for her students. Emma recognized building a caring relationship as a goal for her teaching:

EMMA: I think my primary goal is for any teaching—I've taught a number of different things—is that relationship piece. And to make sure that all of the students I teach, and I have many of them right now... know that I have, first of all, a genuine affection for them. I think that's my primary job.

Teachers work hard to connect with their students, and to make students understand their own importance.

A grade one teacher described her love for each of her students:

CLAIRE: I think, too, for me just thinking about that relationship and just how much the teaching is relationships and the need for that connection and just... I love each of my students and I definitely felt that love.

Creating a safe space for students is necessary for student learning. If students do not feel safe, learning risks will not happen (Neufeld & Mate, 2013). Claire continued to describe her work with a particularly difficult student:

CLAIRE: It is building relationship. And I do try my best to spend a lot of time at the beginning of the year just working on that and working on a relationship and building a space where my students will trust me. Because we spend so much time together—like more time than they spend with their families in that one year. And so, I want it to be a safe space for them. 'Cause I really feel like if they don't have that safety and that trust, it's not going to be a successful academic year for them. They need that space to be able to take risks, ask questions and if they don't have that safety and that trust ... a lot of those learning risks and ... learning chances just won't happen. And so, for me just seeing that, it just reminded me of the connection.

Teachers are a constant adult in young people's lives. Claire described creating an environment that allowed students to take learning risks which includes asking questions.

Teaching might not be flashy and glamorous, but it can have a significant effect on children over time. A primary school teacher who has taught in both the private and public school contexts described the importance of relationship in her everyday work:

ANDREA: I feel good about creating connection with kids and sometimes with their families. Although their families are sometimes reluctant to be involved. But that's why I love it. I feel like I'm in a very small way—we have a good day together and the kids enjoy coming to school and I enjoy them and that's really it. It's not glamorous. It's not huge, but I really enjoy that feeling and when you know that that's happening, when you're away because when you come back the kids are like "Aww..." and it is not 'cause you're special—it's just because you are there. You are a consistent adult in their lives and that keeps me going.

Andrea, a teacher for more than twenty years, shared her final thoughts as follows:

ANDREA: We need to be kinder and gentler with everybody. Students, teachers, and then just honor individual strengths in a really, really authentic way.

People live their lives in a relational context. All of the teachers in this study described the importance of a caring relationship with their students. These teachers are "givers," and their intention is to help their students "succeed." Teachers identified that a necessary condition of their work was actively displaying kindness and support for their students. This focus on

relationships as a fundamental building block of early years education aligns itself well with Peace and Conflict theory.

Teachers build trust through routine, structure, and flexibility

In addition to a focus on relationship building through showing care and concern to their students, a second way teachers highlighted trust building with students was through providing class routine, structure, and flexibility. All the teachers described the importance of predictable class routines in developing relationship, connecting to students and supporting the class community.

KAYLIE: A group that knows the routines and the expectations—not just for me but it’s being in that space, sharing our space together. We’ve got classroom jobs. So every day the kids will come in and look at their roommate jobs. And they know what it is they have to do and really, it’s a lot about taking responsibility and looking out for one another. And then learning to look beyond just our classroom walls and looking at the whole school community.

The same teacher (along with most of the others interviewed) also highlighted the need for flexibility in routine, and the ways that teachers need to be responsive to their students. Lessons can be transformed based on students’ interests and curiosities:

KAYLIE: You never really know what’s going to come out of a student’s mouth and which way your planned lesson is going to transform, right? Just based on their interests and curiosities. But I guess a big part of the day, especially the beginning of the school year, is just trying to establish a strong sense of class community.

Kaylie highlighted her thinking in the need to allow flexibility in the execution of lesson plans.

Andrea echoed Kaylie’s thoughts on the importance of class routine and structure.

Andrea also added that routine brings a sense of calm to her classroom when students know and can predict the pattern of their day:

ANDREA: We really have to address the behaviour and settle people and making—just confirm it or reassure them that there is a safe place, before we can really get into learning. And that’s always difficult because you have to focus on the one kid who’s struggling or the two or three, but you have all the other ones, too. So it’s always a balancing act of trying to keep the learning moving forward and have a very defined structure in the day. Which I think the kids really rely on.

A lot of the kids that can barely read will come into the room and just look up at the agenda. And it’s in 15-minute or half-hour chunks or 45-minute chunks all through the day and they just see what’s going to happen and then they feel, “ahh.” They feel a sense of calm. They love the routine and structure. It’s always a balancing act and I do wish that we had more people we could call on to just support the kids who are struggling.

According to Andrea, routine can bring a sense of safety to the classroom. There is a “balancing act” that teachers need to negotiate throughout their day.

Similar to Kaylie, Andrea also shared the importance of flexibility in the structure of her day, and the ways that being responsive to students’ needs requires flexibility and allowing some students to have their own timelines:

ANDREA: Well, in my own class, if it’s just a small thing like they look tired or grumpy or whatever, we first of all make sure they have something to eat. I’ve got a bin of granola bars and things. Sometimes I can send kids down to the breakfast room. Sometimes I let kids—I’m thinking of one student in particular this year, he always needed to go over to this section, this table that he claimed for himself and he would work on a puzzle or something. Or worked with some modeling clay before he was able to do what everyone else is doing. So, I mean I think you just have to be very flexible in your knowing each kid and knowing what they need and allowing them to have their own timeline, flexibility within the structure of the day.

Andrea observed that to be flexible required that teachers know their students well.

All the teachers observed that promoting routine over time helped to support trust building in their classroom. However, building routines takes time:

CLAIRE: It’s not in one day. So, I think the most important thing is just recognizing that it’s going to take time. I’m with some students more than others. I feel like September is an exhausting month emotionally and not in a negative way—it’s almost like in a thrilling way. Just because I do set aside that month just for building that routine and relationship.

And some students at the end of the first day, they trust you and love you. And other students it takes until spring break before they ask you a question or come and tell you a story about their weekend. And some students don’t ever have that personal connection. But for me, it’s listening. So showing them that I’m there to listen. And, I think the students that maybe aren’t quite as vocal, they’re always watching. And so, if there is a student that’s sharing, how am I going to value the story that they’re sharing? Or the problem that they want help with? And it might not seem like a big deal to me but putting myself in their shoes, it’s a big deal to them... And so, it’s just showing them that I value their opinion and their problems and their stories and being available to listen.

While for some students, trust is established relatively quickly, for others it takes months to build a connection.

As highlighted by the teachers in this section, a predictable, daily routine was beneficial in teachers’ work to build trust with their students. Routines and structures offered students an environment of comfort and security, which in turn can create trust. The teachers also noted the need to be responsive to their students and to be flexible with their routines when students’ needs called for it.

Time

All the participants acknowledged time as important in building relationships and connections with their students. Teachers held a long-term view of relationship, and highlighted that they saw their connection with their students not just for one school year, but rather as something that extended well into the future. Teachers also observed that past relationships impacted current relationships.

Teachers have a long-term view of relationship

All of the participants in this study shared a long-term view of relationship—in other words, they did not see their students as their students for just one year. When asked about his goals for teaching, one teacher shared that he would like to see students' long-term success:

DEAN: Something that I'd like to see, I'd love to see of the fruits of my work. You know, at some point, I'm pretty early in my in my career, but nothing would make me happier than to see a student who is struggling in my classroom in early years and to see them grow up to be a success, whatever that means for them, sometime in the future. I would just love to see the long-term results of what we teachers do in the early years of a student's academic career. So in terms of for the students, that that would be my big dream for them, for myself.

Dean described that the outcomes of teacher's work may not be revealed until later on in a student's life.

Teachers invest time to help students learn, and one teacher expressed that her goal was to support students in their lifelong quest:

CLAIRE: I try to see them not only as my student for one year. But just what can I—how can we help them learn that will help them for the rest of their lives?

The relationship between a teacher and student is very important, particularly if a student is struggling.

One participant became visibly moved while discussing her relationship with her students. Rather than a teacher, she described how she sometimes felt like an “auntie”:

ANDREA: But it gets emotional, you know. Because some of these kids are very fabulous kids but their home lives are so chaotic, they really are struggling. And you feel almost like an auntie to them or a relative.

Andrea described feeling connected to her students.

Teachers' actions matter beyond ourselves and often affect future generations. One teacher shared how her own view spans across generations:

KAYLIE: We want this place to be here for the long haul and for all the generations that come after us. Another quote that is always with me is... I wish I could remember the exact words, but it's the one about the meaning of life is planting a tree under [whose] shade ... you will never sit. It's for somebody else, right? So, thinking beyond ourselves. That's the number one thing.

Kaylie described how actions in the present moment will impact the future.

When asked about the most rewarding experiences in their work, many teachers shared that these experiences were when former students or their families acknowledged her or his role in their life. One teacher explained how meaningful it is to have made a difference in the life of a student:

SOPHIE: When the students come back, and they see me and they tell me that I made a difference in their life. That gets me. I mean, that makes it.

Teachers are in a position to touch children's lives, and for many teachers, this is what teaching is about.

There are times teachers connect with students during defining times in their lives, such as when a student has had a serious illness:

SARAH: I treated him the way I would have wanted someone to treat my kid at that time. And, you know, to this day when I see his family, it is always a really happy experience. And, you know, I would say there's several kids over the years like the one who had a serious illness that I've stayed in contact with. And I think to me, that was what it was about, was touching the life of a kid who needed it, especially at that time.

Sarah reflected that for her, teaching is connected to impacting a child's life.

All the teachers spoke about having a long-term view of relationship for their students. Rather than viewing the children as their students for just one year, teachers described caring about their students, about their lives in the future, and about working to plant the seeds for long-term success.

Past relationships—The historical now

Since very young children arrive in elementary school, it was not surprising that all the teachers identified the importance of students' past relationships, and specifically students' relationships within families. As a child enters elementary school, they are required to navigate both a home and a school culture. Parental involvement in a child's education is vital, something that was borne out in Claire's interview:

CLAIRE: At our school, and I think at most schools, we look to parents. We remind them that they are their child's first teacher. And that we are a team [pause] we probably would see a higher and I'm just assuming a higher percentage of parental involvement than it might be in other schools. So we're thankful for that. I think you know as a child just develops in those really formative early years, parents would be the one in the home that's providing that initial guidance and so I know when a student comes to school, a lot of those ... beliefs or just their view on the world would be shaped by those first few years. And typically, what happens in the home not always—I know with some parents working full time and students going to daycare...—but just recognizing that they come from different environments. And knowing that and wanting to value that.

Teachers also noted that respecting and communicating with parents helps to develop relationships.

The formal education level of a parent or teacher should not impact the relationship and parents need to feel comfortable and welcome in their child's school.

SOPHIE: The parents of these of these children, some of them ... come from poverty. I have a good relationship—like I said, the parents will call me... They can't read. I never make them feel that I'm better than them. They know that I grew up in the north. They know ... I never make them feel that I'm better than them, I think. And I always welcome them in my classroom. And I call them all the time, even with my cell phone.

In describing the ingredient of what make a “good relationship” with parents, Sophie described that parents must know their worth and central importance as a parent. Recognition is important, and validating and welcoming parents cannot be understated:

SOPHIE: I validate their worth as a parent because they love their kids. And they may not have the skills, certain skills, but they're doing the best they can. I validate them. I think that's what it is they do when they talk to me. They feel validation. And what they're doing—that they're trying to do the best they can. I think that's what it is. I think that makes them feel welcomed.

Acknowledging parents and care givers is important.

As described by Dean, working together with parents to advocate for student programming is advantageous to everyone:

DEAN: I had a student last year and my first year of teaching who had very, very aggressive tendencies, who had had a lot of pent-up aggression, was not happy to be at school. And I worked closely with his mother to develop a behaviour plan for him to make sure that he was not being a danger to himself or being a danger to other students. And I developed a very good relationship with a student throughout the year.

Unfortunately, the pandemic hit in March of last year, and so we were unable to have any sort of closure ... with the students. But I did keep in contact with him and the family through remote learning and called him as much as I could to follow up with him and see how he was doing. I delivered hampers to his family's house twice a month throughout the summer. So I was able to keep up with his family in that way.

And then it came time to discuss with the family what's going to happen with him next year, because the mother was very, very concerned about the transition because of his high emotional needs. And so I advocated for him, I said, I know exactly which teacher he should be getting next year, we can have an entry meeting. I'll talk with the new teacher. I'll make sure that he has some exposure to the new teacher before the year begins.

And my advocacy was successful, So he was able to get the teacher that I recommended and this year he's been having an extremely successful year. He's been smiling, laughing with his friends, happy to go to school, likes his teacher, and doesn't require a behaviour plan anymore. And his mother still emails me at least once a month to thank me or just to check up and see how I'm doing.

Developing relationships with parents and guardians supports students.

All the teachers in this study recognized that working with and including a student's home environment—dialogue between the home and school—is important to a child's well becoming. Past and present experiences or socialization are important considerations in the education of young children. Socialization is a complex process that begins in the home and with the adults responsible for a child's care.

Collaboration

All the participants highlighted the importance of collegial relationships as vital to their work. Specifically, they identified collaboration and working together for the common purpose of educating young people as being highly valuable.

One teacher shared that the best thing about her everyday work was building relationships with students, families and her school community:

KAYLIE: The best thing is the relationship with the kids. And the bond with the families and just being a part of such a great school community. That is the biggest gift. I feel really, really lucky to have a strong collegial feel in our building. Right? Like we learn from each other, we can admit our mistakes, we can work through problems together. And that's pretty huge. I know not every workplace has that. I feel like that has developed over time.

Learning from each other and collaborative problem solving helps everyone. A great school community develops over time. True dialogue which must be followed by action and a rethinking of actions must serve in providing a fuller description of our collective existence.

Furthermore, having a supportive, strong school community involves shared resources and support. This is impactful for all staff. Having teaching colleagues who can be counted on is necessary for teachers:

JANET: I think it's important for teachers to have a strong community with ... other teachers in the school—have colleagues that they can count on and that they can go to when there's something that they need help with, whether it's, you know, just emotional support or they need to run ideas past somebody, or—I think that's really important to have that community at school among the staff.

Janet reflected that collaboration is important in teacher's everyday work.

At the end of her interview, when asked if there was anything important that should have been asked, Nicole went out of her way to speak to the importance of collaboration with colleagues and the ways that relationships with colleagues can make or break teachers' work experience:

NICOLE: Maybe like relationships between colleagues. I think that makes a huge difference on the teaching environment, is if you have support and if you have a welcoming staff... I went to this new school in May and June and suddenly, everyone's talking to each other, they're all going out for drinks. They're all helping each other. And it just really makes a difference when you have supportive colleagues and you like the people you work with. I think that kind of makes or breaks the job.

All the teachers in this study shared the importance of having collaborative, supportive colleagues. Teachers need to seek the help and support of other teachers and colleagues in their work. Developing a culture of help seeking is important to teachers.

Relationship to Self: Self-Care

Although care and relationship building were significant findings of this study, none of the teachers specified the importance of self-care. However, they did note the importance of educational leadership in supporting teachers to identify and tend to their own needs. It is important that teachers have some positive feedback from school leaders, parents, or guardians. Acknowledgement and recognition are humanizing. One teacher identified that it is important for school principals to acknowledge teachers:

NICOLE: But there's not a lot of positive reinforcement or appreciation for what you do. And it's not like we need it. But it's nice every once in a while to get praise from the principal or something from a parent... Just sometimes it feels like all your hard, hard work ... doesn't matter. It goes unnoticed ... just a little bit of appreciation can help.

One teacher highlighted that just because she does not teach literacy and numeracy, it does not mean that her work is not important. Teachers in all subject areas must be acknowledged for their everyday work:

EMMA: Well, I think some of the challenges in the role that I'm specifically in is, like I said, the value piece. And just really the school division, the province staff, just really understanding how important the work is. I've used the analogy of a cake before and I'm always advocating—there's sort of this generalization that, you know, literacy and numeracy are the batter. And then everything else is like the icing, if you're lucky at all. All the things that our kids are learning, all the relationships they have with each other, with staff, with the learning process, is all the better. So that's one of the challenges that I find.

Emma observed the importance of advocating for the acknowledgement of diversity.

The mental health of teachers is of paramount importance and teachers must take care of their own mental well-becoming. Teaching young children for a full day can be exhausting.

School administrators understand that the mental health of teachers must be considered:

DEAN: I would say one thing that our administration does right now in terms of meeting teachers needs is understanding what they're going through in terms of their mental health. Our administration understands that our teachers are being mentally drained right now. I mean, yeah, the physical work is hard, don't get me wrong. But, like, what's being asked of us right now is putting taking a real mental toll on us. By the end of the day, we're exhausted, not because we've been moving around so much, but because our minds have been pulled in so many different directions.

Teachers have to remember to connect with colleagues and ask for support.

At times teaching can feel isolating, and Deb highlighted the ways that early years teachers have many responsibilities and can get lost in their own classrooms:

DEB: It can be very lonely sometimes, especially because you have your own classroom, you have your own tasks and obligations and responsibilities, sometimes you get lost in all of that and your classroom can sort of feel like an island at times. And you start to forget that there are people, you know, beyond the walls that you're sitting in.

Deb brought attention to the patterns of interactions between teachers and their context.

The behaviour of the teacher is a function of the context. In other words, there are social forces ruling the lives of the group. Leaders in the field of education have been noted as being

helpful in identifying and supporting teachers' needs. Teachers must be able to safely voice their needs and recognizing self-care for teachers is important.

Conclusion

The theme of relationships was woven throughout all the interviews, with participants identifying relationships as the foundation of their everyday work. The teachers highlighted the importance of trust building, time, and collaboration in building relationships with students and their families. They also noted some of the concrete strategies they used to build relationships. There was a surprising lack of data regarding teachers recognizing their own needs, although in hindsight, my own questions were not geared towards teachers' self-care.

Building healthy relationships is a key theme in Peace and Conflict Studies scholarship. In this study, teachers identified that building relationships was foundational to their everyday experiences. Teachers described a web of relationships that included students, families, colleagues and community. The theme of relationship was woven throughout all interviews and was continuously revisited and stressed by all participants.

CHAPTER 8: UNDERSTANDING TEACHER NARRATIVES

Introduction

Education is a critical consideration for promoting positive peace and a culture of collaboration and empathy, if this is what human beings truly want to create. Developing an understanding of culture and conflict involves a search for greater understanding of human relationships. Lederach (1997) stated, “peacebuilding must be rooted in and responsive to the experiential and subjective realities shaping people’s perspectives and needs” (p. 24). Elise Boulding (2000) challenged people to envision a “Hoped-For-World”—for her, hope was found in the role of social learning and through the connection among family, community and government.

The world is constantly changing and evolving. States create rules, and institutions become the important actors in addressing issues and creating balance within states. The context reveals and directs our thinking, actions, and responses. Accordingly, Winnipeg elementary schools are situated in society that is not only local, but also national and international, and is influenced by all these forces.

Currently, the world is facing unprecedented challenges. Environmental destruction, nuclear threat and technological disturbances are among the biggest risks to our species (Harari, 2021). There are also deep gaps in access to food security, energy and technology between states and communities (United Nations, 2014). Human rights violations continue to deprive people of a life of dignity (United Nations, 2020). The United Nations Human Development Report 2020 noted that “human choices, shaped by values and institutions, have given rise to the interconnected planetary and social imbalances we face.”

Context is important and not all people are participating equitably in Winnipeg elementary schools. This is evident by the four current and urgent issues highlighted in this study. The Seville Statement on Violence stated, “just as ‘war begins in the minds of men,’ peace also begins in our minds. The same species who invented war is capable of inventing peace. The responsibility lies with each of us” (Fowler, 1994, p. 845). Power relations are present in every social interaction (Russell, 1938), including the relationships between teachers and their everyday connection with people. Teachers are navigating and negotiating social power. Strategies and processes related to empathy is where teachers are finding power. This is congruent with enduring power and the connection to the promotion of human rights.

This chapter reviews the findings of this study, which investigated the subjective voices of twelve participants. Specifically, this study involved the experiences of individual Winnipeg elementary school teachers in a shared context, before online learning due to the Covid-19 pandemic. In this study, there was data saturation—it became predictable what participants were likely to share while being interviewed.

Overview of Findings

Three Lessons

Elementary schools are often children's first introduction to a social institution. Teachers are experts in the school system, and their knowledge, insights and participation are important. Sifting and re-sifting through the data collected in this study exposed how Grade 1-3 teachers think about their work. This process clarified both the challenges and specific strategies Winnipeg Grade 1-3 teachers used to navigate their social context along with the importance of relationships and community building.

Three overall lessons were learned from the study. Rather than being related to curriculum development, specific pedagogy, behaviours or learning styles, the three lessons included challenges, strategies, and the importance of relationships. This does not mean that skill building, excellence and the rigor of learning were not important to teachers. On the contrary, all participants shared the critical importance of learning skills. However, this study revealed that the root issues were concerned with the areas in which teachers believed they had control and those they did not. In other words, the findings highlighted where teachers believed they had influence and power.

The twelve Winnipeg Grade 1-3 teachers interviewed in this study identified an extensive list of challenges, including security, lack of resources, negative workplace culture, lack of professional training, and frustration with assessment. The pressure of these challenges and this “lack upon lack” are complex. The challenges included circumstances where the teacher participants did not believe they had influence or control. Keltner (2016) observed that a chronic lack of power in the face of challenges can have significant consequences. Teachers revealed that they did not have the resources from within the system or within their own learning to deal with the challenges they faced.

Teachers also outlined strategies or processes that were supportive in their everyday work. These strategies included individual agency, such as acknowledging multiple intelligences and perspectives, and taking students' social and emotional needs into account. Teachers also identified the importance of a growth mindset, as well as the pivotal role of good leadership. These strategies, which put children's voices at the forefront, strengthened holistic, playful approaches to education. Further, these strategies were identified as working from within the system and offered a pathway that teachers found supportive and powerful. They were strategies related to connection, cooperation and empathy, and were within the teacher's control.

Finally, teachers identified that relationships are at the heart of their everyday work. The theme of relationship was recurring throughout all interviews. Teachers shared that building relationships is woven into daily practices regarding how they think about their work with children. Teachers are uniquely positioned in schools to put information into concrete action. Teachers understand the issues and their connection to systemic roots and can also cultivate relationships and build community.

The first lesson: Lack upon lack- the pressure powerlessness and the importance of human rights

To deny people of their human rights is to challenge their very humanity (Mandela, 1990),

Dominance has to do with power, and it dictates how people behave (Tuso, 2015). The question becomes who has power and this is where the polarization begins. Children come to school with different knowledge systems and access to different resources. Manitoba students are not participating equally in our elementary school system.

Policies and practices have positioned Indigenous people throughout the world in constant struggle to gain human rights (United Nations, 2019). In Manitoba, Indigenous children represent 90% of the children placed in the care of Child and Family Services (Brownell et al., 2015). Less than 50% of children in care are ready to enter school at a typical age (Manitoba Task Force on Educational Outcomes of Children in Care, 2016). Half of the world's refugees are children who have been described as living targets (Machel, 2003). These children have been the victims of genocide, sexual violence, hunger and disease (UNHCR, 2018).

The LGTBQ2 community struggle to protect their human rights and experience harassment, discrimination and violence based on their gender identity. In Canada, there are

more than 6000 homeless LGBTQ2 youth and LGBTQ2 youth are fourteen times more at risk of suicide and substance abuse (Egale, 2022). Manitoba has the highest number of children living in poverty, where one 1/3.5 children live in poverty (Manitoba Child and Family Poverty Report, 2016). Poverty impacts health, development and lowers educational outcomes (Brownell et al., 2012). Manitoba teachers are civil servants working as frontline workers in our society and are navigating these urgent and critical issues. These groups have been highlighted because of their participation in the educational system and in society more broadly.

The teachers who participated in this study described an environment of a lack of basic resources, lack of human resources, lack of time, and lack of technology. Further, teachers described a lack of boundaries, lack of being heard, lack of professional training, and sometimes unsupportive and unmotivated colleagues. Teachers described their limited control and power in dealing with these immeasurable challenges which seemed to be beyond their personal influence. Indeed, these challenges may be understood as dehumanizing human rights issues.

In his book, *Teens Who Hurt: Clinical Interventions to Break the Cycle of Adolescent Violence*, Kenneth Hardy (2005) discussed the “loss upon loss” experienced by the adolescents in his work. In my study, the Winnipeg teachers spoke of “lack upon lack.” The teaching landscape was described as insufficient of necessary conditions and as a landscape of deficit. Lack of resources can be a subtle and powerful indicator of social reality. Although teachers witnessed these inequalities, they did not have control over most of these challenges as individuals. In other words, what needs to be problematized is the lack of institutional resources while dealing with societal issues.

In this context, it is important to highlight that moral injury, the dilemma of knowing what a person needs, and a failure to act has been cited as a relevant concept for teachers (Sugrue, 2020). In other words, if wrongdoings are happening despite people not wanting them to happen, there are consequences. Reconfiguring power so that it is more socially just deserves attention and focus.

The importance of sharing resources has been well documented- thriving societies share resources (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009), yet the current practice for Winnipeg elementary school teachers does not reveal equal access to resources. The lack of resources identified was not limited to material goods and basic needs such as food. The lens of resources was broadened to include lack of human resources (EA support), lack of individual time with children, lack of training for teachers to deal with these challenges, and increasingly a lack of technology. The

factors that are sustaining inequality must be addressed (Noddings, 2014). In many ways, these concerns mimic human rights issues found on a global scale. Globally more than 900 million people live in extreme poverty (World Bank, 2015). Carney (2021) recently highlighted the lack of access to technology as a human rights issue.

In an effort to mitigate the lack of resources, teachers shared heroic acts which are not necessarily attributed to the role of elementary school teachers, such as raising funds for technology and delivering food hampers for students. This generosity of spirit should not be undermined. However, is it possible that teachers are overextending themselves with these heroic efforts? Could student needs be identified and sustained by group efforts, rather than individual teachers? In other words, the lack upon lack of resources presented to teachers may require a collective, collaborative response and institutional support, rather than an individual one. The issue is a lack of resources. Teachers may be able to participate collectively in better ways. For example, one way in which this might be accomplished is through an asset mapping of resources available to students and their families.

Additionally, Paulo Freire (2012) shared that people must be wary of acts of generosity, if generosity does not serve to dismantle the factors that created inequality in the first place. Freire also cautioned that power not be taken away from people, since reciprocity is important. Being in a position to “give” is a powerful position. If teachers are “givers” (Grant, 2013), is it possible that teachers are “over giving?” Could the unintended consequence of “over giving” be that power is being taken away from somebody else? On a global stage, dependency theorists have identified significant unequal power relations. Are teachers participating in a similar situation on a micro scale? The question must be asked: is this type of relationship promoting dependence or cooperation? Dependency can lead to unequal power relations.

Teachers also highlighted students’ experiences of trauma as a significant challenge, including the death of a parent, alcoholism, divorce, and intergenerational trauma. Teachers and children are living in the same society, and it could be that they are experiencing vicarious trauma or trauma of their own. More recently, trauma and trauma-informed care has become better understood. Although understanding trauma and its many faces and impacts on people is becoming more widely understood, it is a complex and a necessary area of study for teachers. The more teachers are able to understand trauma, the better equipped they are to respond to their students in a trauma-sensitive and informed way. Of utmost importance is that unacknowledged trauma is dehumanizing (Hardy, 2005). As the adults caring for young people for up to eight

hours a day, teachers must be prepared to understand and acknowledge trauma while regulating their own emotions. This form of acknowledgement is congruent with compassionate empathy.

Although many of the challenges shared by teachers were not in their control, all teachers did share they faced challenges setting boundaries, including professional conduct and boundaries with technology. Several questions might be asked. Could lack of boundaries be understood as a fear response to needing to maintain their teaching employment? Could it be that teachers are participating in a certain way in the education system for fear they might lose their teaching positions and livelihood? Is it possible that setting boundaries is a challenge that is overly extensive for teachers on an individual level? Setting and respecting personal boundaries is critical to compassion and empathy (Brown, 2012).

While there are aspects of the job that are “not negotiable,” a closer examination of the role of elementary school teachers and boundaries could be an avenue for further research. Elementary school teachers continue to be predominantly women. Women have notoriously and historically had more difficulty setting boundaries (Baldwin, 2008). Women have taken on feelings of care and responsibility for others within society (Gilligan, 1977). Further, when under stress, women often “tend and befriend” (Boulding, 2001, p.55). In tending to the challenges, they face, it is important that teachers are aware of and do not suffer moral injury.

Throughout all twelve interviews, the Winnipeg elementary school teachers also described the “pressure” of their jobs, and their sense of a lack of being heard. The participants shared their feelings that they were never “doing enough.” This could also be related to the role women have played in education and society. However, this study only had one male participant so this cannot be extrapolated. Participants highlighted the need to respond to many competing interests and voices and shared that the urgent demands of their daily work were not acknowledged. This could be considered a burden of care and a form of moral anxiety (Kurth, 2015).

Several participants shared that they had contemplated leaving their jobs. Kaylie described the pressure of her everyday work as follows:

KAYLIE: It’s just doing the very best you can and as much as you can for every single one of your students, and every single one of your families while teaching curriculum and responding to your administrator’s vision and goals for the entire school, and other projects being taken on. But that almost seems like nothing now. Right now there is the added stress of making sure these kids are safe... I’m sure other teachers can relate to my feelings, too, the feeling to have not just being able to let things go at 3:30 pm or 4:00 o’clock. Whenever you walk out of the building—like, it’s always with you. What can I

do differently? What could I do better? What could I do more of? Those are big questions at 3:00 am for 29 students.

Another participant, Andrea, shared her feelings regarding the pressures of her work:

ANDREA: The challenge also for me is being forced into a certain avenue of teaching styles and assessment when I would rather be doing a lot of integrated...projects and getting at kids' interior lives and having them grow as a whole person. So sometimes I feel really pushed in a certain direction that I don't really agree with but I have to. So, I feel like there are these mandates and deadlines that are non-negotiable and that's a challenge... It is just something in the back of your mind that's always there, that you know these are the things that your kids are meant to know by the end of the year. We have struggles, if kids aren't at grade level when they come in, it is difficult to do all those things. And just deep inside myself, I really know even if you wanted you couldn't push a kid further than they can go developmentally. But I feel like that's our job is to find out where is this child at and how can I move them forward in a way that is humane?

There are many layers involved in analyzing teachers' descriptions and experiences. Teachers are not only responding to the environment, but they also have their own intrapersonal processes. Within schools, unsupportive colleagues also contributed to a negative workplace culture. While the teachers highlighted that they were currently working with collaborative colleagues, all but one described competition amongst teaching colleagues at some point in their career. They described colleagues who tried to "outshine" each other and who asked questions about which teachers were "working more or less hard." The teachers looked toward the school leadership to address this competitive, unsupportive environment. Participants all shared that collaboration was not only helpful, but necessary in their daily work.

The challenges teachers face is complex. Working with trauma, violence, lack upon lack of resources along with welcoming newcomer families to Winnipeg, EAL language learners and meeting students' needs are challenging. Understanding teacher perspectives and the challenges of teachers' daily work means understanding the challenges that exist in any classroom community. Teachers described many escalating challenges in their workplaces, most of which were out of their personal control. Stress can be recognized as a feeling of powerlessness (Keltner, 2016). These challenges identified by teachers need to be addressed at a systems level.

The "lack upon lack" context including the lack of basic resources, safety and security issues, trauma, and lack of boundaries all contribute to a pattern of unjust treatment of people—both teachers and students. These issues are not unlike the inequalities and human rights issues found nationally and internationally. In other words, the challenges faced in the Winnipeg elementary school classroom can also be found between nations on a much larger scale. If young

students are entering into a school system that has been described by teachers as a “lack upon lack” environment, the question must be asked is *why*? If teachers are experiencing a lack of power or an inability to influence these challenges, there are consequences (Keltner, 2016). These challenges need to be addressed in a collaborative way. A systems approach is necessary to address these challenges and institutional support is necessary.

Hardy (2005) observed that community is a necessary ingredient in feeling a sense of belonging, connection, and purpose. Human beings derive their sense of identity from their community. Teachers described not having the adequate knowledge or education to meet the challenges that they faced in the Winnipeg elementary school context. Based on the challenges and complexities of their everyday work, additional teacher education is important. Conflict and its resolution, conflict transformation, trauma-informed care, ethic of care, mindfulness, and violence intervention and prevention may be some areas of focus for teacher education programs. Developing an understanding of power relations is imperative. Creative solutions such as the arts and storytelling also need deep consideration.

Samantha Powers (2013) identified that apathy, indifference or lack of emotion is the biggest threat to human rights. The discussion of human rights can be a rational, scholarly discourse without emotional appeal (Schultz, 2013). Human rights cannot manifest without emotion (Schultz, 2013). Teachers, because of their daily work, are witnesses to inequality. Teachers are negotiating and navigating these inequalities because of their connection to their students.

Structural violence and the lens of institutional ethnography

Conflict analysis and resolution require that actors and parties are identified. In the context of Winnipeg elementary schools, it is difficult to fully understand what the conflict is. For example, who are the conflicting parties? What are the issues, objective means and conflict-handling objectives (Sandole, 2003)? This is a social conflict. For this reason, the teachers’ experiences through the lens of structural violence, which Galtung (1969) described as unequal access to power and unequal life chances is useful. Structural violence emerges from the unequal distribution of power and resources from the structure itself.

The teacher participants in this study were mindful of assessment, assessment practices and the communication of assessment. Teachers strongly shared the importance of learning and skill building. However, teachers voiced a strong disconnect between the learning process and the documentation that reflects this learning. Throughout the interviews, all the teachers

acknowledged and mentioned the mandatory curriculum and report cards. Participants voiced frustration with assessment and the sharing of assessment. Participants used words such as “data driven,” and cited that there was “too much time” spent on documentation. For this reason, the Grade 1-6 Manitoba Provincial Report Card requires further consideration (see Appendix E). An analysis of the data through the lens of institutional ethnography which would examine how the conduct of people’s lives are coordinated in relation to the ruling ideology could be beneficial (Campbell & Gregor, 2002).

The participants in this study are working within a structure. Structures are perpetuated because of the way people act and participate (Charmaz, 2006). People live their lives in a web of social complexities that need to be understood (Campbell, 2016). Campbell (2016) observed that understanding ruling relations allows for a better way to examine the mysterious coordination of people’s lives and their lived experiences. Canadian sociologist Dorothy Smith (2005) argued that researchers may begin with their own everyday experiences as being problematic.

The origins of the institutional ethnography approach are anchored in the women’s movement (Campbell, 2016). For many years, women were omitted from intellectual, political, and cultural life. Women’s experiences were internalized and there was no language for their experience. Smith (2005) advocated for people to speak directly from their own experience. Thus, the context is critical. As noted by Campbell and Gregor (2002), “Learning how people’s lives are organized outside their own knowledge and control makes it possible to understand domination and subordination” (p. 61). Accordingly, institutional ethnography allows for examination across boundaries and how they are being played out in the present moment. In other words, Institutional ethnography seeks to understand the conditions of oppression and power relations. Specifically, institutional ethnography is interested in institutional relations of power. At the heart of institutional ethnography is a greater understanding of social relations.

The notions of the power narrative and ruling relations are an important part of deepening an understanding of this research with teachers. Kolb (2004) argued in favour of paying attention to the micro-processes that construct human relationships in the workplace. Standpoint theory discusses the position of people who are subordinated in society. Smith’s (2005) institutional ethnography advocates for understanding lived experiences from different standpoints. For example, Smith’s (2005) research showed the persistent reproduction of gender

relations in schools. According to her, schools are a critical piece of the institutional processes for the different allocation of agency for masculinity and femininity.

Institutional ethnographers are interested in making social linkages between policies, mechanisms, procedures, and decision making. Smith wanted to understand conditions of oppression and power relations, and she was interested in institutional relations of power. Her work specifically highlighted texts and the power that texts have over everyday relations. “Texts and their activation constitute definite forms of social relations between people involved. Mapping those relations allows analysts to identify how things are organized, how people’s lives are ruled” (Campbell & Gregor, 2002, p. 34). The Grade 1-6 Report Card is a well-known public document published by the Manitoba provincial government that deserves further investigation.

The second lesson: Life-giving processes- enduring power and human rights

When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves. (Frankl, 1984)

Participants in this study shared practices, processes and strategies used in their classrooms that were within their control. In other words, these practices and strategies revealed teachers’ agency and power. Teachers highlighted strategies and pedagogy that expanded the understanding of elementary education. The strategies were strength based, humanizing and empowering. The strategies and processes identified by teachers were compatible with nurturing resilience (Unger, 2015) and building community (Perry, 2021). Further, the strategies were based on empathy, a willingness to understand, define and respond to other experiences (Goleman, 1995). These processes were congruent with enduring power (Keltner, 2016).

Individual agency: Voice, creativity and play, multiple intelligences and diverse perspectives

Including the lived experiences of people is humanizing. Promoting and acknowledging students and inviting students to import their lived experiences into the classroom invites young people to be active participants in their own education. In other words, rather than becoming objectified, they are recognized for their own individual lived experiences. The participants of this study all identified that listening to student voice was critical to the success of their teaching.

This finding was consistent with Julie Hyde’s (2021) research, which explored the school experiences of young people in Winnipeg’s inner city and stressed the importance of engaging

young people as active agents in society. Creativity and play are the languages of children (Siegel, 2011). Teachers highlighted the importance of reaching academic levels in areas such as reading and math, but also stressed the importance of a holistic view of education that included the arts and creative ways to show and participate in the experience of learning.

All the teachers also stressed the importance of valuing multiple intelligences and including perspectives and knowledge systems. Participants described the importance of respecting, embracing, and celebrating differences. They stressed that listening is an important practice. Validating student's strengths is essential. Two participants described teaching as an "art." They suggested looking at the school system as a long-range process where students are exposed to teachers with different strengths, interests, and passions. In other words, teaching cannot be overly prescribed. Teachers are a collection of people with different skills and interests. It is important to move beyond prescribed practices that prioritize specific skills and perspectives. These observations are consistent with Marc Kuly's (2021) research, *Walking Between Worlds: The Stories Inner City Adults Tell About Schools*, in which Kuly used a storytelling methodology to elicit narratives from his study participants. What he found was that despite successful high school graduation, for the most part school was not a place where these adults felt valued, acknowledged and recognized.

People's lived experiences are at the heart of conflict transformation and building positive peace (Lederach, 2010). The colonial relationship between adults and children is another important contribution to fostering peaceful relations (Lombardo & Polonko, 2015). Children are not passive, but active agents in building a culture of peace. Educational spaces have an abundant opportunity for generating new questions, creativity, resistance, and transformation (Bajaj, 2015). Contact between people is important, and meaningful contact creates new attitudes towards one another (Byrne, 2015). Teachers are uniquely positioned to navigate this contact.

Historically, schools have followed a "banking style of education" where information was deposited into young learners by teachers (Freire, 2012). Lederach (1995) has described that prescriptive processes can be helpful, such as mastering specific techniques, trainer/teacher as expert and participants take on knowledge. Prescriptive models can be helpful in providing ideas as well as skills and moving participants towards application. This approach takes little time to teach methods and accomplish goals. The question must be asked, are these prescriptive processes sustainable for supporting the development of the whole child?

Social and emotional needs and mindfulness

In Western culture, the desire to see, hear and speak no evil is alive and well. Social and emotional needs are also sought simultaneously and are a necessary consideration. Learning social skills and checking in with emotion and emotional regulation is practiced in Winnipeg early years education. However, with the challenges of limited human resources and limited individual time with students, it is unclear how effective teachers can respond to and listen to the emotions of their students. If connection, cooperation and empathy are related to emotion, this must be critical to consider (Goleman, 1995). It has been said that apathy is the biggest detriment to human rights (Power, 2013).

All teachers identified the practice of mindfulness as part of their daily programming. Various mindfulness programs and apps were mentioned, including “MindUP ” (MindUp, 2022), “Smiling Mind” (Smiling Mind, 2022), “Go Noodle” (GoNoodle, 2022), and “Positive Kid Yoga” (Positive Kid Yoga, 2022). Mindfulness is being used in classrooms as a tool to promote self-regulation. This emotional self-management is also connected to empathy and an ability to manage one’s own state while holding a space for another (Goleman, 1995). Teachers identified mindfulness as an important tool for everyday life. Interestingly, teachers did not identify the ways that they had been trained in mindfulness. Accordingly, the area of mindfulness education could be a potential learning opportunity for teachers. *Hearts and Minds*, is one such organization that offers teachers various resources and programs to bring mindfulness into the classroom (Hearts and Minds, 2022).

If lack of care is positioned as the largest threat to human rights, emotional intelligence including self-regulation, needs to be examined in promoting positive peace. Teaching tolerance, addressing fear, and understanding identity are all vital implications for education (Parks, 2010). Miriam Greenspan (2004) identified that “as we become more aware of our own dark emotions and able to tolerate them, we become more aware of the suffering of others and more empathetic. We loosen the constrictions of isolated pain. We open our hearts to the world. We grow in compassion” (p. 145). Kuly’s (2021) research highlighted the importance of individual teachers who had a positive influence on students by making them feel recognized and appreciated. Kuly observed, “The feelings resulted in a trust based on the work teachers did to show their allegiance with the participants, work which often fell outside of what would be considered normal teaching responsibilities. The presence of these human factors within the school system provided the essential supports for the participants to find a path to graduation” (p. 237).

Growth mindset

Having a growth mindset was identified as important by all participants in this study. All the teachers interviewed expressed that with practice, focus and work children can grow and learn. The growth mindset supports students by fostering belief and confidence in themselves. Having a growth mindset allows students to be vulnerable and work through a fear of learning. It is also humanizing and recognizes human potential.

A growth mindset is not historically consistent with the individualistic, competitive values associated with capitalism (Freire, 2012). Participation in the national and world economy has typically involved competition and profit motives (Schellenberg, 1996). The vulnerability of learning is in direct contrast to the dominant discourses embedded in capitalism's need to "have the right answer" or "meet outcomes consistently." In contrast, a growth mindset sees learning as a process that should benefit all students. To work through challenges and learning challenges, people must work together (Fisher et al., 2011). It is important to go soft on the people and hard on the problem.

School leadership

School administration is a major consideration in early years education. Trust, empathy, an ability to listen, creativity, consistency, humour, working through difficult conversations, and confidence were some of the ingredients that teachers respected in a school leader. These attributes were developed because of their experiences with their school administration. One teacher shared her experience with an inspiring administrator who consistently worked to maintain the dignity of all people—teachers, students and parents alike. All the teachers highlighted that school leadership was impactful for all people in a school. Clarity of vision for a school was also shared as being of critical importance to teachers' daily practice and work with children.

This study did not focus on educational leadership. However, educational leaders are in a position of influence and power. Teachers identified educational leadership as important and impactful. Role models are critical (Tait, 1996). Like all humans, teachers are always in the process of becoming (Freire, 2005). Teachers affect the world around them by conscious transformation of their reality and their consciousness of it. Freire recognized that authentic reflection considers people in relation with the world. Authentic thought and action require simultaneously reflecting on ourselves and the world without dichotomizing this reflection. Transformation of our living reality requires an examination of power. Leaders must understand

that to dominate is to deny true praxis, the right to say our own words and think our own thoughts (Freire, 2012).

Teachers are negotiating their social environment by adopting specific strategies. These strategies are humanizing and recognize the knowledge and dignity of people. They address social problems and are consistent with advocacy for human dignity and resisting inequality. Teachers are attempting to address human rights issues outside of the judicial system. This is a radical paradigm shift which is aligned with building a culture of positive peace.

The third lesson: Our relationships and building a culture of peace

The eyes of the future are looking back at us and they are praying for us to see beyond our own time. They are kneeling with hands clasped that we might act with restraint, that we might leave room for the life that is destined to come. To protect what is wild is to protect what is gentle. Perhaps the wildness we fear is the pause between our own heartbeats, the silent space that says we live only by grace. Wilderness lives by this same grace. Wild mercy is in our hands. (Williams, 2002, p. 215)

The central finding of this study was the importance of relationships. The concept of relationship was woven throughout all the participant interviews. Relationships were identified as the fundamental building block for Winnipeg elementary school teachers. Building relationships with children involved trust building, time, and collaboration. The theme of relationships shifted from working with challenges and strategies to being with people. Shared power, honest dialogue, boundaries, respect and reciprocity are all prerequisites to healthy relationships (Freire, 2012). Building good relationships is the key ingredient to keeping people healthy and happy (Vaillant, 2012). It is also the central tenet of building a culture of peace (Boulding, 2000).

There is a dynamic interplay of individual, family, community, and societal forces that affect relationships and behaviour (Hardy, 2005). Hardy observed that people can be devalued in a situational context by being disrespected or a societal context of becoming dehumanized. Socially marginalized groups are denied access to power and experience devaluation. Dehumanization is deeply impactful for not only those whose humanity is taken, but also those who rob another of their humanity (Freire, 2012). Furthermore, disruption and erosion of community leave people more vulnerable to the trauma of devaluation (Hardy, 2005). Counteracting devaluation and restoring primary, extended and cultural communities need to be acknowledged and made part of the public discourse. The elementary school teachers in this study described the challenges they faced in their work, including security, trauma and lack upon

lack of resources. These challenges are dehumanizing. Marginalization and vulnerable people need acknowledgment and action.

Conflict transformation is based on creating an environment which generates respectful processes and seeks increased truth, justice, and healing relationships (Lederach, 1995). Conflict transformation promotes a redefinition of expertise and power. People are the resources and participate in the naming and transfer of knowledge (Lederach, 1995). People need to be positioned to work together on problems (Fisher et al., 2011). This approach can be criticized due to the amount of time and commitment involved in the process (Lederach, 1995). However, Lederach noted that taking time to develop mutual understanding and relationship is essential to positive peace. To maximize creative innovation and development to learning and seeking` solutions, respecting and seeking what is present first is empowering and essential.

Trust building

The centrality of caring relationships and trust building was pivotal to teachers. Teachers identified that trust could be built by being emotionally responsive and caring towards students along with maintaining predictable routines. Teachers expressed their wanting to know and understand their students in a genuine way and described their everyday work to connect with their students and create a safe space for young students to feel “at home.” Routine and structure bring a predictable pattern to the day which brings a sense of calm for young children. Flexibility and being responsive to student needs also helped to support trust building.

Trust building and the anatomy of trust could be a vast and complex study on its own. Teachers in this study shared the importance of building trust with their students along with the importance of being trusted themselves. Moving a little deeper into the role of trust in elementary education, it would be interesting to examine the role of trust through the lens of cultural and structural violence. For example, what role does trust play if teachers are participating in a system that perpetuates inequality? Do teachers need to rethink their participation in the current school system that could build more trust?

Time

All the participants in this study acknowledged time as important. The teachers held a long-term view of relationships and also acknowledged students’ past relationships as imperative. Early years teachers are hoping to plant seeds for lifelong success, and the participants in this study wanted to contribute to their students’ lifelong success. The teachers

described rewarding experiences for themselves when a former student let them know they had a positive impact in their life. Parental and family involvement in early years education is of central importance. Parents and guardians are the adults responsible for their child's care, and when families and schools work together it benefits everyone.

According to Byrne and Senehi (2009), "it is important to pay attention to the origins, development, and life cycle of conflict as well as the factors that lead to conflict escalation and de-escalation, and the attitudes, behaviors, situations, goals, and values that influence individuals' interaction and intervention style" (p. 9). In developing an understanding of conflict, conflict resolution and the range of interventions and applications, time becomes an important consideration. It is necessary to understand past patterning to develop an appreciation for life at the present moment and to build a shared future. In developing an understanding of social reproduction, the impact of social inequality over generations is reflected in lived experience. Historically, as observed by MacLeod (2009), the social position in which we are born greatly impacts our "success" within structures. The present moment is infused with the past and affects the future. Expanding time to beyond the present moment allows for broader, critical questions to be asked. Through a postmodernist lens, how can this power narrative be deconstructed (Foucault, 1977)?

Time is an interesting consideration. In Western culture, the saying "time is money" is heard often. Directiveness and immediacy are preferred strategies as they speak to an issue of time. However, Augsburger (1992) observed that for many cultures, time is people. Within this view, people need time for adjustment, accommodation, and acceptance to emerge. As a result, the pressure around time is not only removed but people are encouraged to *take their time*.

Collaboration

Teachers identified collaboration as highly valuable. Cooperation is also the goal of all mediation and conflict resolution processes (Augsburger, 1992). While dealing with the challenges that they face, Winnipeg elementary school teachers shared that collaborative, supportive colleagues are essential to their work. Collaboration results in shared resources and support. Learning from each other and the ability to be vulnerable supported a culture of collaboration.

It was interesting that teachers highlighted collaboration and working together as critical to their job. Conflict is tension between the "same" and "other" (Tuso, 2015). Tuso noted that human beings can dehumanize others to elevate themselves. Human beings want to satisfy their

need to be important and this is not isolated to one culture. For teachers, this could be related to job security. Traditional peacemaking practices are the oldest form of conflict resolution (Augsburger, 1992). Perhaps the greatest strength of traditional mediation practices involves the building of social relationships. Traditional societies assume solidarity and build sanctions to preserve patterns of social processes (Augsburger, 1992). Collaboration is necessary for solidarity.

Relationship to self: Self-care

Self-worth and agency are necessary for sharing power and creating healthy relationships (Freire, 2012). Although the theme of relationship was an overarching finding of this study, none of the teachers mentioned self-care. In other words, teachers did not acknowledge their own needs. School leaders were noted as being supportive in identifying and promoting teachers' needs. Teachers must identify their own needs and must be able to voice them safely.

After she realized the inadequate voices of women in theory, psychologist Carol Gilligan promoted an ethics of care, in which she advocated for the need of responsiveness in relationship. According to Gilligan, the highest levels of moral development include balance of care for self and others (morality of nonviolence). This is a level above care and responsibility for others. Self-care is a critical consideration for teachers—perhaps it is possible for teachers to move beyond care and responsibility for others to balance self-care and care for others.

Through a feminist lens, teaching early years education has been work that is typically associated with women. Indeed, in this study, all but one of the teacher participants were women. Historically, women's movements have allowed women to have stronger voices. Women have fought to oppose patriarchy and strive for a just society. They have been asking for a redistribution of culture for equality and equity. There is a documented connection between women's rights and oppressed nationalities (Tuso, 2015).

It is important to highlight that all but one of the participants in this study were women. Augsburger (1992) observed that to be a woman speaks to generations of patterns of conflict suppression. However, from the woman's movement, seven liberating themes emerged, including 1) a new consciousness, 2) a new accountability, 3) rejecting violence, 4) equal opportunity, 5) progress, 6) triumph, and 7) solidarity (p. 181). Women have been outsiders to many of the world's political and economic processes (Augsburger, 1992). For this reason,

women offer a unique and valuable perspective to both the fields of peace and conflict studies and education.

Teacher Voice: Social Change- A Radical Paradigm Shift and a Focus on the Interest of Human Dignity and Human Rights

When properly understood, synergy is the highest activity in all life—the true test and manifestation of all of the other habits put together. The highest forms of synergy focus...unique human endowments, the motive of win-win, and the skills of empathic communication on the toughest challenges we face in life. What results is almost miraculous. We create new alternatives—something that wasn't there before. (Covey, 2004, p. 274)

The participants in this study outlined the tremendous, overwhelming challenges that they face in Winnipeg elementary school classrooms. In their everyday work, the main challenges teachers listed included the lack of security (including physical violence and trauma), lack of basic resources, lack of human resources, lack of time, lack of technology, lack of boundaries, lack of being heard, lack of training, and unsupportive and unmotivated colleagues. They also cited a deep frustration with assessment processes in early years education.

These challenges highlight an environment drained of recognizing human needs and human rights. These challenges are dehumanizing and not unlike the macro challenges seen on the wider world stage. To what degree do teachers have the capacity to act and respond to these challenges? Teachers have individual agency, and this is important. The teachers in this study recounted acts such as supplying food and technology for students in need. However, are such acts by individual teachers sustainable? As much as teachers may care, caring alone is not going to solve the challenges. Human rights and equality can be embedded into every day, micro practice (Dutta et al., 2016).

According to the UNDP's (2014) Human Development Report, "when people act collectively, they marshal their individual capabilities and choices to overcome threats, and their combined resilience deepens development progress and makes it more sustainable" (p. 29). As Reardon (1995) acknowledged, the framework of human rights applies a standard of justice to the human experience. Responding to human rights issues and advocating for the dignity and value of all people, decreases division and allows for the opportunity to work towards global challenges such as climate change (Grayling, 2022).

Teachers are finding influence and power in acting in the interest of human dignity. Teachers shared empowering, humanizing strategies that are supportive of their everyday work. These included the importance of recognizing individual agency (voice, creativity, and play), working with multiple intelligences and different perspectives, taking social and emotional needs into account, working with a growth mindset, and the pivotal importance of strong and wise educational leadership. These strategies all supported students in bringing their lived experiences into the classroom context.

If identity is lodged in the narrative about how people see themselves, what narrative are people telling themselves about education? In Western society, the education of young children is deemed as valuable and connected to life chances. Attachment to ideas can lead to competitive processes (Palmer, 2007). Arguably, however, as demonstrated by the teachers in this study, education is rooted in recognition, safety, and dignity. These are identity issues that need to be dealt with directly (Kreisberg, 2003). Promoting a culture of peace and peace processes is an everyday endeavor (Boulding 2000). Power relations are always at play (Keltner, 2016). Teachers are important participants and stakeholders in the education system who are uniquely positioned as they work directly with these power dynamics with young people. Teachers, collectively are in a position to support the framework of human rights.

Teachers are navigating a social conflict. They are in connection with students and can be impacted by their stories. Investigating the challenges that teachers face, along with the strategies that were supportive of their everyday work, revealed the deep significance of power. Teachers indicated that they had influence in empathic, humanizing practices. Rather than objectifying or dehumanizing students, teachers found power in validating and recognizing their students. Rather than division, relationships based on trust, time, and collaboration was expressed.

Teachers are seeking a radical reformulation of power that resists dehumanization, devaluation and division in favor of humanization, validation and relationship building. This radical reformulation of power could be framed as an unarticulated form of non-violent resistance. Teachers are seeking to resist the dehumanization of their students and the social divisions that impact their students. If processes work by dividing and objectifying people, teachers and their daily work and processes are part of the leadership in social change. Teachers are reconstructing the power narrative based on humanization, validation and relationship building. Promoting human rights is in everyone's interest.

The Connection to Peace and Conflict Studies

This study was based on the subjective realities of twelve Winnipeg elementary school teachers. There was data saturation as the teacher participants response became predictable. Although they share the importance of learning new skills, the participants did not discuss test scores and educational rankings. They highlighted the immense challenges they face every day and over which they lack control. They also shared the successful strategies and processes they use in their work with children in the classroom.

Teachers have highlighted three lessons which include the role of elementary education in deconstructing violence while promoting a culture of peace based in collaboration and empathy. At the heart of this study, teachers revealed that humanization, empathic processes and relationship building are key. The search for a greater understanding of relationships is also at the core of conflict transformation (Lederach, 1997). Honest dialogue and personal stories grounded in lived experience are essential.

Children living in Winnipeg face current and urgent human rights issues. The inequalities faced by Indigenous children, refugee children, LGBTQ2 children, and children living in poverty were highlighted in this study. If conflict is to be transformed, it must be brought into “a public context, thereby entering the public transcript and impacting shared knowledge” (Senehi, 2009, p. 211). Respecting people and their knowledge are of critical importance. Expertise and knowledge can be an invaluable resource to others (Lederach, 1995). People are resources. Cooperation is essential. Lederach (1995) observed that long lasting and sustainable peace requires individuals or groups to identify the power within themselves.

Relationship is primary in understanding a system (Lederach, 1997). Human beings need to deal with each other in relationships. According to Lederach (1995), this shift towards relationship redefines both expertise and power as people participate in the naming and transfer of knowledge. Building relationships can create a new and shared reality based on trust and mutual empowerment (Lederach, 1997). There is nothing more real or concrete in the world than humans being with humans (Freire, 2012). Revolutionary transformation of our world requires human relations and dialogue. Teachers identified that building relationships was foundational to their work.

In revisiting the field of conflict analysis and resolution over the last twenty years, Byrne and Senehi (2009) noted that there has been a “bold quantum leap forward as a three-dimensional mosaic of scholars and practitioners throughout the world with a constellation of

ideas and diversity of approaches, disciplinary roots and topic areas” (p. 525). However, there are still challenges in the field, such as multiculturalism within unity, the need for local Indigenous cultures and knowledge to be taken into account, the process of authentic dialogue, and ecological security. Other areas such as storytelling, the creative arts and cultural production have great potential in creating positive peace (Byrne & Senehi, 2009).

This research joins a mosaic of peace and conflict scholars including Laura Reimer (2013), Sandra Krahn (2021), Pauline Tennent (2021), Julie Hyde (2021) and Marc Kuly (2021) who have explored education in the Manitoba and Canadian school contexts. Hyde (2021) advocated that the school context is complex and requires deep analysis. Kuly (2021) identified that teachers have made a positive impact on students and warned that inclusive language in schools can mask actions that exclude people. Laura Reimer’s (2013) research used Lederach’s conflict transformational framework which identifies relationship as fundamental.

According to Lederach (1997), proactive change is only possible with vision of a shared future as well as an understanding and response to current realities and crises. He noted that developing an infrastructure for peace building is similar to preparing the architectural design of a house. It is not the final design, but rather the central categories of design which allow for the variety of contexts and situations. We need institutions that are rich in information. Community consultation is key. Building a culture of peace takes time and daily practice.

Schools can divide people, which leads to inequality and unequal access to resources. (Boulding, 2000). Meaningful contact creates new attitudes towards each other (Byrne, 2015). Hope can be found in the form of social learning. Boulding (2000) drew attention to the ways that individuals, families, and social institutions have the capacity to learn about the interdependence of all living things. The challenge is to draw upon hopes, learning skills, relationship-building, networking, and coalition-forming skills. The strategies teachers have shared can contribute to growing a culture of peace.

The narratives of the participants of this study illuminated challenges and effective strategies in their work. A follow-up study could include the use of institutional ethnography to further explore ruling relations and power in the school setting. Moving beyond this study, it could be important to examine the perspectives of additional stakeholders in Winnipeg elementary education, including parents, students and administrators. As shown by the field of peacebuilding, integrated problem-solving, and collaborative problem-solving processes are useful.

This study asked how Winnipeg elementary school teachers think about and define their everyday work, from their own perspective. Foucault (1972) identified that power relations are encoded in language. Filtering the data through Peace and Conflict theory introduces new language to elementary educational spaces which helps to more fully describe the lived experiences of these teacher participants. Teachers described their interests as being connected to humanizing practices which speak to human dignity. Teachers described processes connected to enduring power (Keltner, 2016). In this light, teachers are supporting the reconstruction of the power narrative from an outdated narrative which highlighted manipulation, might, force, competition and gain. For teachers, the framework of human rights can serve as a standard of justice.

Limitations of the Study

Through the collection and analysis of extensive qualitative data, there was a strong body of evidence to answer the research question. The teacher participants in this study reflected a high degree of consensus on the challenges of the elementary education system along with prescriptions for what was working and what needed to be changed. However, the teacher participants in this study also shared their experiences with unsupportive teacher colleagues along with teacher colleagues who seemed to favor competition over collaboration, which demonstrates that teachers have different viewpoints. It is unclear what constraints these alternate voices might make on attempts to reform or change the education system.

This was an exploratory study. This study was not a representative sample of elementary school teachers. For example, it could be that teachers who felt more critical of their situation were drawn to participate in a research project on teachers. Further research is needed to learn how teachers as a population think about these issues. For example, a survey that is shared with all Grade 1-3 Winnipeg elementary school teachers. This study is seen as a starting point that could be useful in preparing such a survey and clarifying key issues to be further explored.

Conclusion

This study revealed three lessons. First, Winnipeg teachers are facing tremendous challenges that mimic the challenges found globally between nations. The lack-upon-lack environment described by these elementary school teachers highlighted a responsibility to help

meet basic human needs and protect human rights. These challenges and the structural systems that underpin them need to be addressed. Second, teachers employ numerous strategies that support their work. These strategies were empowering, humanizing and within teachers' influence and control. Third, relationship- building was central to teachers' everyday work. The participants cared deeply about their students. Teachers are direct participants and leaders at the forefront of the educational system. Their experience, knowledge and insight are critical, and their collective narrative must be amplified.

There is a connection between the challenges the teacher participants face and the strategies the teachers find supportive of their work. In fact, the challenges and strategies come together very clearly. While the challenges were dehumanizing (violence, trauma, lack upon lack of resources), the strategies being negotiated by the teachers were humanizing (student voice, including multiple intelligences and perspectives, social and emotional needs). Rather than engaging students from a deficit perspective, teachers were advocating for a growth mindset along with recognizing and validating students. Finally, rather than creating division, teachers identified that relationship building was foundational to their everyday work.

Importantly, the teachers' strategies—that is, finding some influence and empowerment in humanization, validation and relationship building—are in their control. They are not in a position to immediately address social and institution structures. These efforts and strategies by teachers can be seen as a form of resistance to what is arguably a context of social violence. While a world safe for children and children's human rights are protected by the Charter of Rights and Freedom, the fact is that young people grow up in Canada in a context characterized by racism, sexism, homophobia, and other bases of discrimination, as well as poverty and even increasing precarity. In Canada, there is also the legacy of colonialism, neocolonialism and the devastating harms caused by residential schools; moving away from these social conditions to a true reconciliation and social justice will be a long-term process. Teachers have identified and acknowledged challenges in their everyday lives and are balancing the violation of these challenges with humanizing practices. They are seeking justice in their everyday work, outside of the legal system.

Power exists in every relationship, and elementary school teachers are not excluded from this power dynamic. Teasing out the lessons learned in this study revealed a close and broad examination of areas of their work where teachers believe they have influence, and areas where they do not, from their unique context. Dasher Keltner (2016) challenged the power narrative. If

power in the 21st century is connected to empathy rather than dominance, teachers are finding tremendous strategies to leverage power in their contexts. Teachers are advocating for a reformulation of the power narrative that is based on humanization, recognition and relationship building. Compassionate empathy is a necessary ingredient to promoting and protecting human rights (Hunt, 2007). The challenges such as “lack upon lack” of resources need to be addressed in a collaborative, sustainable and systemic way.

Keltner (2016) observed that profound social change begins with shifting how individuals understand the world. He noted that enduring power is the product of connection and empathy. Power and empathy co-exist—they are not exclusive or incongruous. In this light, power is not something to be feared. The broader narratives of the teacher participants in this study shine a light on power and control. Teachers are finding power in inclusive strategies that are humanizing and based on compassionate empathy. These humanizing strategies are essential to human rights. Teachers collective work could help shift the dominant power narrative in educational thought and perhaps beyond.

Next Steps and Recommendations

The findings reflect the way that complex dynamics in the school system, and, perhaps more so, the complex social injustice and adversities in society affect young people’s daily lives and affect the elementary school environment. These dynamics all lead to a working life where teachers are under enormous pressure to meet the demands of their jobs while lacking a number of required supports.

Teachers are navigating a complexity of relationships, not only with students, but also with numerous school colleagues, administrators, parents and communities. It is not clear how to change such complex social and organizational structures through specific schools or governmental societies. Also, there are already so many policies that often result in a kind of muscle-bound situation, and which can take the agency away from individual teachers.

What is needed is a radical paradigm shift in the following ways:

1. Further research is necessary. This study is not a representative sample. Based on the findings of this study, a further study in the form of a questionnaire to all Winnipeg teachers could confirm the seriousness of the challenges identified in this study.

2. Centering the wellbeing and knowledge of elementary school teachers by providing support, which could happen in many forms: for example, smaller class sizes; regular professional development, perhaps combined with sabbaticals; setting boundaries around when and how parents interact with teachers; ensuring teachers' physical and emotional safety, including their moral distress. Most importantly, this would mean teachers having a much more significant voice in the education system: for example, the freedom including the time and space to critically analyze their work and workplaces without retribution; the opportunity to share innovative ideas, perhaps in research collaborations with faculties of education; and to have a more formal voice or role in policymaking and leadership at the divisional and school level using processes developed by teachers.

3. Awareness and acknowledgment of the role of power and conflict in shaping the educational system and teachers' daily lives, which could happen in many ways: for example, a more public and mainstream examination how power relations shape the education system, students' lives, and teaching beyond what is now relegated to critical education theory; teacher training in peace and conflict theory that includes theory and practice about conflict resolution and also about cultural conflict, violence, and power.

4. Awareness and acknowledgment of the importance of relationships between teachers and students, the school and families, school boards and communities. Again, this could be done in many ways: for example, considering how assessment is done and curriculum development.

Teachers are finding power in humanizing practices to resist the societal challenges that they face. These humanizing practices are resisting systems of oppression and dehumanization. This is within the teacher's influence and control. Teachers are seeking a radical paradigm shift which reconstructs the power narrative.

However, structural change is essential. Building processes in schools to support equity, opportunity, human rights and dignity must be constructed. Teacher's caring is not enough; it must have an avenue and be supported by collective action and processes. Elementary school

teachers need the time and opportunity to cast a critical lens on their own teaching experiences. The solidarity of teachers advocating for and navigating the elementary school context to address inequalities and promote human rights must be prioritized.

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APPENDICES



Appendix A: Social Media Poster

Peace and Conflict Studies
Graduate Program
“Social Media Poster”

252 St. Paul’s College
70 Dysart Road, University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, MB R3T 2N2 Canada
Phone: 204.474-8894 Fax: 204.474.8828

*Hi, my name is Jennifer Bell. I am a PhD Candidate in Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Manitoba. I am currently conducting research for my PhD thesis and would like to learn more about how Winnipeg Grade 1-3 school teacher's think about and define their everyday work. Please contact me if you would like to participate. Participation involves a 60-minute interview **via Zoom**.*

Thanks very much, I look forward to discussing this further with you.

This research study has been approved by the University of Manitoba Joint-Faculty Research Ethic Board.

Appendix B: Letter of Introduction/Email to Teachers



Peace and Conflict Studies
Graduate Programs

252 St. Paul's College
70 Dysart Road, University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, MB R3T 2N2 Canada
Phone: 204.474-8894 Fax: 204.474.8828

Letter of Introduction/Email to Teachers

Dear Teachers,

*I am a PhD Candidate in Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Manitoba. I am interested in learning more about how Grade 1-3 teachers think about and define their everyday work. Early years teachers are a critical part of the educational system, and this research is seen as an opportunity for teachers to reflect on their practice. This research will seek to learn from teachers' views, insights, perspectives, ideas, and practices. Participation in the study will involve one **60 minute** Zoom interview.*

I hope that you will think about participating in this research study. If you're interested, please contact me and I will give you more information about exactly what is involved, and you can still change your mind at that time. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me so I can answer these for you. You can contact me at 204-xxx-xxxx or bellj349@myumanitoba.ca. You could also contact my research supervisor: Dr. Jessica Senehi Associate Professor Peace and Conflict Studies, Arthur V. Mauro Centre for Peace and Justice, Saint Paul's College at 204-474-7978 or Jessica.Senehi@umanitoba.ca. This research study has been approved by the University of Manitoba Joint-Faculty Research Ethic Board.

Thank you for considering this request and this opportunity to contribute to our understanding of how teacher's think about and define their everyday work.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Bell

Appendix C: Consent Form



Peace and Conflict Studies
Graduate Programs

252 St. Paul's College
70 Dysart Road, University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, MB R3T 2N2 Canada
Phone: 204.474-8894 Fax: 204.474.8828

Consent form

Research Project Title: Walking Through Data: How Winnipeg Inner City Elementary School Teacher's Think About and Define Their Everyday Work

Principal Investigator and contact information: Jennifer Bell, PhD Candidate Peace and Conflict Studies, 70 Dysart Road, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, MB Canada R3T 2M6; email: bellj349@myumanitoba.ca

Research Supervisor (if applicable) and contact information: Dr. Jessica Senehi, Associate Professor, Peace And Conflict Studies, 70 Dysart Rd., University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, MB Canada R3T 2M6 Phone 204-474-7879; email: Jessica.Senehi@umanitoba.ca

Sponsor (if applicable): N/A

This consent form, a copy of which will be left for you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

1. Purpose of the Research

This study seeks to understand how Winnipeg Grade 1-3 elementary school teacher's think about and define their everyday work. Teachers are frontline workers in our educational system.

Speaking with Frontline workers to learn their perspectives and insights can help our children become what they are capable of becoming and maximize their potential. Participants in this study will be 12-24 Winnipeg inner-city elementary school teachers. Participants will vary in gender, educational background, work experience, ethnicity and race. *Participants will not be under the age of 18 years.*

2. A Description of the Procedures

As part of your participation in the study, you are requested to participate in one, one hour zoom interview. The interview will be an informal conversation that involves questions about your experiences and perspectives working in a Winnipeg elementary school. The interview will be audio recorded so that the researcher can transcribe answers accurately. However, if you are uncomfortable with being audio recorded, the researcher will write your responses to each question and review your answers with you. If allowed to proceed with voice recording, the researcher will be transcribing the interviews from the audio recorder. The researcher may also take notes during the interview process. These notes will jog the researcher's memory regarding information that you shared with the researcher during the interview that needs further clarification or exploration through probing questions. Following the interview, a transcription of your interview will be sent to you for review and feedback within 72 hours by email. Please note that your quotes will be used in the final analysis. You are required to send your revised copy to the researcher within 72 hours. If no revision is required, please inform accordingly by email or phone whichever works best for you within 72 hours.

3. A Description of any Recording Device to be Used.

Participant one-on-one Zoom interview sessions will be recorded using an audio recorder for accuracy. A digital audio recording device will be used for Zoom interviews. If the participant chooses not to be audio recorded, the researcher will write the participant's responses and will review them with the participant for accuracy.

4. Benefits

This project is intended to be a positive experience for those participating. It is an opportunity to speak about your work including successes and challenges in your job. Your knowledge will be used to help the researcher and others who read the final report to learn about how teacher's think about and define their everyday work.

5. Potential risk

There is minimal risk to participants in the study. *Risks are no greater than in everyday life.* Participants will not be evaluated on their teaching, as the purpose of the study is to evaluate participants views on teaching. Therefore, participant comments regarding any problems or difficulties are welcomed. Further, there may be benefits to participants as their experience will contribute to a greater understanding.

6. Confidentiality

Please note that every possibility will be taken to ensure confidentiality. To protect the confidentiality of all participants your name and identity will not be used in the recordings or transcription, reports, dissertation, presentation, or publications; a pseudonym will be used instead. Your name, email, and phone number will be kept on the researcher's computer in a locked password-protected file. All audio recorded information will be kept in a locked drawer for up to 72 hours and then it will be deleted immediately following that transcription. The researcher will be the only transcriber of the recordings; and the researcher is bounded by the principle of confidentiality. All written information relating to the study including consent and confidentiality forms will be kept in a locked drawer in an office desk at the researcher's home. All electronic documents relating to the study will be in a locked password-protected folder on the researcher's computer. *Electronic data will be encrypted.* All electronic correspondence including emails will be deleted once read. All hardcopy information will be destroyed five years after completion of the study. *The researcher's advisor must have access to all data.*

Participant confidentiality will further be maintained as participants will have an opportunity, to review transcribed interview. This should allow Participants to feel comfortable sharing their experiences without worrying that the information provided could be attributed to them or could negatively impact them in the future.

7. Remuneration

No final compensation will be provided for participation in the study.

8. Voluntary Withdrawal

Participation in the study is voluntary. You have the right to refuse to participate in a study. You also have the right to discontinue participation in the study any time during the research process or by June 1, 2020 by telling the researcher your wish to stop in person, by phone or by email.

There will be no negative consequences for withdrawing from the study. Once informed of your wish to withdraw, the researcher will destroy all audio recorded interviews, transcriptions, and signed forms. If you choose to participate and you are asked questions during the interview that you choose not to answer, you can still participate. If you initially chose to have the interviews recorded and you change your mind during the process, the audio recordings will be stopped. If you choose to withdraw at this time. You may ask to erase the recordings of your interview.

9. Feedback/Debriefing

At the end of the interview, we will have a brief conversation about your thoughts about the interview and you can ask questions about the interview or the study. *Participants will have an opportunity to read their transcriptions if they so choose. Feedback must be received by July 15th, 2020. This is the process by which participants will approve quotes.*

10. Dissemination

The information gathered during the course of these interviews, including, with your permission quotes from our conversations, will be used for the researcher's PhD thesis. A final report will be written for the participants. Further publication of the results may be in peer reviewed academic publications. All publications of the results will maintain your confidentiality.

11. Distribution of Summary of Results

Within one year of this conversation, the researcher will provide the participant with a brief on the project at their request indicating general findings. The data collected for the research study will be completed approximately by June 1, 2019, After which the researcher will be analyzing the data and providing the participants with a 1 to 3 page summary of the results by July 15th, 2020. Participants will be given one week to review the summary of the results and provide feedback by July 22, 2020. Results from the study will be described in the researchers final written dissertation, and in journal publications, policy briefings, and conferences. At your request the researcher will also notify you about any publications that arise from the study. The researchers dissertation will eventually appear in MSpace. Participants will find the link at [https:// mspace.lib.umanitoba.ca/](https://mspace.lib.umanitoba.ca/).

12. Confidential Data

All audio recordings will be deleted within 24 hours of transcription. Transcription, field notes and other information from and pertaining to participants will be destroyed (computer files deleted, and paper files will be shredded) five years after the date of completion of the study, *October 15, 2020*.

Please indicate if you wish to receive a summary of the findings? Yes () No ()

YES, please provide an email address or instructions on how you would like to receive the notifications: _____

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researcher, sponsors, or involved institution from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification on new information throughout your participation.

The University of Manitoba may look at your research records to see that the research is being done in a safe and proper way.

This research has been approved by the University of Manitoba Joint-Faculty Research Ethic Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project, you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator at 204-474-7122; email: *humanethics@umanitoba.ca*. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

Participant's Signature _____ Date _____

Researcher and/or Delegates Signature _____ Date _____

Appendix D: Semi Structured Interview Questions



Peace and Conflict Studies
Graduate Programs

252 St. Paul's College
70 Dysart Road, University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, MB R3T 2N2 Canada
Phone: 204.474-8894 Fax: 204.474.8828

Semi Structured Interview Questions

Research Title: “Walking Through Data: How Winnipeg Elementary School Teacher’s Think About and Define Their Everyday Work”

*Before the interview begins, participants will be asked not to mention specific individuals other than themselves. They will be asked to talk in general terms.

1. How are things going for you? How has COVID-19 affected you?
2. Can you tell me about your typical workday? What do you do?
 - What are your goals?
 - What is your dream for what you are trying to do?
3. What in your work do you feel the most good about?
 - Can you tell me more about that?
 - Can you give an example?
4. What are some of the challenges in your work?
5. What do you think teachers need to be supported in their work?
 - How would this make a difference?
6. Is there something that happened that gets at what teaching means to you?
7. How are you finding the interview? Are there any questions that I should have asked?
8. Why did you go into teaching? Have your thoughts on teaching changed?

Appendix E: Manitoba Grade 1 to 6 Report Card

[division name] Grades 1 to 6 Report Card



[school name]

Grade Report Card	Student:	Provincial Student #:
	Homeroom Teacher:	Date Issued:

Attendance	Term 1	Term 2	Term 3	Total
Days Absent:				
Times Late:				

Grade Scale	Academic Achievement of Provincial Expectations	
4	Very good to excellent understanding and application of concepts and skills	
3	Good understanding and application of concepts and skills	
2	Basic understanding and application of concepts and skills	
1	Limited understanding and application of concepts and skills; see teacher comments	
ND	Does Not yet Demonstrate the required understanding and application of concepts and skills; see teacher comments	
Additional Codes	NA	Not Applicable
	IN	Incomplete: not enough evidence available to determine a grade at this time

The following codes are used if the expectations for a student are different from the grade-level curriculum in a subject.	
EAL (English as an Additional Language)	Achievement is based on expectations that focus on English language learning.
IEP (Individual Education Plan)	Achievement is based on expectations that reflect special learning needs.

English Language Arts		Teacher:		
<input type="checkbox"/> EAL <input type="checkbox"/> IEP		Term 1	Term 2	Final
Comprehension	Reading			
	Listening and viewing			
Communication	Writing			
	Speaking and representing			
Critical thinking				
Comments:				

Mathematics		Teacher:		
<input type="checkbox"/> EAL <input type="checkbox"/> IEP		Term 1	Term 2	Final
Knowledge and understanding				
Mental math and estimation				
Problem solving				
Comments:				

Science		Teacher:		
<input type="checkbox"/> EAL <input type="checkbox"/> IEP		Term 1	Term 2	Final
Knowledge and understanding				
Scientific inquiry process				
Design process and problem solving				
Comments:				

Social Studies		Teacher:		
<input type="checkbox"/> EAL <input type="checkbox"/> IEP		Term 1	Term 2	Final
Knowledge and understanding				
Research and communication				
Critical thinking and citizenship				
Comments:				

[Arts subject]		Teacher:		
<input type="checkbox"/> EAL <input type="checkbox"/> IEP		Term 1	Term 2	Final
[Category]				
[Category]				
[Category]				
[Category]				
Comments:				
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 10px auto; width: fit-content;"> <p>For detailed information concerning reporting on the Arts subjects, please refer to the <i>Manitoba Provincial Report Card Policy and Guidelines</i> document at www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/assess/report_cards/index.html</p> </div>				

Physical and Health Education		Teacher:		
<input type="checkbox"/> EAL <input type="checkbox"/> IEP		Term 1	Term 2	Final
Physical Education	Movement			
	Fitness management			
Health Education	Healthy lifestyles			
Comments:				

French		Teacher:		
<input type="checkbox"/> IEP		Term 1	Term 2	Final
Oral communication				
Reading				
Writing				
Comments:				

[Local option subject]		Teacher:		
<input type="checkbox"/> EAL <input type="checkbox"/> IEP		Term 1	Term 2	Final
[Category]				
[Category]				
[Category]				
[Category]				
Comments:				

[Multi-subject grading box]		Teacher:		
<input type="checkbox"/> EAL <input type="checkbox"/> IEP		Term 1	Term 2	Final
[Subject]				
[Subject]				
[Subject]				
[Subject]				
Comments:				

Information on the multi-subject grading box is available in the *Manitoba Provincial Report Card Policy and Guidelines* document at www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/assess/report_cards/index.html

Learning Behaviours

Scale	Descriptor
C	Consistently – almost all or all of the time
U	Usually – more than half of the time
S	Sometimes – less than half of the time
R	Rarely – almost never or never

Individual Education Plan: This code is used if behaviour ratings are based on expectations that reflect special learning needs.

Learning Behaviour	<input type="checkbox"/> IEP	Term 1	Term 2	Term 3
Personal management skills	Uses class time effectively; works independently; completes homework and assignments on time			
Active participation in learning	Participates in class activities; self-assesses; sets learning goals			
Social responsibility	Works well with others; resolves conflicts appropriately; respects self, others and the environment; contributes in a positive way to communities			
[Local option]	[Up to 2 local options may be added]			
[Local option]	[Up to 2 local options may be added]			
Comments:				

Principal's Comments

Next School Year (final report card only)

Next school year, your child will be in Grade _____.

Principal's Signature: _____