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## Editorial 2021 spring issue of *in education*

Patrick Lewis

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At this writing, here in Canada we are into month 15 of the many measures taken to curtail the spread of COVID-19; measures taken, relaxed, then stepped up and heightened, relaxed and so it has gone. There is no one who has not been affected by this pandemic in some way; this makes the second issue of our journal that sees me speaking of the pandemic in the editorial, and our spring 2020 issue was canceled because of the pandemic. That is certainly not something anyone would have imagined at the beginning of the outbreak of COVID-19. Yet, the pandemic has become very much an integral part of our daily lives no matter what it is we may take up in our everyday practices. All the measures and practices that have been implemented over the past year have influenced and shaped discourse, practice, and actions/behaviours. Many of us in the academy made that sudden shift to remote/online teaching and then dove into the reality that it was not going back to face-to-face for an indefinite period, and still, many universities will be predominantly remote teaching in autumn 2021. The radical shift in teaching method is only one aspect of the far reaching impact of the pandemic on the academy. So many things have had to change, and in the process have brought much to light to bear on aspects that may not have been noticed or attended to prepandemic.

The academy has been significantly impacted by the pandemic and has had to make changes and will continue to make changes even as vaccines roll out and many universities begin to implement their return-to-work/campus plans for staff, faculty, and students over the coming months and year. Like many other things across society, the university is unlikely to return to “normal” practices postpandemic, our structures and practices have shown that we need to address the many inequities and poor practices of inclusion that we are so fond of heralding. And of course, there has been the issue of money; the pandemic certainly has impacted the bottom line of most universities. Universities are, and will be, scrambling to take up and implement more remote and online programs as well as restructuring how facilities are utilized and how and where employees work. If nothing else the pandemic caused universities to take measures that in many cases brought to the fore structural budget problems that were not so easily noticed prepandemic; universities will have to come to terms with these and many other issues if they are to continue to thrive.

Throughout this period many academics impacted by the pandemic in many different ways have been trying to work away at ongoing research projects or try to figure out how to launch new projects during the pandemic with new layers of precautions, protocols, and routines. Conferences were at first cancelled then retooled as online virtual events, and folks continued to try to write and publish, while journals like ours staggered on trying to find reviewers for articles and authors managed to submit works for consideration. Submitting articles to journals or monographs to publishers seemed to be one of a handful of things academics could grasp on that presented as somewhat familiar and unchanged during the pandemic. But that is not very accurate because everything was impacted; the ability of folks to volunteer to review, the unevenness with which academics’ writing has been impacted by the pandemic, and folks who work at journals did not go unscathed by it all. Yet, in spite of all this here we are with another issue of *in education*, thanks to our many reviewers, managing editor, associate editors, our

consulting editors, and of course all the authors who chose to share their work through *in education*.

This issue will appeal to a many folks as there is a very interesting cross section of work represented within these digital pages. Please dive in and take a look around; we are certain you will be intrigued by many of the works held in this issue.

Take care and keep well,

—Patrick

# Curriculum Integration and the Forgotten Indigenous Students: Reflecting on Métis Teachers' Experiences

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## Abstract

Curriculum integration, or in other words, changing what students are taught within racially desegregated Canadian schools, has served as a primary but incomplete pathway to racial justice. In this paper, I present evidence from a qualitative critical race theory (CRT) methodological study with 13 Métis teachers to demonstrate how curricular integration has been framed as a key solution to inequitable outcomes concerning Indigenous students. This strategy has been instilled within the Saskatchewan K–12 education system by a wide spectrum of authorities over several decades. Although absolutely essential for multiple reasons, I argue that teaching students about Indigenous knowledge systems and experiences, as well as anti-racist content, cannot resolve the systemic racial injustices encountered by Indigenous students who attend provincial schools. In particular, three CRT analytical tools—structural determinism, anti-essentialism, and interest convergence—are utilized to examine the limitations of curricular integration as a strategy of racial justice.

*Keywords:* Métis teachers; Indigenous education; critical race theory; integrated schools



IN  
EDUCATION

## Curriculum Integration and the Forgotten Indigenous Students: Reflecting on Métis Teachers' Experiences

In his book, *And We Are Not Saved: The Elusive Quest for Racial Justice*, Derrick Bell (1987) discussed the dangers of taking a narrow view for school-based racial integration. To introduce his argument, Bell told a fictional counter-story entitled, "Neither Separate Schools nor Mixed Schools: The Chronicle of the Sacrificed Black Schoolchildren," which is a tale about the first day of American desegregated schooling in a community where White families and, for different reasons, some Black families had opposed student integration. In spite of community trepidation, desegregation policies proceeded and the first day of racially integrated schools finally arrived. On that first day of integrated schooling, however, to the horror of Black families, all the Black schoolchildren disappeared. At first, many White community members felt the disappearance was "for the best" given the presumed dismal conditions in which Black children lived, the assumed inability of Black students to compete with White students, and the belief that Black students would diminish the status of schools attended previously only by White students. Once White community members and school authorities grasped what would be lost without the Black students, such as funding and employment opportunities stipulated for integrated schools, increased effort was put into locating the children. Sadly though, soon enough, "all the community came to realize the tragedy's lamentable lesson. In the monumental desegregation struggle, the intended beneficiaries had been forgotten long before they were lost" (Bell, 1987, p. 107).

Bell (1987) told this allegorical counter-story to stress how the American 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* school desegregation law, a monumental civil rights achievement, did not lead to the desired outcomes. As critical race theory scholars have argued, the physical integration of Black and White students did not eliminate the White supremacist foundations of the American education system (Irvine, 1988; Leigh, 2003; Taeuber, 1990). While Black segregated schools were underfunded, under-resourced, and lacking credentials afforded to White schools, the schools were also governed by Black authorities and teachers who determined the curriculum and invited parental input. Further, Black students did learn about Black history and culture in segregated schools. Conversely, American state school integration policies did not ensure that Black children would receive quality care, nor a meaningful, rigorous, and equitable education. Therefore, although Black civil rights advocates and communities had fought for and demanded desegregation, racially integrated schools did not protect Black students from institutionalized racism.

Furthermore, White citizens benefitted from numerous school integration policies. Integration policies enabled White authorities to close Black, not White, segregated schools, to demote Black administrators, replace Black teachers with White teachers, and force Black students to bus to White communities, which often resulted in White residents fleeing to predominately White communities (Irvine, 1988; Taeuber, 1990). In addition, resources were not distributed equitably within schools and Black parents and professionals were not consulted (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Taylor, 1999). As a result, Black students were moved from Black segregated schools to endure racist learning and social environments and a White normative curriculum taught primarily by White teachers who systemically held racist beliefs (Ladson-Billings, 2011). In this way, as Bell (1987) explained, the interests of Black students were lost or "disappeared" in the pursuit of desegregation.

Bell (1987) did not argue for a return to segregated schooling. Instead, his work revealed why comprehensive racial justice cannot be achieved in racist societies through restrictive or narrow approaches. Mandating the physical integration of racialized student bodies could not lead to racial justice because it is in the interests of even well-meaning White citizens to ensure racial equality remains elusive—as observed by Bell (1987). Marked by the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* case and the 1961 Affirmative Action ruling, the civil rights movement did improve the socio-economic standing of African Americans for nearly two decades, but poverty and unemployment reached levels higher than those prior to the *Brown* decision by the 1980s (Bell, 1980; Freeman, 1988; Hardwick, 1991). Gains achieved by civil rights litigation, including school desegregation laws, have, therefore, not led to the anticipated results but rather, through numerous systemic means have consolidated advantaged onto White citizens (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

Inspired by Bell's (1987) analysis, I argue that mandating Indigenous curricular integration within desegregated Saskatchewan schools has also not led to the desired outcomes and, as such, broader institutional and systemic approaches are needed. Indigenous—First Nations, Inuit and Métis—and non-Indigenous students in Canada are no longer separated through historical racist policies of segregated schools, yet the subordination of Indigenous students enrolled in, and attempting to attend, provincial K–12 integrated schools persists. The primary pathway proposed to counter this subordination, however, has remained almost exclusively fixated on what and how students are taught even as racial inequities endure. To present this argument, I center Métis people and Saskatchewan schools. First, I outline a brief historical review of Métis experiences with Saskatchewan schools. I then present qualitative evidence from a critical race methodological study with 13 Métis teachers to demonstrate how the provincial curriculum remains a pressing focal point when considering racism within Saskatchewan desegregated schools. To conclude, I extend my argument to discuss why curricular integration on its own is an incomplete solution to transcending institutionalized racism and colonial hierarchies within education systems.

### **Saskatchewan Métis Experiences**

The Canadian government recognized Métis as Indigenous people officially in the 1982 Constitution Act under section 35(2). Noting ongoing debates regarding Métis citizenship and identity criteria, scholars agree that Saskatchewan Métis communities originated from the expansion of the fur trade into Western Canada from the late 1700s until the late 1800s (Chartrand, 2006; Macdougall, 2012). Because Canada's historical economy depended on the fur trade, unions between primarily British, French, and Scottish men and First Nations women were for a time encouraged by colonial governments (Van Kirk, 1980) and such unions led to culturally distinct Métis/Michif communities (Macdougall, 2012). Unlike Indigenous peoples, such as First Nations and Inuit who were constructed as racially pure, however, in-line with racial ideologies of the time (Young, 1995), British and French colonial, and later Canadian, officials constructed Métis as mixed-race. The presumed biological and moral innate inferiority of so-called mixed-race people was authorized through scientific racism and Western institutions until after World War II (Willinsky, 1998) and, in Canada, were used to legitimize the oppression of Métis people. Thus, colonial imposed practices of dispossession and terror, of which Métis resisted diplomatically and through military force, were sanctioned by the racialization of Métis as mixed-race.

Racialization processes occurring throughout Saskatchewan's history have shaped the formal educational experiences of Métis families beginning with fur trade company schools. Littlejohn (2006) explained that Métis and First Nations children could attend Hudson Bay Company (HBC) schools from the 1820s until 1869 when the HBC sold Rupert's Land to the Government of Canada. The HBC schools were run by missionaries who sought to "civilize" half-breeds and First Nation children to encourage HBC employee commitment. Missionary schools excluded parental input, and thus "parents had no say in how the schools were administered or what the curriculum would include" (Chartrand, 2006, p. 15). Furthermore, "the non-participation of parents in the education system left children vulnerable when emotional and physical abuse occurred or when students were exposed to incompetent teachers" (Chartrand, 2006, p. 16).

In 1870, after the HBC sold Rupert's Land to Canada and as Canada negotiated numbered treaties with First Nations as a strategic colonial strategy to secure access to, and control of, land and resources, education policy concerning Métis and First Nations children took different directions. The Federal Government gained control of HBC missionary schools and thereafter funded only First Nations students as promised in treaty negotiations and legalized in the 1876 Indian Act. Although some Métis children attended Federal residential schools with First Nations students in the newly formed North West Territories, Métis students were often considered outsiders (Chartrand, Logan & Daniels, 2006). In addition, because the Federal government would not fund Métis students, Métis families were forced to pay for their children to attend residential schools and often only Métis children deemed "uncivilized" or who spoke Indigenous languages were accepted for enrollment (Littlejohn, 2013). Eventually, residential schools only accepted Métis students when First Nation student enrollment quotas were not filled (Littlejohn, 2006).

While several Métis communities established schools and school boards beginning in the late 1800s, such positions of authority were displaced with the gradual arrival of White settlers after 1905 (Littlejohn, 2013). Barriers to provincial schools attended by White settler children, however, also existed as the schools were "funded through local property taxes. Since most of the Métis parents lived in road allowances or Crown lands, they did not pay taxes" (Littlejohn, 2006, p. 73). Therefore, Métis who did not pay property taxes were not eligible to send their children to provincial schools with White settler families. In addition, White provincial schools in southern Saskatchewan often refused to admit Métis students. Barron (1990) explained, "Native parents had been discouraged from sending their children to schools. The excuse commonly cited was that Native children represented a health hazard, a fact under-scored in a 1943 school report...In reality, the health issue was little more than a smoke-screen for racial and class prejudice" (p. 246). Consequently, some Métis families who could identify as White did so to avoid racial persecution and gain access to provincial schools as well as other institutions.

Métis exclusion from provincial schools continued until the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) was elected in 1944 and took direct action through multiple policies (Anuik, 2010). The CCF's political move mirrored the 1950s national desegregation policies which culminated in the gradual closure of residential schools. In spite of the turn toward racially integrated provincial schools, Métis students, like Black American students after the 1954 *Brown* decision, continued to experience inequitable K-12 outcomes. Ensuring all Métis students have access to quality provincial education has remained a long and pressing necessity. For example, CCF Métis education programs in northern Saskatchewan were rarely successful and throughout

Saskatchewan Métis students were provided a modified education. In the 1970s, a three-part plan was implemented by the Saskatchewan government to study “the ‘deficiencies’ of Métis learners and their families; investments in schools; and solicitation of evidence-based expert opinions from teachers and scholars on effective pedagogy and curriculum for Métis learners” (Anuik, 2010, p. 83). Such policies were grounded in racist ideology that viewed Métis families as problems that could be “fixed.” Métis students have been excluded from, or forced to attend often racially hostile, integrated schools that have yet to lead to socio-economic prosperity on par with the White Saskatchewan population. Yet, throughout each stage of segregation and integration, Métis have resisted oppressive conditions and fought for equitable and culturally affirming education.

### **Critiques of Cultural Integration**

Responding to inequitable outcomes derived from racist school policies and practices such as those experienced by Métis students, calls to Indigenize educational curricula within integrated schools have been championed by Provincial and Federal Governments. This activism has been brought to the forefront of policy discussions by Indigenous leaders, scholars, and educators and has led to multiple progressive culturally responsive provincial Indigenous education policies. In particular, in 1989 the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education directed all teachers to integrate Indigenous content across subject areas and grade levels and in 2010 Treaty education was mandated. Although the 1989 directive was not enforced initially, multiple supplementary Ministry documents have since been released and school divisions and teacher education programs across the province, in varying capacities, now aim to prepare all teachers to meet this goal. Increasingly, First Nations, and to a lesser extent Métis/Michif, language programs and cultural initiatives have been integrated within Saskatchewan school divisions.

According to Lentin (2005), Indigenous peoples’ demands for culturally responsive education as a primary solution to educational racial inequality can be traced to the United Nations’ Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization’s (UNESCO) *The Race Question*. Released in 1956, after WWII, *The Race Question* featured renowned scientists who disavowed two centuries of institutionalized scientific racism. Since this time, as Lentin (2005) argued, “the culturalist approach epitomized by the UNESCO tradition has dominated ideas about how to interpret and propose solutions to racism in the post-war western world” (p. 389). Lentin (2005) further explained,

Culturally based explanations of human difference and culturalist solutions to racism emerged out of an elite project, piloted by the United Nations and legitimized by renowned academics. To blame the racialized for the culturalization of politics and the resultant depoliticization of anti-racism is to misunderstand the origins of the culturalist project and to disregard the choice often faced by black and “minority ethnic” anti-racists, from the 1980s on, between adopting the language of multiculturalism or ceasing to be socially and politically engaged. (p. 390)

Lentin’s argument holds true in Saskatchewan where Métis demands for provincial funding were upheld in the late 1970s, which led to an apparent strategic turning away from Métis critiques of White supremacy and colonialism, such as those of Howard Adams, in the 1980s. With this shift in policy, a gentler cultural integration discourse took precedence. For example, the Métis grassroots political activism magazine *New Breed* called for radical transformation and Métis rights, often challenging racism, throughout the 1970s (Bird-Wilson, 2011). The tone of *New*

*Breed*, and Métis activism in general, changed considerably—toward a language of cultural revitalization—with provincial government funding stipulated to Métis organizations in the 1980s, even as Métis injustices endured.

At the same time, White society in general did not immediately accept even a liberal cultural approach to integration within Saskatchewan schools. Indeed, cultural education as a solution to racial inequity in K–12 schools has slowly, over the past few decades, gained legitimacy and acceptance within Saskatchewan’s White population. Noting this acceptance as a positive step forward, but also the marginal change occurring through cultural integration initiatives, beginning in the mid-2000s anti-racist Indigenous education scholars published critiques of cultural education in Saskatchewan schools (Comeau, 2005; Gebhard, 2017; McCreary, 2011; St. Denis, 2004; 2007; 2009; 2011). Building on Canadian and American anti-racist theory, critiques of cultural education deconstruct discourse that situates cultural differences rather than racism as the cause of racial inequities.

Critiques of cultural education, therefore, also contest the assumption that equitable K–12 outcomes can be achieved when Indigenous students are taught their cultural identity or learn in culturally affirming environments. Leonardo (2014) argued that “culturally relevant education for students of colour, which is defined as one that resonates with and is sympathetic to their meaning systems, by itself is not enough [to achieve racial justice], especially if it happens within broader conditions of racial inequality” (p. 35). Moreover, strengthening Indigenous students’ sense of identity does “little to ensure that white teachers will view their [Indigenous] pupils as capable of the same level of achievement and range of desires as their white students” (Razack, 1989, p. 9).

As Yosso (2005) noted, “Race is often coded as ‘cultural difference’ in schools” (p. 175). In this way, teachers argue it is not the biological racial deficits of students that act as barriers to success—as this would be viewed as racist—but rather the culture of non-White students prevents academic achievement. Ladson-Billings (2006) further explained that deficit thinking is embedded within “cultural difference” language, arguing: “[Teachers] use it with authority as one of the primary explanations for everything from school failure to problems with behavior management and discipline” (p. 106). This is certainly the case in Saskatchewan where culturally responsive discourse remains prevalent as an accepted strategy of equity and decolonization. Yet, graduation rates have changed little in spite of this discourse stressed within multiple Ministry and division policy papers over several decades. Furthermore, as the findings of this study suggest, Indigenous curricular integration itself has not materialized at wide-scale systemic levels.

### **Gathering Data**

A qualitative critical race methodological (CRM) study with 13 Métis Saskatchewan teachers informed the findings. CRM is grounded in critical race theory (CRT) and was selected to frame this research with Métis teachers because it explicitly names White supremacy as endemic and values the experiential knowledge of racially oppressed people. Furthermore, CRM works to uncover and challenge racialization processes in institutions such as K–12 education systems. Originating from rich multifaceted intellectual histories of resistance to White supremacy and colonialism, critical race theory emerged from American legal scholars of colour and White allies in the 1980s in response to the arrested success of civil rights movements (Bell, 1992).

CRT materialized as legal scholars examined the limitations of civil rights litigation and was first applied to the field of education with Ladson-Billings and Tate's (1995) seminal work.

Within critical race methodology, research methods and analyses must align with particular CRT tenets (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005). First, CRT asserts that racism and White supremacy are endemic to society. Skepticism of liberalism is the second CRT tenet and includes critiques of race neutrality, colour-blindness, individualism, meritocracy, and post-racialism. Acceptance of racially oppressed peoples' experiential knowledge or counter-stories as valid and legitimate is a third CRT tenet. Fourth, CRT necessitates that research is situated within a "history of racial subordination" (Parker, 1998, p. 45) and thus critiques ahistorical analyses. Fifth, CRT scholars assert that racial justice can and must counter all systems of intersecting oppression. And last, CRT is necessarily interdisciplinary by embracing various theories that further the cause of racial justice in specific contexts. Critical race methodology also requires that the research is situated in CRT through the use of CRT analytic tools. In this study, structural determinism, anti-essentialism, and interest convergence are utilized to analyze the findings.

I used the snowball method (Marshall & Rossman, 2011) to recruit Métis teacher participants who accepted an invitation that stated clearly the intent of this critical race research. Nine of the participants can pass as White and four are visibly Indigenous with darker skin tones. All of the participants identify openly as Métis and ranged from beginning teachers to those with decades of experience. Each participant answered a series of questions regarding their experiences with racism as K–12 students and teachers. To gather robust data, I interviewed each participant for approximately 90 minutes using the conversational method (Kovach, 2010). I self-located with participants as a Métis anti-racist educator and explained the purpose and intention of the research from my subjective position. Data were analyzed using an iterative approach and NVivo software until primary themes were identified through memoing (Charmaz, 2006) and systematic procedures including open, axial, and selective coding (Boeije, 2010; Saldana, 2009).

## **The Findings**

The following section has arisen from a larger study in which I examined Saskatchewan Métis teachers' experiences with racism. Uncovered through the research, Métis teachers' school-based experiences are shaped intergenerationally by unique histories of institutionalized colonial processes including Saskatchewan's segregated and integrated schools. The findings presented are, therefore, situated within historical patterns of racism—the ideological system that upholds and normalizes colonialism, systemic racial violence and inequities, and White supremacy. For the purpose of this paper, I present four primary themes identified within the 13 Métis teacher participants' discussions concerning barriers to teaching Indigenous knowledge, history, and experiences, as well as anti-racist education to K–12 students.

### **Barriers to Curricular Integration**

When answering the question, "Please tell me some stories about how you have experienced and witnessed racism as a teacher," the participants' answers varied but included a wide spectrum of examples. In general, even those teachers who could pass as White held critical perspectives or a partial awareness of racism as systemic, connected to historical colonization processes, and benefitting White identified citizens. While the participants were able to name multiple ways in which racism disadvantages Indigenous students, the importance of teaching

meaningful Indigenous culture, decolonized history, and anti-racism content was stressed repeatedly as key to challenging racial inequities.

In general, the participants were not taught about Indigenous people, knowledge, nor experiences when they attended Saskatchewan K–12 schools. While some graduated from provincial high schools in the early 2000s and others as early as three decades prior, each participant shared similar experiences with limited Indigenous classroom content. Some remembered learning about Indigenous culture through indirect inferences, such as the following:

I recall when I was in Grade 6 or 7 ... We went snowshoeing, we cooked out on the open fire, and things like that. I sort of felt that I identified with it. But, I don't recall anything specifically being taught about First Nation or Métis in the schools. (P11)<sup>1</sup>

Other participants recalled being taught superficial dehumanizing messages such as, “In elementary school, they had the alphabet on the wall. I remember [for the letter] ‘I’ they had a picture of a headdress and it said Indian” (P7). Several participants remembered being taught about “Louis Riel the traitor ... back when words like ‘savage’ were very prominent in textbooks ... and so the slant on history was very [racist]” (P8). Participants who did not grow up knowing they were Métis but knew they were Indigenous, due to historical colonial processes, found the limited Indigenous content they were taught contributed to a false identity. One participant explained, “I had an Aboriginal teacher in Grade 4 and we sang this song in Cree and I remember thinking, ‘I think I am Cree’” (P9).

Indigenous Studies while attending high school was also not an option for most of the participants. As one participant recalled: “I don't remember any of it [until my sibling took it], so 2011 was the first time they offered Indigenous Studies” (P1). While some participants did learn about Indigenous history, this content was not presented through an anti-racist lens as described by another participant:

We watched a video on the Beothuk and their extinction, and we had to answer a question, was it genocide? And that started my thinking. I didn't have the word colonization. I didn't have that knowledge yet, but it started my thinking that there was some injustice inflicted on people when Europeans started to come over. (P5)

More meaningful decolonized content taught by some teachers rarely focussed on Métis peoples as “there wasn't much of a Métis focus in Native Studies in high school” (P6).

Given the participants as students were generally not taught Indigenous content, and that curricular integration is stressed at every level of the K–12 system as a primary means in which to increase Indigenous student graduation rates, barriers to curricular integration were recurring themes in the data. Specifically, four themes were identified: individual teachers who refuse to teach Indigenous content, fractured approaches to Indigenous curricular integration, the objectification of Métis teachers as cultural experts, and systemic fear of anti-racism education.

### ***Refusal of Individual Teachers***

Overall, the participants acknowledged that Indigenous education is prioritized to a greater degree than when they attended K–12 schools and some participants had worked at schools where Indigenous curricular integration was embraced. Participants in general, however,

also spoke about encounters with teachers who chose not to integrate Indigenous knowledge and experiences. As one participant stressed, “Even though the curriculum has changed ... I really question if it is being taught in all the schools in all the classrooms and why not, yet it is mandated” (P11). One reason why curricular integration has not been realized fully, according to the data, is that “there’s a little bit of push back to the expectation and [teachers] are feeling like they are being harped on that they have to [integrate Indigenous content]” (P3). For example, one participant witnessed a high school administrator state, “Province-wide results [on standardized Treaty teachings] were awful [and] reserves’ results were awful ... If [First Nations students] don’t know it, why should we have to know it, why should we have to teach it” (P5). In the same way, another participant commented, “With teaching Treaties in the classroom as a requirement, you see a lot more uneasiness about who [teachers] are when it comes to non-Aboriginal teachers” (P7). Consequently, mandating Indigenous curricular integration has been perceived by some teachers as infringing on the rights of individual teachers. This finding is congruent with research that has examined White teachers within multiple contexts (Castagno, 2009; Stoll, 2014; Vaught, 2012).

Moreover, according to the interviews, some White teachers perceive the act of Indigenous curricular integration as a special right granted to Indigenous students denied to other students. For instance, participants stressed that White teachers have argued, “Why are we even doing all this [First Nations, Métis, and Inuit] stuff anyway, why are we talking about the Native students all the time?” (P10). As another participant stated, “There were teachers and educational assistants who thought we should not just focus on Aboriginal students because we had kids from Burma and all over the place” (P8). Another participant shared a story about teaching at a school that values Cree knowledge systems, saying, “[A teacher at a staff meeting] was saying why would we have a Cree influenced value system when there are so many other cultures?” (P12). Fortunately, at this particular school, a majority of the staff rejected this teacher’s position, but this was not reported as common by most of the participants. Rather, the data indicates that schools continue overwhelmingly to operate as White normative spaces and teachers can choose to disregard Indigenous curricular outcomes and provincial mandates at their discretion.

### ***Objectifying Métis Teachers***

Barriers to Indigenous curricular integration was also identified through the Métis teachers’ experiences of being positioned as cultural experts. One participant shared,

I have felt that everyone’s shoulder tapping me for something because “we need an Aboriginal person for this thing.” I also have often felt that I am being used to tick a box. I have actually once said, you know what, I am just myself and I do not represent all Aboriginal people, I don’t represent all Métis people. (P10)

This finding is replicated in research with other racialized teacher populations who reported feeling pressure to act as cultural resources for White colleagues and to sit on numerous committees as cultural representatives (Jay, 2009; Reid & Santoro, 2006; St. Denis, 2010).

Another participant who worked with a school division’s Indigenous education unit had been told, “Well you are working with the brown team so you clearly have some sort of Aboriginal in you, so you must speak Cree and you must know this and you must know this.” (P9). The expectation that all teachers must teach Indigenous content thus often falls upon the

small number of Indigenous teachers who are objectified through pan-Indigenization or assumptions that Indigenous teachers must know everything about all Indigenous people. Indigenous teachers then face pressure to provide culturally relevant support to White teachers—who comprise approximately 90% of the provincial teaching force—without financial compensation. The data indicates that Indigenous teachers are often asked to find culturally appropriate resources and build relationships with Indigenous students and communities on behalf of White teachers. Such requests are made regardless of the Indigenous teacher’s cultural identity. One Métis teacher described,

I have to be the First Nation person because if anyone wants to know anything First Nations, they come to me and I don’t know. So, I have to educate myself, right? So, of course I have to do pow wow too, so I have singers and drummers. (P6)

At the same time, many participants felt a responsibility as one of a few Indigenous or the only Métis teacher on staff to ensure Indigenous content is taught to students.

### ***Fractured Approaches***

Another barrier to curricular integration, according to the data, occurs through fractured approaches when teachers pick and choose various lessons about Indigenous people but do not provide substantial comprehensive knowledge. Fractured approaches include tokenistic or surface level instruction. According to most of the Métis teachers I interviewed, when teachers do teach Indigenous content, this practice is often reduced, perhaps unintentionally, to tokenism as has been found in studies within varying racialized contexts (Chandler, 2009; Hollingworth, 2009; St. Denis, 2010). For instance, one participant stressed,

These new math textbooks that have the odd question thrown in about, “Denise is part of a traditional singing group, she is making a new drum, the circumference is this, calculate how much hide she is going to need.” Give me a break. (P10)

As such, participants underlined a need to teach students about Indigenous culture, history, and rights in more meaningful, decolonized ways.

Fractured approaches also include non-threatening lessons and field trips that serve to comfort or entertain non-Indigenous teachers and students. For instance, as one teacher shared, “No one really wants to know who [we] are—they want to be able to say, oh this is delightful” (P2). Another participant explained, “We do the dance and cultural stuff really well. Do we do the historical identity piece as much, maybe not” (P1). As another participant stressed,

We want to talk about the values and the medicine wheel, and we do smudging and run a drumming group, so we want those positive things but we are not talking about colonialism and figuring it out and making sure everyone understands. (P12)

Thus, culture becomes entertainment through approaches that advance only certain knowledge. For instance, “The sweats that [schools] have and pow wows are all First Nations events and I think First Nations are a little more exotic than Métis and get a little more press and excitement” (P3).

Consequently, fractured approaches were identified as adversely impacting Métis education. One participant expressed frustration, saying, “Treaties are mandatory, well what’s mandatory for Métis history? Our Métis communities have been really fighting for that for a long

time. So how is it even possible that it's still left out? (P1). Another participant pointed out, "It is frustrating but confusing to me that we focus on Treaty 6 and Cree culture. That makes sense to an extent but then we also have Métis kids and our Métis population" (P9). Embracing the responsibility to teach Métis culture, the participants also explained how "sometimes you have to veer away from your curriculum a bit and make sure that when kids pass through your classroom, they pass through gaining the knowledge of the history of Aboriginal people in this country" (P8). In general, the participants emphasized a need to interrupt fractured approaches to Indigenous curricular integration by prioritizing anti-colonial recognition and understandings. As one participant shared, "Talking about jigging and food, [is] part of who we are, [but] there's so much more in the spirit of our people—our sense of resistance, our sense of doing what is best for our community" (P1).

### ***Fear of Anti-Racism***

Reflecting anti-racist critiques of cultural education, many of the participants stressed that while some teachers may teach anti-colonial education, even fewer teachers teach about White advantages, structural racism and intersectional oppression. As one participant explained,

[The common approach] only brings [Indigenous] people's cultural beliefs to the forefront and other people can learn from it—about the peace pipe, about pow wow, about certain ways that young people might dress in regalia for a certain dance. It doesn't bring any social action; it doesn't bring any transformation. It only brings in [that] we need to learn their history; this was their land. We need to bring that into children's mindsets, where Aboriginal people came from. We need to honor the treaties. We need to teach about residential schools. It's mandated now with the Provincial Government. But then it stops there. (P2)

Overall, most participants understood that, "in terms of doing a power analysis and looking at racism and colonization ... most [teachers] would get their backs up" (P5). Another participant reiterated, "[Racism] doesn't necessarily get looked at as much because people don't want to feel any fault or any blame" (P2). This finding is consistent with literature that exposes how the comfort of White identified teachers often takes precedence to teaching students about, and how to counter, ongoing racism (Buehler, 2012; Castagno, 2008; Yoon, 2012).

While most participants stressed that non-Indigenous students must be taught anti-racism perspectives of Indigenous experiences to achieve equity and justice, one participant specifically stressed why Indigenous students deserve to learn about racism and intersecting systems of oppression, stating, "They don't understand the system that keeps them oppressed" (P1). Furthermore, another participant who has worked with a division's Indigenous education unit explained, "Nobody, nobody has a degree in [anti-racism with the school division]. I would not feel comfortable teaching a group of adults how to properly [teach students about racism] because I don't believe that I even have the knowledge" (P9). Acknowledging curricular change has occurred, participants in general understood that "there are still hidden things in the curriculum, but it is not as blatant as it was. I don't know if you get away from it in Saskatchewan. I don't know if you get away from racism" (P8).

## **Discussion**

Anti-racist critiques of cultural education appeared to influence most of the Métis teachers I

interviewed. Reflecting on intergenerational experiences with racism in Saskatchewan schools, the participants were also able to recognize various ways in which racism disadvantages Indigenous students. Yet, how to resist and change specific racist K–12 practices and policies at an institutional level beyond curricular integration remained elusive when analyzing the data. Expanding on curricular integration is, therefore, essential in Saskatchewan for two primary reasons. First, provincial curricular integration mandates and goals have yet to materialize in most Saskatchewan classrooms in spite of multiple Ministry directives and, second, the province’s aims and goals have not led to K–12 racial equity.

That said, even if every Saskatchewan teacher integrated meaningful Indigenous knowledge, experiences and perspectives reflecting every Indigenous nation in culturally appropriate ways, *and* anti-racist teachings into every K–12 classroom, it is conceivable that inequitable student achievement could persist. Lynn and Jennings (2009) explained, “Teachers who affirm the culture of their students and fail to oppose unequal school policies or speak out against unfair social policies illustrate a kind of passiveness that is necessary for a White supremacist patriarchy to thrive” (p. 192). The following discussion extends the participants’ common experiences as Métis teachers to a broader context concerning Indigenous education and integrated schools. Three CRT analytical tools are utilized to frame the discussion: structural determinism, anti-essentialism, and interest convergence.

### **Structural Determinism**

Stated previously, in 1989 Saskatchewan directed the integration of Indigenous focused content into all K–12 schools as a response to political pressure and racially inequitable academic achievement rates. Thirty years and multiple similar policy documents later, curricular integration in Saskatchewan’s provincial schools has not led to the desired results. Nevertheless, the need to integrate meaningful and epistemologically sound Indigenous knowledge systems, languages, and pedagogies within K–12 schools continues to be stressed as a primary solution to racial inequality at a national level (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). Structural determinism is a CRT analytical tool that can assist with understanding why Indigenous education policies supported by the Ministry remain relatively unchanged in spite of a lack of progress.

Delgado and Stefancic (2012) explained that oppressive conditions are determined through recirculating pre-existing institutional language, rules, and categories that mask, distort, or minimize oppressive conditions and, therefore, predetermine specific outcomes. Exposing processes of structural determinism is a necessary process because “our system, by reason of its structure and vocabulary, is ill equipped to redress certain types of wrong” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p. 31) and thus “allow[s] the current system to replicate itself” (Tate, 1997, p. 222). This process occurs because “[education] does not merely reflect race as an external phenomenon; [education] and [educational] doctrine constitute an ideological narrative about what race and racism are” (Harris, 2002, p. 1216). As a result, as Tate (1997) argued, “One implication of structural determinism is that it limits how individuals and society at large are able to analyze and critique oppression” (p. 224). For instance, CRT legal scholar Delgado (1984) found “the twenty leading law review articles on civil rights” (p. 561) were authored by White males who cited each other. Consequently, prominent ideas and language circulated through civil rights journals determined the practices and laws deemed legitimate in civil rights litigation. In

education, as with the legal system, “whiteness is operationalized through the messages that are sent about what is fair, equal, and equitable” (Castagno, 2008, p. 323).

According to Internet and library searches, curricular integration or, in other words, changing what and how students are taught, has habitually been recirculated as fair, equal, and equitable within a majority of Indigenous education publications and provincial Ministry policy documents produced over the past three decades. Consequently, within K–12 education, “race equity has constantly to fight for legitimacy as a significant topic for education policy makers. This is a key part of the way in which education policy is implicated in [institutionalized racism and, hence,] White supremacy” (Gillborn, 2005, p. 493). The institutional focus on curricular integration as a primary solution to racial inequality has in this way structurally determined how racism is conceptualized by K–12 educators and thus countered within schools.

Reflected in the interviews I conducted with Métis teachers, challenging K–12 racism encountered by Indigenous students relies almost exclusively on changing what (and how) students are taught. According to a structural determinism analysis, the inability to meet curricular integration institutionalized goals, and the recurring focus on curriculum integration as a solution to racial injustice, leads to continued effort to meet such goals to the exclusion of other solutions. Narrow visions of racial justice are thus not caused by individuals but are structurally determined through the recirculation of institutional practices and vocabulary that limit the abilities of even advocates and allies to conceptualize and enact more effective ways to counter systemic racism.

### **Anti-Essentialism**

Anti-essentialism is another CRT analytical tool that can assist with understanding why curricular integration as a primary solution to inequity is an ineffective solution. According to Ladson-Billings (2012), “Critical race theory scholarship decried essentialism. Essentialism is a belief that all people perceived to be in a single group think, act, and believe in the same things in the same ways” (p. 40). For example, essentialist beliefs concerning Métis insist authentic identities consist of speaking Michif, being involved in community, and practicing traditional culture. Based on historical analyses, CRT scholars refute such views and defend racial and cultural identities as fluid and shifting while interacting with oppressive socio-economic processes. While the need to preserve and maintain Métis culture due to colonialism is urgent, curricular integration informed by essentialist understandings of culture can lead to fractured approaches to teaching and shoulder tapping Métis teachers, who are assumed to be cultural experts, as identified in the findings.

Essentialist notions of culture also inform false assumptions that Indigenous students cannot learn nor benefit from Western knowledge or non-Indigenous epistemologies. Consequently, it can then be argued that teaching Western knowledge to Indigenous students is an oppressive act of assimilation. Such assumptions are premised on essentialist understandings of human biology that insinuate Western knowledge somehow contaminates the supposed cultural purity of Indigenous identities which leads to student failure. Unfounded essentialist beliefs that knowledge is derived from racially pure populations and passed on biologically through innate traits, also informs teachers’ low expectations for Indigenous students. As Ladson-Billings (2006) argued, teachers are taught to perceive culture as, “that exotic element possessed by ‘minorities.’ It is what it means to be nonwhite. It is also the convenient explanation for why some students cannot achieve success in the classroom” (p. 107). When

teachers believe Indigenous students lack abilities to learn from Western knowledge systems, this can then excuse poor teaching, which leads to poor academic performance and ongoing systemic inequities. For instance, Standard English literacy is a requisite to social and material power in Canada and at a global level. Denying Indigenous students access to high-quality Standard English literacy instruction, as several Métis participants in my study experienced as children, therefore, structurally determines inequitable outcomes. This process is a continuation of historical systems such as residential schools that claimed to assimilate Indigenous students yet offered a substandard education with the goal of creating an indoctrinated and colonized working class (Littlejohn, 2006).

Furthermore, essentialist conceptions of knowledge posit all Western knowledge (or what is assumed to be originating from White Western paradigms) as oppressive and all Indigenous knowledge as purely good or benign. Such false binaries limit potential to draw from emancipatory knowledge derived from Western paradigms and to counter oppressive practices within Indigenous epistemologies. Just as it is oppressive to construct Indigenous knowledge as inferior, there is danger in constructing Western knowledge as entirely oppressive. This line of binary thinking is similar to that of White nationalists who claim all Western journalists and scientists cannot be trusted, that all Western institutions are corrupt, and that those who make inauthentic claims of non-White identities, even unknowingly, deserve public humiliation. As a result, essentialist binary approaches to Indigenous and Western knowledge curricular integration lead to fundamentalist thinking and practices (St. Denis, 2004). When considering Métis education, as highlighted in the data, this line of thinking further excludes knowledge and experiences that do not fit neatly within racial binaries such as Métis intellectual, cultural and experiential knowledge.

### **Interest Convergence**

The interest convergence principle, theorized by critical race theorist Derrick Bell, can also assist with uncovering the limitations of curricular integration in achieving racial justice. According to Bell's (1980) interest convergence principle, the rights of Indigenous, Black, and people of colour are only granted by the dominant White population when these rights converge with the interests of White citizens. Referring to the *Brown* decision, Bell (1980) argued Black Americans had fought for desegregation for 100 years, yet these demands were not considered seriously until "whites in policy making positions [were] able to see the economic and political advances at home and abroad that would follow abandonment of segregation" (p. 524). For instance, the closure of Black segregated schools presented nationwide employment opportunities for White citizens. Moreover, in America, school desegregation law converged with the interests of White society by assuming an appearance of moral authority during the cold war (Dudziak, 1998). Similarly, Raptis and Bowker's (2010) historical research has revealed Canadian school desegregation occurred largely because the federal government could no longer finance residential schools.

According to the interest convergence principle, it is practical to conceptualize racial justice strategies in ways that converge with White society's interests. Ladson-Billings (2012) explained,

We cannot expect those who control the society to make altruistic or benevolent moves towards racial justice. Instead, civil rights activists must look for ways to align the interest of the dominant group with those of racially oppressed and marginalized groups. (p. 38)

At the same time, the interest convergence principle assists with disclosing why solutions accepted by a majority of White citizens concerning what is needed to achieve justice, rarely, if ever, lead to justice. It is, therefore, imperative to consistently reassess solutions to racial injustice accepted broadly by White authorities.

Drawing from anti-racist critiques of cultural education as a solution of racial injustice, I argue that privileging curricular integration as a strategy in which to eliminate the racial injustices Indigenous students experience converges with the interests of White citizens. Although this approach has created some change and aligns with advocacy of Indigenous leaders and scholars, the approach also benefits White institutions through, for example, access to funding and employment. Millions of dollars are funneled into institutions in the name of cultural competency, cultural awareness, and decolonization through Indigenous knowledge, land-based, and language programming—funding that ultimately benefits White authorities without causing White distress.

A glaring example of interest convergence occurs at the post-secondary level when departments of educational administration do not require graduate students to complete anti-racism policy courses while preparing to become school administrators. In addition, while colleges of education in Canada have identified Indigenization as a priority, teacher candidates who exhibit racism towards Indigenous peoples through their coursework continue to graduate and teach in schools. Teacher educators, particularly Indigenous professors, however, are often reprimanded for poor course evaluations from anonymous racially hostile students (Henry & Kobayashi, 2017; Mohamed & Beagan, 2018). Furthermore, the content integration solution aligns with Bell's (1980) interest convergence principle as it suggests inequality can be countered through what K–12 students are taught, as if, somehow, educational inequities will disappear magically once students learn about Indigenous culture, language, history, and experiences with racism. The solution implies that racial justice can be achieved through changing what K–12 students are taught rather than how adults—school authorities—think and act. The solution also misleadingly suggests it is teachers—not school authorities at the highest level—who hold power to change inequitable graduation statistics and academic achievement. Pledges to Indigenization and to teach students about racism, then, in this way and others, converge with the interests of White citizens.

According to the interest convergence principle, and through processes of structural determinism reinforced by essentialist thinking, curricular integration or Indigenization remains a recurring solution to racial injustices because the solution does not infringe on White institutional power. As a result, and as one Métis teacher I interviewed emphasized, “The same issues they are talking about now were there when I graduated in 1986” (P11). It is, therefore, necessary to build on K–12 Indigenous education within integrated provincial schools. For instance, the Métis teachers in my study stressed the following specific practices that disadvantage Indigenous students:

- Racially discriminatory disciplinary actions;
- Racial profiling through academic streaming;
- Inequitable funding practices;
- Racialized hiring and promotion practices;

- A lack of or imbalance of Indigenous representation and authority;
- A lack of Indigenous and ally leadership in anti-racism education;
- Racially hostile learning environments;
- Racist assumptions about Indigenous parents;
- Teachers' fears of high Indigenous student enrollment schools;
- Informal social and extra-curricular school-based racial segregation;
- Systemic low expectations for Indigenous students; and
- Essentialist beliefs regarding Indigenous histories, perspectives, and identities.

Holding educational authorities accountable to rectify such injustices and shifting approaches when the primary beneficiaries are found not to be the most vulnerable and oppressed Indigenous students is necessary if K–12 schools are to take a comprehensive approach to racial justice.

### **Conclusion**

Indigenous knowledge systems and languages are inherent rights of Indigenous peoples and protected by federal and international law. The struggle to realize, enact, and safeguard Saskatchewan's Indigenous curricular integration policies within provincial schools, therefore, remains a pressing and consistent challenge. Furthermore, all students can benefit from the rich diversity of Indigenous knowledge systems and languages, and all students deserve to learn about, and how to challenge, colonialism, racism and intersectional oppression. At the same time, as reflected in my conversations with Métis teachers, K–12 authorities require more direct understandings of what racial justice entails beyond curricular integration and the propensity to support Indigenous students in culturally affirming ways. While barriers and resistance to teaching Indigenous knowledge and experiences, as well as anti-racist education, exist, privileging curricular integration as a primary mode of justice within integrated schools neglects the multiple and diverse racialized experiences of Indigenous K–12 students, families, and educators. Like the sacrificed Black schoolchildren in Bell's (1987) fictional story, decades of upholding curricular integration as a primary solution to racial and colonial injustices within Saskatchewan's schools has ensured the "beneficiaries were forgotten long before they were lost" (p. 107).

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<sup>1</sup> P=Participant

# Flattening the Facebook Curve: Exploring Intersections of Critical Mathematics Education with the Real, the Surreal, and the Virtual During a Global Pandemic

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## Abstract

In March 2020, near the onset of the COVID-19 related lockdowns, quarantine, and isolation measures being taken worldwide, we noticed an increasing number of graphs, diagrams, images and mathematical models relating to the pandemic posted on our Facebook walls. For the purposes of this paper, we selected a number of these Facebook posts to discuss and analyse, through the lens of questions based in critical mathematics education research. Our analyses draw attention to public discourse(s) around mathematics, as well as how numbers, graphs, diagrams, and images are used on Facebook. In our analyses, we first identify the mathematics topic/concept being depicted through the image and, second, how that Facebook post might serve as an artefact of critical mathematics education. In doing so, we challenge the usual separation of mathematics classrooms from the real world and highlight how, in this time of pandemic, life is less real than it is surreal; it is less real than it is virtual.

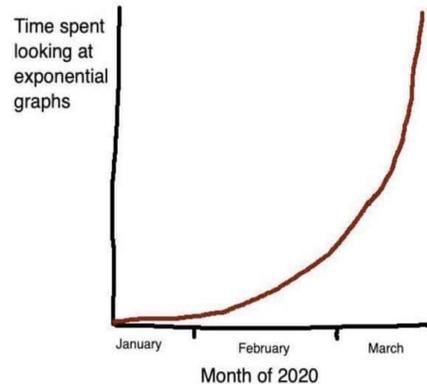
**Keywords:** mathematical modelling; real-world problems; images, critical mathematics education; mathematics and social media; virtual reality; Facebook; mathematics in society; mathematics teaching; mathematics teacher education

The logo for InEducation, featuring the letters 'IN' in a large, bold, light blue font above the word 'EDUCATION' in a smaller, bold, light blue font.

## Flattening the Facebook Curve: Exploring Intersections of Critical Mathematics Education with the Real, the Surreal, and the Virtual During a Global Pandemic

**Figure 1**

*Time Spent Looking at Exponential Graphs*



*Note.* The language and graphical representation of exponential growth (and decay) were not, until recently, present within public discourse. (Image Source: Tripathi, 2020; Posted to Twitter March 25, 2020)

Research in mathematics education reports advantages of bringing real life problems into the mathematics classroom (Liljedahl et al. 2016; Verschaffel et al., 2000). This research includes important questions posed by critical mathematics educators of what and whose real life is actually being represented in these problems (Andersson & Ravn, 2012; Skovsmose, 2001a; 2014). In any case, there is a widespread belief that students will better connect and engage with mathematics if teachers can relate the mathematics topic/curriculum, in some ways, to a student’s “real life.” At the same time, current studies show (Hidayatullah & Suprpti, 2020; Quinn, 2018) that students are excessively connected to their “virtual life”: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, Youtube and other forms of social media. It seems that, specifically in the time of the pandemic, life is less real than it is surreal; it is less real than it is virtual.

In this article, we explore the virtual life of Facebook near the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak, at the time when the world was in a state of shock, or bewilderment, about what was actually happening. It was two weeks after the [famous March 2020 speech by Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus \(WHO General Director\)](#) in which he declared the Corona virus a pandemic<sup>1</sup> when we started to notice an increasing number of graphs, diagrams, images and mathematical models relating to the pandemic on our respective Facebook walls. We were drawn to consider what it might look like to apply a critical lens to the mathematical world of Facebook at this specific point in time. For the purposes of this paper, we selected a number of these Facebook posts to discuss and analyse through questions based in critical mathematics education research. We first identify the mathematics topic/concept being depicted through the image and, second, how that Facebook post might serve as an artefact of critical mathematics education. Our analyses draw attention to public discourse(s) around mathematics, as well as how numbers, graphs, diagrams, and images are used on Facebook.

## Research Design and Methods

To initiate our research process, we collected a large number (more than twenty-five each) of mathematics-focused images, graphs, and/or diagrams (for simplicity, we use the term “images” from this point forward) appearing on one or the other each of our Facebook pages, during a 1-week period (March 26–April 1, 2020), a week of heightened news with regard to the global spread of COVID-19. Through a collaborative approach of carefully examining and discussing this collection of images, we made decisions around keeping a smaller number to focus on for our analysis. These decisions were informed by recognizing that several of our images depicted similar mathematics concepts, representations, and/or grade levels which we felt could lead to redundancy in our analysis. In addition to our effort to avoid redundancy with respect to the mathematics depicted in the image, our selection was also guided by our desire to draw on diverse questions from our chosen framework for analysis. In the end, we selected 12 images for our analysis, ranging from exponential graphs of infection rates and pie charts of online attention spans to a mathematical infatuation with cats and geodesic domes. Due to the nature of Facebook—and the ease with which one can share, re-share, and re-post content—it is not a simple task to trace an image back to its “original” source. As noted by Benoit (2018) in his study of mathematical Internet memes: “With the click of a button, a meme can be disseminated to millions in seconds” (p. 2). For this reason, it could even be proposed that such images rapidly become part of public domain. For the purposes of providing some detail on context and authorship, however, we have provided a Facebook posting date, along with the name and URL of a source for each image. We assure the reader that, in spite of providing only minimal details on the image creator/author, our intention is not to present a decontextualized analysis of the images; on the contrary, we feel confident that we adequately position these images within a period of time when the world found itself within the first month of institutional lockdowns, restricted movement and limited (often inaccurate) knowledge on the specifics of transmission.

In this paper, we view and analyse our 12 selected images through two lenses: first, we ask what mathematics topic/concept is being depicted through the image and, second, how might that Facebook news item (in some cases, posted with serious intentions and, at other times, likely posted to lighten the mood and disposition of the reader) serve as an artefact of critical mathematics education for school learners. For the second lens, we draw on a framework of questions which we developed by drawing on key critical mathematics education (CME) scholars. In doing so, we claim that our work begins with the virtual (mathematical world) and the surreal (what is often coined “the new normal”) as a way of connecting to the real (mathematics classroom).

As noted, our intention in this paper is to construct an analysis of Facebook posts through a lens of questions based in critical mathematics education. While the field of critical mathematics education offers many possible directions and perspectives, the questions we formulated for our analysis draw on four main sources: Skovsmose (1994), Andersson and Wagner (2017), Barwell and Abtahi (2019), and Nasir et al. (2008). Our analysis is limited to the 12 selected posts, although we believe that we model a process which could be adopted and adapted by mathematics teachers and teacher educators in their own practices and specific contexts. We realize that the virtual “remote teaching” reality that is presently (as we write this) being imposed upon many teachers due to the pandemic is temporary (or at least we are hopeful that this is the case); however, the process we model will be a valuable addition to any teacher’s repertoire of critical approaches that can be drawn upon, in both virtual and real mathematics classrooms.

## Literature Review

In our aim to apply a critical mathematics education lens to public discourse(s) around the mathematics of Facebook posts, we review research literature in three key areas: Real-world mathematics, critical mathematics education, and Facebook as a research context.

### Real-World Mathematics

With respect to what is meant by a real-world problem, Jurdak (2006) offered that it “refers to the actual experience of a real-world situation which calls for the person to make a decision based on whatever tools (including mathematical) are available and accessible to the person” (p. 285). Often interchangeably referred to as real world, real life, context-based and/or situated, the real-world problem is used “to refer to any mathematics problem that makes use of a real-world context” (le Roux, 2008, p. 308). Some researchers account for efforts where societal, environmental or other problems become connected to the required mathematics. These problems might even be chosen by the students themselves (Andersson, 2011; Andersson et al., 2015). Hence, instead of searching for real-world contexts with mathematical topics (which usually becomes a semi-reality (Skovsmose, 2001a), these researchers suggested turning the process around and searching for the mathematics needed to discuss the real-world’s specific challenges. In this vein, Steffensen et al. (2018) showed how “wicked problems” became a basis for addressing climate change in a Norwegian context. Similarly, Lunney Borden (2021, forthcoming) challenged mathematics teachings in Indigenous communities where real-world projects tend to focus on Indigenous artefacts, and instead she suggested investigating topics such as the rates of diabetes in Indigenous communities, the ongoing problems of unsafe community drinking water and other social justice issues. Hauge and Barwell (2021, forthcoming) addressed “post-normal” dilemmas (see Funtowicz & Ravetz, 1993) which, in contrast to mathematical school problems, have three important features: “a high level of conflict, a high level of uncertainty, and a high level of urgent risks.” The COVID-19 pandemic is a clear example of a “post-normal” problem. Skovsmose (1994) reminded us, however, that these problems are solved, or at least explained, with mathematical models that are usually un-questioned or un-critiqued. We note that those mathematical models explain the pandemic, covered with diagrams and graphs, that these days we see—or rather wade in—in the news, in the media, and on Facebook.

### Critical Mathematics Education

Mathematics intervenes in reality by creating a “second nature” around us, by giving not only descriptions of phenomena, but also by giving models for changed behaviour. We not only “see” according to mathematics, we also “do” according to mathematics. (Skovsmose, 1994, p. 55)

During the pandemic, we have become surrounded by experts using mathematics for modelling and predicting the virus spread, numbers of deaths, patients requiring intensive care and, in addition, all the complex economic problems arising in the backwaters of the pandemic. These experts, building their public advice and underplaying political decisions, are shaping our behaviours and actions during the pandemic and even influence how we interact in our closest relationships. How we can (not) move in space, who we do (not) meet, how we act, react and interrelate during the pandemic is clearly formatted with mathematics, mathematical modelling, and technology. These days, maybe clearer than ever, we see, accept, and acknowledge that mathematics shapes our reality.

Skovsmose (1994) explained how the process works when mathematics shifts from being descriptive to becoming prescriptive. He offered: “We not only ‘see’ according to

mathematics, we also ‘do’ according to mathematics” (Skovsmose, 1994, p. 55) and hence society becomes formatted through mathematics. The idea of societal formatting becomes, during the pandemic, intrinsically obvious in how we (not) act in (real) reality but furthermore become more engaged in the “virtual” reality. Hence, the use of mathematics and mathematical models have real social effects: our lives, and now also our deaths, are (and becoming even more so) organised by mathematics. Mathematics, particularly in the process of modelling, is thus used to describe different aspects of reality in virtuality. Descriptions now become prescriptions, dictating how we should behave to stay safe and healthy. Consequently, mathematics becomes, in Skovsmose’ (2001b) language, a *realised abstraction* in our social (real) and virtual reality. In this paper, we specifically focus on the virtual formatting in order to uncover different ways that mathematics shapes our present pandemic experiences and behaviours. We argue that during and after the pandemic there is an important role for critical mathematics education to play in conducting analyses of societal and media information.

We define critical mathematics education (CME) in the words of Skovsmose (2000) “as an expression of some broader concerns about mathematics education” (p. 2), including “attempts to consider mathematics in its social, cultural and political complexities” (p. 7). An underlying characteristic of CME is expressed by Andersson and Wagner (2017) as “the apparent objectivity of numbers in the way they are usually represented gives users of mathematics the power to claim objectivity and to render contentious ideas as inevitable and incontrovertible” (p. 24). Mathematics education should address the role of mathematics in society, and we argue that mathematics education can also critically address the way mathematics and mathematical modelling shapes our knowledge (fake or not) and behaviours (good or bad) during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Facebook as a Research Context**

As a form of Internet-based social media platform and networking, Facebook enables anyone (over a certain age) to register for an account, create a personal profile, and become part of a network of “friends” who circulate (post and share) texts, photos, videos, and so forth, among themselves and, potentially, other users worldwide, depending on selected privacy settings. These posts of texts, photos, and videos, also referred to by some as memes, appear on Facebook walls and serve “as a vehicle, carrying ideas, practices, culture, and/or symbols from person to person in various forms” (Benoit, 2018, p. 1). Benoit (2018) suggested that the production and consumption of memes on social media by the general population “has transformed them into popular culture” (p. 1) and, in a manner similar to what we aim to achieve in this paper, Benoit (2018), in his research, sought to understand how mathematics is portrayed in memes across many platforms of social media (Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, etc.).

Looking reflexively at our personal Facebook walls, we note that we both are middle class female academics and teacher educators in the privileged Western world (Kathleen identifies as Canadian, Annica as Swedish), and our walls, for the most part, mirror those of our friends and the groups we follow that connect to our working life. In addition, we obviously have interests outside of our academic life; Annica has a high number of outdoors, hiking and pilgrim friends and Kathleen is connected to volunteer organizations and animal rescue contexts. Besides, younger family members share a number of posts, and we note that two of the chosen images were shared by a 24-year-old student.

As noted previously, attempts to solve, or at least explain, the complex problem of the pandemic makes use of mathematical models, and these models are what we see and wade

through in the news, in the media, and on Facebook. Facebook as a context for achieving wide distribution of these “real world” models makes perfect sense if one believes reports on the numbers of Facebook users. For example, in the digital marketing world, Noyes (2020) reported that, as of March 31, 2020, “there are over 2.6 billion monthly active users” worldwide on Facebook. In the month of March 2020 alone (our data collection month), more than 1.7 billion people logged onto Facebook daily and were thus considered daily active users (Noyes, 2020). Though Facebook may be seen as a desirable site for marketing and advertising, it is not these interests alone that account for so many Facebook users. In the realm of education, and mathematics education specifically, some have argued that Facebook and other forms of social and participatory media can increase community engagement (Chen, 2017) and also help “students link mathematics to their daily activities, inside and outside the school” (Casey, 2013, p. 62). Similarly, Quinn (2018) offered a number of student activities which explicitly study the mathematics of social media, including drawing on graph theory to understand the networks involved in the virtual world of Facebook friends.

### **Critical Mathematics Education (CME) Analysis**

As introduced earlier, for our CME analysis we present here a set of questions adapted from four key sources: Skovsmose (1994); Andersson and Wagner (2017); Barwell and Abtahi (2019); and Nasir et al (2008). Skovsmose (1994) invited readers to understand critical mathematics education as a critical “approach to” or rather addresses critical “concerns about” relations between mathematics and mathematics education on the one hand, and the power of the use of mathematics in society and subsequent formatting of society, based on values of democracy, social justice and freedom on the other hand (Gutstein, 2006; Skovsmose, 1994; Valero, 2004).

Andersson and Wagner (2017) invited readers to consider how numbers are presented in mathematical and political arguments. They explored how numbers were (not) used in the context of analysing the Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission reports (TRC, 2015). They claimed that “it is necessary for mathematics educators to help their students understand how numbers can be used politically and how numbers can be positioned in such contexts” (p. 19). In grappling with the culturally situated use of number, Andersson and Wagner (2017) were careful “to underline that caution needs to be taken with respect for cultures, people, and spaces when working critically (and mathematically) with ethically rich documents” (p. 32). They formulated a set of questions—such as where are the numbers, where are they not, and why might the author have chosen this representation—and they encouraged mathematics teachers and teacher educators to raise these questions with students when mathematically investigating ethically and culturally rich documents. For the purposes of this paper, we find their questions valuable to use when analysing the Facebook entries about COVID-19, since numbers are (not) used politically and/or positioned in vulnerable contexts even if masked in fun diagrams, hidden in colourful graphs or presented in a humorous context.

In relation to media practices and mathematics content, Barwell and Abtahi (2019) posed broad and critical “questions about the treatment of mathematics education in news media and the role of mathematics education in interpreting media reporting” (p. 1). Although the authors found it “surprising that little research has been conducted on the nature of news media discourses of mathematics education” (p. 2), they claimed that media coverage tends to oversimplify the complexity of teaching and learning mathematics, seemingly reducing these endeavours to naïve, dichotomous discourses such as ‘back to basics’ vs. ‘discovery learning’” (p. 2). Their critical questions included the following: “What discourses are apparent in news coverage about mathematics education? How does the medium shape

the message? How do consumers of news media interpret these discourses? How do these discourses construct mathematics education, mathematics curriculum, teachers, students, and so forth? How are prevailing discourses linked to broader political ideologies?” (p. 1). These questions guided our analysis, helping us to focus some attention on medial discourses about mathematics and mathematics education.

The fourth source we draw on is Nasir et al. (2008), who interrogated the (perceived) boundaries between cultural and domain knowledge in mathematics. These authors “explore[d] relations between ‘everyday’ informal math knowledge and school math as a way to enter the conversation about the cultural nature of mathematics” (p. 191). In their work with youth in non-school settings, they found that “out-of-school environments hold quite different opportunities for youth in terms of authentic problem solving, ongoing feedback, and meaningful relationships” (p. 191). Nasir et al. (2008) maintained, however, that as long as “mathematics holds a privileged status in our society as an elite activity for the smartest of citizens” (p. 226), then the importance of everyday problem contexts and students’ own realities will continue to be rejected as mathematical knowledge.

In the following table, we summarize the critical questions and their corresponding sources that we draw on for our analysis:

**Table 1**

*A Summary of the Critical Questions Drawn on for Analysis (With Sources)*

CME Questions	Adapted from source
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does the mathematics of this image serve as a tool for identifying and analysing critical features of society, either globally or locally?</li> <li>• In what ways does the mathematics of this image reproduce inequalities?</li> <li>• Is the mathematics itself of this image problematic because of the function of mathematics (that is, where the mathematics itself is both a tool for, and an object of, critique)?</li> </ul>	Skovsmose (1994)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number analysis: Where are the numbers? Where are they not? How are the numbers represented? Are they specific or vague? Are they rounded? Are they absolute numbers or proportions? If they are proportions, what is being compared?</li> <li>• Image (other representation) analysis: How are graphs/diagrams/images used? Or not?</li> <li>• Why do you think the authors chose to use numbers, graphs, images, or other forms of representation as they have done? What do their choices prompt readers see and not see?</li> <li>• What if not? Consider different ways of reporting on the same phenomena. What would be the effects of these different representations? (This may require investigative</li> </ul>	Andersson and Wagner (2017)

research to find missing data.)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What discourses are apparent in this image about mathematics education?</li> <li>• How does the medium shape the message? How do ‘consumers’ of this image interpret (or are expected to interpret) these discourses?</li> <li>• How do these discourses construct mathematics education, mathematics curriculum, teachers, students and so on? How are prevailing discourses linked to broader political ideologies?</li> </ul>	Barwell and Abtahi (2019)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In what ways does the image reflect “out-of-school environments [which] hold quite different opportunities for [the reader] in terms of authentic problem solving, ongoing feedback, and meaningful relationships”? In what ways does the image potentially allow for the reader to demonstrate “rich mathematical problem-solving strategies in non-school contexts”? (p. 191).</li> <li>• In what ways does the image potentially “problematize [and/or nurture/perpetuate] Eurocentric assumptions about valid mathematics and the power issues at play in deciding whose mathematics to legitimize”? (p. 195)</li> </ul>	Nasir et al. (2008)

### Introducing the Images

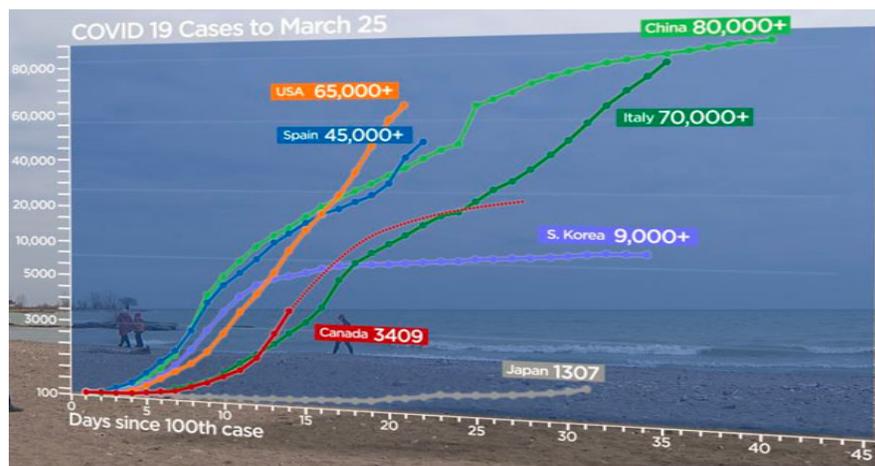
We analysed images that were posted on one or both of our Facebook walls during the time period of March 26–April 1, 2020 with a focus on posts with mathematical content in its widest sense. We looked for graphs, statistics, texts with or without numbers, images and diagrams presenting mathematical arguments, and so forth—all of which referred to different aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic. In other words, all chosen images connect, in some way, to mathematics content with/in society during an early period of the COVID-19 pandemic. We build the analysis section by presenting critical mathematical conversations where, in an interpretative way, we account for our reflections on the mathematical content and critical mathematical education possibilities, as well as implications for pedagogical content. We note that, since the mathematical level varies, the images may serve as inspiration for teaching in the different school levels—from kindergarten to university and teacher education.

### Country Comparison Images

We begin with two images (see Figure 2 and Figure 3), both of which function to draw the reader/student into the familiar anticipation of number-based graphical analyses. The first one depicts the number of COVID-19 cases to March 25, for seven selected countries, while the second image illustrates the total number of reported cases through the presentation of six bar graphs.

**Figure 2**

*A Depiction of the Number of COVID-19 Cases to March 25*



*Note.* This image is an example of the kind of statistics and diagrams that leave readers with feelings of uncertainty rather than actual or factual information. (Image Source: Global News Canada, 2020; Posted on Facebook March 26, 2020)

### ***Critical Mathematics Conversation***

The first image (Figure 2) we analyse contrasts the numbers of COVID-19 cases over time after the 100<sup>th</sup> case was established in the (specifically chosen) countries. This image is a “school example” of the kind of statistics and diagrams that leave readers with feelings of uncertainty rather than actual or factual information about both the mathematical content and the societal content—that is if you become inspired to stop and reflect about what is actually going on within this image.

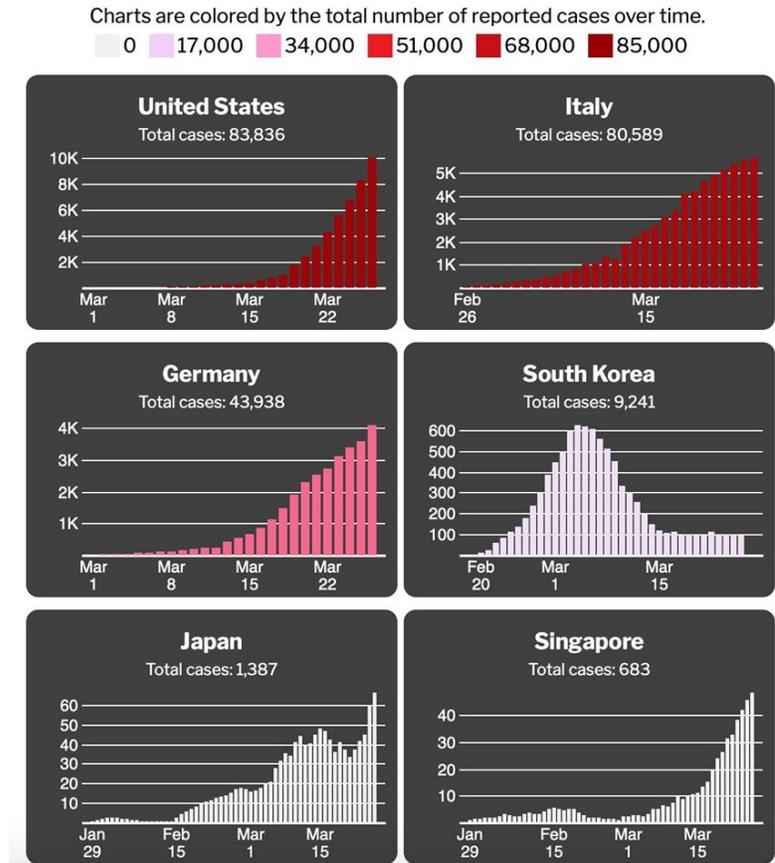
The image provokes us, and hopefully secondary school students, to raise mathematically grounded questions in the vein suggested by Skovsmose (1994), for example, about the bizarre scales on the x- and y-axes. The unit distances expand along the horizontal axis and skips in inconsistent ways on the vertical axes (after having started at the number 100) with the first and largest skip being a “unit” of 3,000 infected, while the last and shortest skip is a unit of 20,000 infected individuals. Some countries’ numbers are rounded off to the closest 10,000 (for example China); others to the closest 1,000 (South Korea) while two countries’ numbers are reporting the exact numbers of infected individuals (Canada and Japan). In addition, we could ask what the “+” after the rounded numbers indicates, and how the slopes (positive and negative slopes have specific meanings in terms of infection rates) can be interpreted.

The background of the photographical image suggests feelings of isolation and hence, maybe feelings of security to not get infected, with people walking (safely) with a required physical distance on an almost empty beach. During the heavy global lockdown period in early April 2020, several sources reported that more than 60% of the global population were in lockdown, and could not go outside their living quarters, let alone stroll on a beach. This photographical image would thus only serve as a dream for the 3,6 billion people on earth who were not even allowed to go outdoors in those months. In addition, the blueness and the vast horizon in the background inspired us to reflect on eternity: What will the world look like after the pandemic? Will we (and/or our loved ones) even be around...? In contrast, the waves seem to roll in heavily but rhythmically, as they always do; waves and tides come and

go, in a mathematically and physically expected rhythm, indicating that some things are still “normal” and predictable in an uncertain and surreal world.

**Figure 3**

*Bar Graph Presentation of Total Number of Reported COVID-19 Cases*



*Note.* The main mathematical problem with these bar graphs is that the graphs actually are not comparable as none of the graphs share the same units of scale. (Image Source: Wolfson & Wilson, 2020; Posted on Facebook March 26, 2020)

**Critical Mathematics Conversation**

The second image (Figure 3) of country comparison diagrams illustrates the numbers of reported cases in six countries. However, instead of showing the different countries in the same diagram, which was most common on our Facebook walls, here each country got their own individual bar graph, side by side. The main mathematical problem with these bar graphs is that the graphs actually are not comparable. What is indicated by a first quick glance might not be the case, as none of the graphs share the same units of scale. In other words, if we only look at the image, without tracing the explained colour codes or noting the total case numbers, the different unit distances on the vertical axis make us believe it is Singapore who has the highest number of reported cases because Singapore’s bars are highest. However, on closer look, Singapore actually has the lowest number of reported cases. Inspired by Andersson and Wagner (2017), we realize that the choices made by the people behind the bar graph tricks our eyes and might fool us as readers if we are not observant on details. The different scale units on the horizontal axis disrupt the slopes in the

same vein and hence also make them un-comparable. We believe that rich critical mathematics conversations (Skovsmose, 1994) will develop in any classroom if questions such as “Which of these six countries had the fastest increase in numbers of reported cases?” were posed; the answer is not obvious at either a first or a second glance.

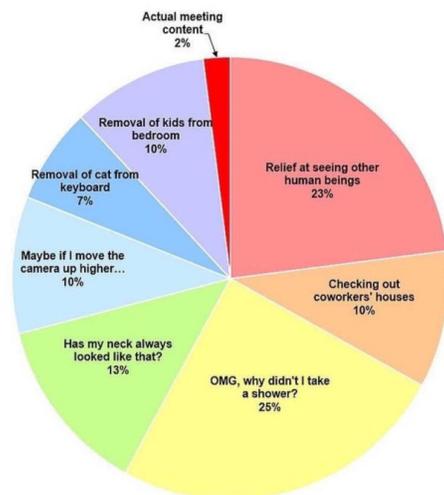
The societal CME questions asked of both comparison images may inspire us to talk about, and work further with, mathematical arguments as suggested by Andersson and Wagner (2017), to discuss difficult questions in class. Why were these countries chosen and not others? Who are in(ex)cluded and what might be the reasons for these choices? Why are only countries from the Northern hemisphere represented, and hence, how is this mathematical tool used to further stigmatization of global differences and media discourses (Barwell & Abtahi, 2019) in a North/South perspective? (see le Roux, 2019). Are there (hidden) media discourses about countries in the Southern hemisphere which might make certain countries invisible? Following Nasir et al. (2008), Eurocentric values seem confirmed but, even more important, how can they be problematized when reflecting on these two bar graphs?

### The New “Virtual Reality” Image

**Figure 4**

*Diagram of Zoom Meeting Attention Span*

**Diagram of Zoom Meeting Attention Span**



*Note.* A circle diagram and a humorous depiction of someone’s Zoom attention span in which we all, at least partly, can recognize ourselves. (Image Source: Rich Kaplowitz, 2020; Posted on Facebook March 27, 2020)

### **Critical Mathematics Conversation**

When workplaces, universities, and schools closed down and people worked from home whenever possible, the numbers of Zoom meetings increased exponentially and became our virtual reality. This was also true for the number of images on Facebook *about* Zoom meetings. We found images about how to Zoom-dress, preferred Zoom backgrounds and favoured Zoom hair styles. We found humorous images about the impact Zoom meetings have on conversations, appearances, and actions. The image we chose (Figure 4) is a circle diagram sharing someone’s Zoom attention span in which we all, at least partly, can

recognize ourselves—and smile at.

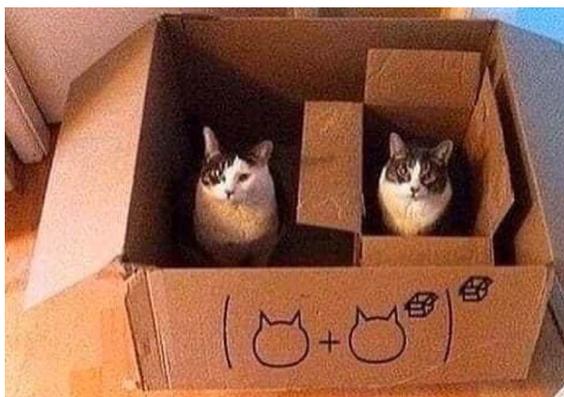
Mathematically, the image (Figure 4) reflects an accurate portrayal of circle graphs, which must add up to 100% (for a total of 360 degrees). However, for the individual pieces to add to 100%, it means that the options shown form the complete set of possible options (since one cannot go beyond the “whole Zoom experience” of 100%). In other words, these eight areas of focus for one’s attention span can be the only possible areas for recognition—or not.

A recognition of our societal behaviours and/or social discourses in the wider context, as well as us as individuals and our actions and relations “today,” is easy to joke about. The area referred to as “actual meeting content” occupies only 2% of one’s attention span (the joke), and catches the reader’s attention as they begin to think about what else *they* might be attending to (in their own world) with the remaining 98% that is not devoted to the meeting content. In fact, we suggest that this is precisely what teachers could ask their students to think about during and after a mathematics class taught remotely using Zoom. Students could be asked to construct a personal circle graph, with its unique attention span pieces, to illustrate what they have been paying attention to during the Zoom mathematics class (and we expect teachers would hope that the mathematics content gets allocated more than 2% of the circle!).

### Cat-Math Images

#### Figure 5

*Humorous Cat-Math Image About Self-Isolation*



*Note.* This humorous cat-math image presents an interesting opportunity for understanding exponential functions in the form of  $f(x) = a^x$ . (Image Source: Math/Science Jokes & Puns (or GTFO!), 2020; Posted on Facebook March 28, 2020)

#### ***Critical Mathematics Conversation***

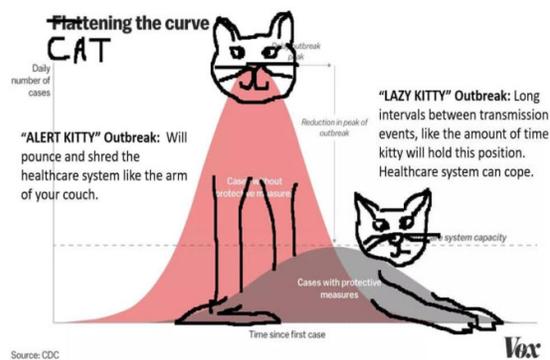
The connection of this image (Figure 5) to COVID-19 is with regard to the discourse of self-isolation and, in this humorous illustration, even the cats must isolate from one another. This image presents an interesting opportunity for understanding exponential functions in the form of  $f(x) = a^x$ ; in this case, the expression on the side of the box, translated into a more typical mathematical form, would be  $f(x) = (a + a^x)^x$ , where  $a$ =cat and  $x$ =box. The connection and metaphor extend even further by connecting the COVID-19 public discourse of isolation to the mathematical discourse of isolating variables when solving equations (when embedded/nested operations are involved). In fact, to correctly solve an exponential equation such as the one depicted here ( $f(x) = (a + a^x)^x$ ), the problem solver must understand

the required isolation and application of the small box cat exponent prior to applying the external exponent to the total contents of the big box. We believe this image and metaphor could serve as an appropriate medium to shape the mathematical (and pandemic) messages being conveyed with respect to exponents and isolation. However, in reference to Barwell and Abtahi's (2019) question of how "consumers" of this image may interpret (or are expected to interpret) these discourses, the Facebook "consumer" of this image is probably expected to take the image at face value, and interpret it only as a clever way to bring cats into the equation on isolation.

We can analyse this image (Figure 5) by drawing on the work of Andersson and Wagner (2017) and ask why the authors chose NOT to use numbers in their representation. We suggest that an intentional lack of numbers actually functions here to portray the "softer," more qualitative side of mathematics. Overall, the image was likely posted to lighten the mood of readers while, elsewhere in the news, those same readers were being bombarded with the reality of the pandemic's exponential spread. At the very least, the image grabs one's attention and serves to nurture a public's infatuation with cats.

**Figure 6**

*"Cattening the Curve"*



*Note.* This figure illustrates the positive effects on the health care system when the curve is flattened. (Image Source: Darling, 2020; Posted on Facebook March 28, 2020)

**Critical Mathematics Conversation**

This second cat-math image (Figure 6) provides immediate insight into the meaning of "flattening the curve" which, until the pandemic, was not a common expression within public discourse. We claim also that the language and graphical representation of exponential growth (and decay) were not, until recently, present within public discourse—a reality also displayed through our introductory image (see Figure 1). As in the previous critical mathematics conversation, this image also demands attention to, and nurtures, cat infatuation, though we believe this image serves as much more than a post to lighten the mood and disposition of the reader.

Analysing this graph through the lens of number (Andersson & Wagner, 2019), and posing the question of where are (not) the numbers, it becomes apparent that numbers are, in fact, conveniently absent. The axes are labelled with descriptors suggesting a scale and associated units (units of time for the horizontal axis and # cases/day for the vertical axis), but actual numbers are not included. We believe this was intentional since, if the scale and units had been provided, it would become clear that these two variables do not have a relationship yielding curves of these shapes. Thus, numbers are intentionally absent and not expected to be part of the discourse around this image.

Conversely, the graph does achieve (without the use of number) the intended aim of illustrating the positive effects on the health care system when the curve is flattened (or, *cattened*, as the image jokes). It does this through the humorous metaphor of a cat being alert/pouncing (peak reached so quickly that the system cannot cope) or lazy/slow (long intervals between infections such that system can adequately respond). The mathematics can be analysed in relation to, for example, bell curve distributions, slopes of tangents, and so forth.

Referring to the framework question which asks why the authors would have made the choice to use this representation (a graph), but to exclude numbers (Andersson & Wagner, 2019), we suggest that the absence of numbers serves to detract from the mathematical seriousness of the graph, suggesting that the graph can only be “talked about,” not taken to the level of calculations and precision. In other words, the image communicates a sort of “mathematics light” where there is an air of something vaguely mathematical, but it cannot be pinned down to fit into the public/media discourse—one that tends to construct “mathematics education in terms of a simple binary distinction between ‘traditional’ teaching and learning versus ‘discovery learning’” (Abtahi & Barwell, 2019, p. 50). In the absence of a traditional (back-to-basics) set of procedures to follow or a collection of mathematical concepts to be discovered through deeper devotion to the problem, “mathematics light” draws intrigue, in an otherwise mathematically/scientifically “heavy” time of pandemic.

### Modelling with Graph Theory

#### Figure 7

*A Map of the Main Known Genetic Variants of the SARS-CoV-2 Virus*



*Note.* This image is a snapshot in time from an interactive (and animated) map designed to show the transmission of the novel coronavirus (Image Source: Weise, 2020, Posted on Facebook March 30, 2020)

### Critical Mathematics Conversation

A news story appearing in *USA Today* presented this image (Figure 7) of a map, with the caption: “A map of the main known genetic variants of the SARS-CoV-2 virus that causes COVID-19 disease.” This image is a snapshot in time (March 27, 2020) from an interactive (and animated) map designed to show the transmission of the novel coronavirus (<https://nextstrain.org/ncov/global?animate=2019-12-08,2020-05-19,0,0,30000>). Traced back to its animation starting point, the map reveals the origin of coronavirus as one small purple dot in central China in December 2019, with the animation then tracing its spread through to present day. The animation reveals how, gradually, the coronavirus tentacles reached out to other countries—France, Thailand, United States, Malaysia, and so forth.

With far-reaching tentacles extending toward nearest neighbours, the mathematics being depicted in this map (Figure 7) is a perfect example of how the field of graph theory relates to our real lives, even in surreal times. In the “real world” of graph theory, one can generalize any population or organization by arranging individuals on a graph composed of vertices (also called nodes) and edges (connections between vertices), where each vertex represents an individual and an edge between vertices denotes a relationship between those individuals. The edge can be drawn using a single or double arrow (directed graph) or merely a line (undirected graph). A particularly interesting dimension of graph theory that can be brought into the study of network graphs is the weighting of edges, meaning that a particular edge can carry more significance or value (which could also be interpreted as privilege or power) than others in the network graph. Additional interesting possibilities for analyses exist: one can refer to nearest neighbour (adjacent vertices), the degree of a vertex (the number of edges connecting a vertex/node to any other), articulation points (where a vertex has been cut off), and so forth. We could (but won’t) continue to write more about this fascinating field of mathematical study (see, for example, Clark & Holton, 1991, for pure mathematics and Scott, 2013, for mathematical applications to social science networks).

Analysing this image through the lenses of critical mathematics, we draw on Skovsmose’ (1994) question of how this image can serve as a tool for identifying and analysing critical features of society, especially globally, and in what ways the mathematics of this image might serve to reproduce inequalities. We note that the image (Figure 7) is presented as an undirected graph, though we are fully aware—through viewing the animation and through our own reading of stories in the media—that this is not the case. In fact, escalating tensions and finger-pointing have emerged in the media, with people determined to establish who “started it all.” We also work into our analysis an understanding that air travel was the enabler in initiating the pandemic spread, which alone highlights inequities between the global North and South. In the language of graph theory, where a vertex represents a country and each edge the pathway of air travel, one immediately surmises that some edges likely carry more weight than others. One might suggest that this highly networked graph is what prompted the urgent, and repeated, pleas of “stay home”; yet, at the same time, “stay home” for those in crowded conditions of refugee camps and other poverty-stricken settlements is actually counter to the message of maintaining required physical distancing, and hence safety. With COVID-19 spreading rapidly, countries (vertices) in the global North grounded air travel (that is, they essentially cut their connections with their nearest neighbours, producing many articulation points in the graph), whereas those in the global South were left struggling to reduce the weight of other inequities.

A framework question from Andersson and Wagner (2017) directs our attention to how this image (Figure 7) serves as a powerful means of having students reflect on the effects of using representations which do not rely on the use of number to make their argument. In graph theory, representations like this one—whether one points to it in the analysis of COVID-19 spread or constructs a different weighted graph to study, for example, relationships between friends on Facebook (Hulgan, 2019)—we find ourselves drawn to quoting mathematical biologist Martin Nowak, who studies networks in the context of cooperation: “More connectivity won’t necessarily promote people being good to each other. It’s not that global connections are bad, but they are no substitute for a small number of strong local connections” (Nowak, as cited in Highfield, 2017).

## Geometrical Fun

### Figure 8

#### *Geo-Fun While Staying Home*



(Image Source: Smart School House, n.d.; Posted on Facebook March 30, 2020)

#### ***Critical Mathematics Conversation***

With the rapid spread of COVID 19 and the advice offered to protect ourselves from becoming infected, this image (Figure 8) draws the reader into some “geo-fun” while staying home, and staying safe. The mathematics of geodesic domes is generally part of Grades 8–10 school mathematics curricula,<sup>2</sup> where Platonic solids are studied and constructed. Reflecting back, however, on our own experiences of learning related topics in Grades 8–10, we recall how the act of achieving a geometry outcome—such as determining Euler’s formula for convex polyhedral—was seldom accompanied by an opportunity to build, play and crawl into these three-dimensional solids. Even though teachers might readily admit that a two-dimensional textbook image and formula could never adequately (re)present the richness of geometric solids, many, unfortunately, become stuck in the textbook paradigm and associated time constraint discourses (Nolan, 2012). Ironically then, the authentic experience of constructing a platonic solid is portrayed here (Figure 8) as suitable only for the time one has available in an out-of-school (home schooling) environment during a pandemic.

Drawing on a critical question posed by Andersson and Wagner (2017) to prompt reflections on number, this activity does, in fact, highlight what is possible when numbers are not used (at least when they are not a primary focus). This image (Figure 8) draws on a form of representation that prompts the reader to see and experience mathematical creativity. The image is drawn from a website promoted as “crafts for kids” (<https://www.instructables.com/id/Cardboard-Geodesic-Dome/>) and the plans available on that website for building the geodesic dome highlight only the language of triangles and pentagons. By following a short trail of links, however, one comes across websites which include rich mathematical language and history of symmetry, polyhedron/a, the five Platonic solids, spherical trigonometry and even the fascinating work of Michael Goldberg.<sup>3</sup> Regrettably, some of the authors of these sites rich in mathematics apologize for taking the reader so deeply into “the boring theory side of things.”

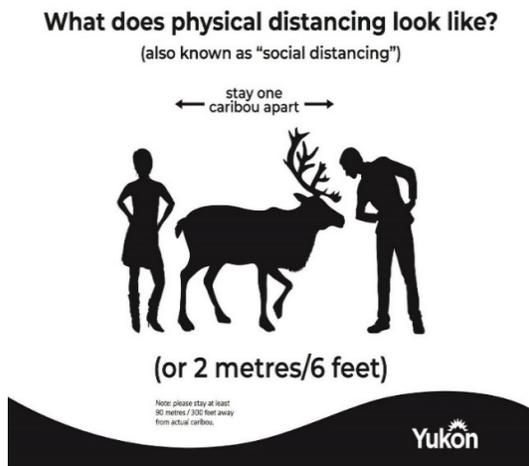
For our CME analysis, we look to Barwell and Abtahi’s (2019) question about how discourses can construct mathematics education, educators and students. From this image (Figure 8) and associated websites, it is apparent that, in building a geodesic dome, the complicated mathematics is best left “behind the scenes” for those who are smart enough to

digest it (i.e., “for the smartest of citizens”) (Nasir et al. 2008, p. 226). For the rest of us, we will (hopefully) prevail by following a series of steps or procedures using a ruler, scissors, and some basic knowledge of triangles and pentagons. Returning to our CME framework, we also draw on a question framed by Nasir et al. (2008) and ask: In what ways does the geodesic dome image reflect “out-of-school environments [which] hold quite different opportunities for [the reader] in terms of authentic problem solving, ongoing feedback, and meaningful relationships”? With regard to this image (Figure 8), the question may be a matter of whether authentic problem solving, even in “out-of-school environments,” is at risk of becoming “mathematics light” if the steps to construct (the dome or other geometric object) are executed without ongoing meaningful analysis (of angles, symmetry, relationships of faces/edges, etc).

### Keeping the Distance(s)

**Figure 9**

*Illustration of What Physical Distancing Looks Like*



(Source: David Suzuki Foundation, 2020; Posted on Facebook April 1, 2020)

**Figure 10**

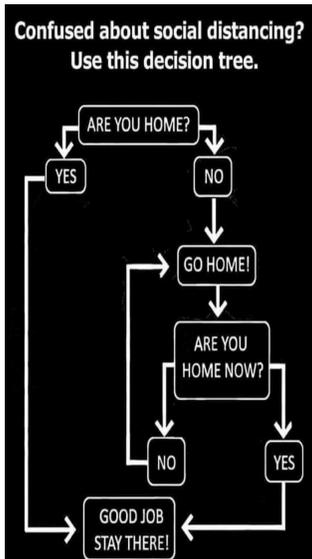
*Pythagorean Theorem and Social Distancing Signs*



*Note.* This figure is a good source for “real” critical mathematics conversations and an example of a practical use, both in and out of mathematics classrooms, of the Pythagorean theorem as a “learning landscape” with “real-life references” (Skovsmose, 2001a, p 124) (Image Source: Drake, n.d.; Reposted to Facebook).

**Figure 11**

*Decision Tree for Social Distancing*



(Image Source: Downtown Markham, 2020; Posted on Facebook March 30, 2020)

**Figure 12**

*Social Distancing Joke*



*Note.* Folkhälsomyndigheten [The Public Health Agency of Sweden]: “Keep a distance of 1–

2 meters if you are out among people” Norrbottningar [People living in the furthest northern Swedish province Norrbotten]: “Do we have to stand that close?”<sup>4</sup> [Translated by Andersson] (Image Source: Citat, 2020; Posted on Facebook March 30, 2020)

### ***Critical Mathematics Conversation***

“Keeping the distance” was a very popular Facebook theme as a high number of our virtual friends perceived it as their role to share posts about keeping distances, with the overarching goal of stopping the virus spread. Initially, our Public Health Authorities labelled the distance as “social,” in both our languages (Swedish and English). However, the discourse changed and “social” soon became “physical” since the intention was, and still is, to keep an infection-preventative distance between people.

These images inspire ideas for CME teaching on concepts of distances in preschool and for children in the lower grades. The caribou image (Figure 9) teaches us that a physical distance should be two meters between people and 90 m between people and caribous; hence the image reflects, in a humorous way, an “out-of-school environment” that, in line with Nasir et al. (2008), offers opportunities for younger students to learn about (the differences between) social and physical distances. There are several ways to play with the required distances: with bodies; with or without manipulatives; using furniture; counting numbers of different animals that fit within these distances; with images; making handicrafts; and art. Hence, making the “virtual distance reality” a “real reality,” also for younger children.

Regarding the San Francisco signs (Figure 10), we will not comment further on the mathematics as the author commented critically himself. We believe, however, that the image would be a good source for “real” critical mathematics conversations and an example of a practical use, both in and out of mathematics classrooms, of the Pythagorean theorem as a “learning landscape” with “real-life references” (Skovsmose, 2001a, p 124).

In line with Barwell and Abtahi’s (2019) ideas, the black and white decision tree flowchart image (Figure 11) invites us to reflect on discourses about (school) mathematics as being taught as a logically and structured subject. Also, Mukhopadhyay and Greer (2001) offered:

Mathematics is commonly seen as consisting essentially of computation and formulas, yielding exact and infallible answers, without relevance to everyday life, accessible only by experts, and not open to criticism. Indeed, in many respects mathematics is commonly perceived as the antithesis of human activity—mechanical, detached, emotionless, value-free, and morally neutral. (p. 297)

This flowchart (Figure 11) nurtures assumptions and discourses about (school) mathematics. The exclamation marks underline this discourse, resembling instructions in mathematics textbooks as calculate (!), simplify (!), express (!). Consumers of these images will probably find the flowchart associating with, or confirming, discourses about mathematics being a subject where thoughts, answers, and actions are either right or wrong, logical or illogical, or “black or white”; that is, the flowchart is structured in a way that the only “right” place to end up is “at home” and to “stay there!”, which is the (only) right place, the (only) right answer to the problem—a problem constructed by someone we do not know, about a virus spread we do not (yet) understand, in a seemingly “un-logical” “un-predictable” and “un-real” world, and all taking place in a “surreal” time where seemingly only mathematics can provide us with correct answers.

The joke image (Figure 12) in Swedish urges us to reflect on cultural jokes in mathematics education (because jokes are situated in cultural meanings) and “what we find humorous ... [is] not easily disentangled from the society and culture in which we ourselves are embedded, nor from the minority groups to which we may belong” (LaFollette & Shanks, 1993, p. 136–137) and consequently might reproduce inequalities (Skovsmose, 1994). The humour in this cultural image, however, may inspire a change from the usual media discourses (Barwell & Abtahi, 2019) about mathematics education. That is, the mathematics itself could inspire the cultural meaning of a joke, as in the definition of mathematical humour offered by Tap et al. (2019): “Humour derived from the mathematics concepts being discussed, combined with general humour ideas, particularly the incongruity theory of humour characterised by elements of surprise and unexpected twists or turns” (p. 246). In this case, we argue that jokes and humour—with a high level of recognition for the individuals but without pinpointing certain groups of people or human characteristics—might make mathematics classrooms a happier and joyful “real” place to be.

### Figure 13

#### *A View From an Indian Doctor on Social Distancing*

##### A view from an Indian doctor on social distancing:

A view from an Indian doctor:

"Social distancing is a privilege. It means you live in a house large enough to practise it. Hand washing is a privilege too. It means you have access to running water. Hand sanitisers are a privilege. It means you have money to buy them. Lockdowns are a privilege. It means you can afford to be at home. Most of the ways to ward the Corona off are accessible only to the affluent. In essence, a disease that was spread by the rich as they flew around the globe will now kill millions of the poor. All of us who are practising social distancing and have imposed a lockdown on ourselves must appreciate how privileged we are. Many Indians won't be able to do any of this."

10:53 PM · Mar 27, 2020 · Twitter for



*Note.* The focused and short text highlights the fact that it is a privilege to be one of those who are able to impose a lockdown on oneself. (Image Source: Perkins, 2020; Posted on Facebook March 27, 2020)

#### ***Critical Mathematics Conversation***

Our last image (Figure 13), originally a tweet that was re-posted on Facebook, is different from all of the other images we discussed since the image is entirely text. Authored by an anonymous Indian doctor, the message conveys what a lockdown might mean in different parts of the world, of a country, or of a city. The focused and short text highlights the fact that it is a privilege to be one of those who are able to impose a lockdown on oneself. We see this text as a rich source for CME and/or interdisciplinary teaching since the text may be considered as an ethically rich text (Andersson & Wagner, 2017). There are no obvious numbers, although we identify a high number of hidden numbers: What is a “large enough

house”? Who, or how many people, have (not) access to running water or wash rooms? Can people in your country/city /neighbourhood afford a lockdown? and so forth.

Although this image (Figure 13) originates in an Indian context, we note that the caste system is not mentioned, despite the fact that the caste system “plays a significant role in determining access to mathematics education” (Subramanian, 2017, p. 925) and to who lives in poverty (Thorat & Newman, 2007), which is the theme that permeates the image text. We ask if this may be a hidden (mathematical) discourse and propose that interdisciplinary teachings together with CME could further explore the impact the caste system might have, based on the conclusions made by the Indian doctor about the effects of the pandemic on people living with different circumstances, but also the impact on children’s access to schools and education due to caste, social class, gender, privileges, age and/or other social categories in India and elsewhere. Drawing on Nasir et al. (2008), ethical questions may be asked in mathematics classrooms about the image’s potential to actually problematize “Eurocentric assumptions about valid mathematics.” Hence, if the mathematics used to impose a lockdown had taken other aspects into account—such as the impact a lockdown may have on people living in poverty (as the image, Figure 13, indicates), but also, for example, increasing mental health issues, youth becoming excluded from their daily activities and schools, increased domestic violence—what would the advice have looked like then? Who would have benefitted...?

### Discussion

Our situation on this earth seems strange. Every one of us appears here, involuntarily and uninvited, for a short stay, without knowing the why and the wherefore. (Einstein, 1932, as cited in Morreall, 2014, p. 130)

According to Morreall (2014), who cites Einstein’s words above, “We need to be ready for surprises . . . , and so need to cultivate mental flexibility so that we are versatile” (p. 130). The mental flexibility and versatility written about by Morreall is in relation to humour and, as we write this article during these pandemic times, humour has supported our work through and through while dealing with the serious matters that are attached to the conversations we raised or suggested above. We have appreciated the “humour derived from the mathematics concepts being discussed, combined with general humour ideas, particularly the incongruity theory of humour characterised by elements of surprise and unexpected twists or turns” (Tap et al., 2019, p. 246). When analysing and writing up our analyses, we have used humour to critically reflect on mathematics per se, on mathematical, educational, and societal discourses and on some issues associated with the COVID-19 pandemic as it continues to unfold, both in our real and virtual lives at this surreal point in time, a surreal that has become, during this past year, the new normal.

In closing this paper, we feel the urge to reflect on our own privileged positions and contexts. Writing this article means that we had access to computers, a library, Internet and Zoom. We could afford a lockdown. We live in the global North, with the power and privileges that come with our own “real” lives. Our Facebook walls mirrored these privileges associated with our contexts (even in lockdown) and are clearly visible in our text. Our work confirms Skovsmose’s (1994) argument that “mathematics has an important social influence; it follows that to understand this formatting power becomes an essential aspect of critical mathematics education” (p. 207).

We view this paper as an inspiration for mathematics teachers and teacher educators, not only at this time of writing in a world of remote teaching, but well beyond due to how it has modelled a process for analysing and understanding the real and virtual world of

mathematics. Our analysis questions focus on identifying the mathematics topic being depicted through Facebook images and how the images might serve as artefacts of CME. Given that the images range from exponential graphs of infection rates and pie charts of online attention spans to cat-math and geodesic domes, we suggest that teachers consider beginning with the virtual (mathematical world) and the surreal (what is often coined “the new normal”) as a way of disrupting the real (mathematics classrooms).<sup>5</sup>

Andersson and Wagner (2017) argued that “people use mathematics to manipulate and control others. However, it is possible to use mathematics to counter such manipulations and to rectify injustices that are partially attributable to these manipulations” (p. 26). We wish and hope that mathematics teachers and teacher educators become inspired to continue their important work and to move critical mathematics education forward in their own contexts with the goal of educating critically aware students who have power to question the mathematics that influences and formats their lives. As Skovsmose (2007) offered, “If the citizens were not able to read information put into numbers, the society would not be able to operate” (p. 14). If one possible way to (teach students to) question the mathematics that formats our lives can be through an endeavour to critically and mathematically analyse the virtual in a surreal real-world, in mathematics education classrooms, on all levels—then we say go for it (!).

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<sup>1</sup> This speech took place on March 11 2020; see <https://www.who.int/dg/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-media-briefing-on-covid-19---11-march-2020>

<sup>2</sup> For example, in the province of Ontario in Canada, a Grade 8 mathematics curriculum outcome is as follows: Determine, through investigation using concrete materials, the relationship between the numbers of faces, edges, and vertices of a polyhedron (i.e.,  $number\ of\ faces + number\ of\ vertices = number\ of\ edges + 2$ ) (*Sample problem*: Use Polydrons and/or paper nets to construct the five Platonic solids [i.e., tetrahedron, cube, octahedron, dodecahedron, icosahedron], and compare the sum of the numbers of faces and vertices to the number of edges for each solid.). Available: <https://ca.ixl.com/standards/ontario/math/grade-8>

<sup>3</sup> 20th century mathematician Michael Goldberg is credited with describing a set of new shapes, which have been named after him, as Goldberg polyhedral. An interesting historical anecdote has it that geometers do not consider Goldberg's shapes as polyhedral because they do not have planar faces (<https://theconversation.com/after-400-years-mathematicians-find-a-new-class-of-solid-shapes-23217>).

<sup>4</sup> We add that it was not only Norrbottningar we found jokes about, but also, we noted a number of images of, for example, Finnish people, people from the Northern Canadian provinces, and urban people in bus lines, with the same kind of joke.

<sup>5</sup> In the year that has passed since these images were collected for this paper, the pandemic has remained an enduring reality worldwide—remote and/or hybrid teaching persists in most educational contexts; Zoom, Webex, and other online video conferencing platforms have not only become the norm for facilitating work meetings but also for most family and community gatherings. We are thus, at this time, compelled to acknowledge, embrace even, the fading of the distinctions made between real, virtual and surreal in our discussions, since they commingle and intersect in ways that we never thought possible just one year ago. We,

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along with other educators/researchers, have had to acknowledge and accept how, these days, digital life *is* “real life” and what is surreal is very much redefined every day.

# **Conduct Unbecoming? Teacher Professionalism, Ethical Codes, and Shifting Social Expectations**

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## **Abstract**

In this paper we share findings from a historical investigation into changing expectations regarding teacher conduct as connected to the evolving Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation Code of Ethics and the eventual proclamation of a Government-mandated teacher regulatory board. This study was based on the idea that views of appropriate conduct embedded in ethical codes evolve in relation to shifting societal norms and values. We demonstrate that the tone and content of ethical codes of conduct for Saskatchewan teachers transformed from explicit and concrete to abstract and ambiguous.

*Keywords:* conduct unbecoming; code of ethics; teacher regulation; teaching profession



IN  
EDUCATION

## Conduct Unbecoming? Teacher Professionalism, Ethical Codes, and Shifting Social Expectations

In the 21st century, teacher professionalism seems to interweave notions of ethical educator conduct with accountability to the public more deeply than ever. Breaches in ethical conduct, once often contained within the workplace and/or community in which they occurred, are now accessible by the public at large via a host of news and social media platforms. For example, in 2013, a particularly damaging investigative news story came out in a local newspaper in Saskatchewan suggesting that teachers were not being suitably disciplined by the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation (STF) when accused of misconduct (French, 2013). This article posed questions about the appropriateness of current STF disciplinary structures. Other newspapers, blogs, and television reports sustained the circulation of questions about whether teachers accused of violating the STF Code of Ethics were being properly regulated. In response to the furor sparked by this reportage, the Government ordered a study of processes, policies, and structures for teacher regulation in Saskatchewan. In 2015, based on recommendations from the resulting report (Kendel, 2013), the Provincial Government mandated a separation of powers between the STF and a newly created organization, the Saskatchewan Professional Teachers Regulatory Board (SPTRB). The SPTRB would henceforth, "establish and administer the professional certification and standards of professional conduct and competence of teachers for the purposes of serving and protecting the public" (Province of Saskatchewan, 2015, p. 4)—that is, the SPTRB became responsible for disciplining teachers found guilty of ethical misconduct and professional incompetence

While media, the public at large, and the Provincial Government appeared to be most focused on how teacher misconduct should be handled, the issues illuminated in the example outlined above raise questions about how proper conduct and conversely, misconduct, are defined by the teaching profession, both in the past and in the present. In particular, this paper addresses the development of the STF Code of Ethics and documents how the historical evolution of this Code informs present-day understandings of the term *conduct unbecoming* among teachers, the public, and the Government in Saskatchewan. The findings demonstrate that the tone and content of ethical codes of conduct for Saskatchewan teachers transformed from explicit, concrete, and regulatory to abstract, ambiguous, and aspirational. Understanding these changes from a historical perspective and contrasting past codes with present day SPTRB bylaws can enhance ethical awareness, helping educators to better grapple with and enact their professional obligations.

We posit that our study is of practical significance to both teachers and professions outside of the education sector. Situations involving ethical dilemmas consistently bombard both professionals and the public at large, surfacing in the news and developing in workplaces. As self-governing professions became increasingly challenged by questions regarding transparency and public accountability (Glaze, 2018; Kendel, 2013; Schultze, 2007 ), ethical conduct is more regularly questioned and scrutinized. We take the position that such questioning requires ethical awareness based on historical consciousness.

Understanding the roots of codes that guide ethical conduct allows professional collectives to create a climate of ethical awareness and consensus through healthy debate and lively discussion and can induce professionals to choose to behave in ways that honor professional, contractual, and societal expectations. Hence, in this paper we address this

question: In what ways have understandings of teacher professionalism and expectations around ethical conduct evolved over time in the province of Saskatchewan? Furthermore, to demonstrate the historical evolution of the STF Code of Ethics, we address these sub-questions:

- What was considered appropriate conduct or conduct unbecoming for teachers prior to establishment of the STF in 1935?
- As stipulated in the first 1935 STF Code of Ethics titled, “the Canon,” what was considered appropriate conduct or conduct unbecoming?
- What were there significant changes regarding what was considered appropriate conduct or conduct unbecoming according the STF Code of Ethics between 1935 and 2017?

Our findings reveal that the STF Code of Ethics has evolved from explicit, highly regulatory, and concrete expectations for conduct to abstract, unstipulated and aspirational expectations. While it can be argued that a more abstract and aspirational code of ethics demonstrates a high degree of trust in teachers as professionals, it can also be claimed that such codes are less clear about what is expected, sometime leaving teachers uncertain as to what is and is not conduct unbecoming. Exploring the evolution of the STF Code from a historical perspective and contrasting past codes with present day codes and SPTRB bylaws has the potential to enhance ethical awareness, helping educators to better grapple with and enact their professionals obligations.

### **Literature Review**

In this review we shed light on existing studies that explored the relationship between professions, codes of ethics, and teacher professionalism. Although the literature review includes a brief discussion of studies that have attempted to delineate the characteristics that denote professions, our main focus was on studies that attempted to better understand the connection between ethical codes of conduct and how these have helped to define teaching as a profession.

Historically, the term *profession* goes back to the Middle Ages, when it was connoted with the “learned professions” of Divinity, Law, and Medicine (Monteiro, 2015, p. 49). Officially, professions were not aggressively studied until the mid 1900s, “as the demand for professional status grew more and more, and the professions became a subject of varied research” (Monteiro, 2015, p. 49). Typically, the research conducted on professions occurred in the field of sociology and was “prominent from the 1950s through the 1970s, before being generally abandoned in the 1980s and 1990s because no single definition could fully capture the complexity of professional employment and its variations across time and space” (Adams, 2010, p. 50). In short, there exists a whole body of research, spanning many decades, that attempts to define what it means to be a profession. While there has not been a high degree of agreement about the characteristics of a profession, a consensus seems to have been reached about the characteristics that separate a profession from an occupation. This accord came about when sociologists declined to offer one concrete definition of a profession, but rather listed attributes thought to be characteristic of “professional” vocations and then offered judgements as to which occupations most closely matched those commonly agreed upon characteristics (Montagna, 1977).

For example, Parsons (1968), a researcher who has had ongoing impact in the study of professions, felt that the characteristics most commonly held by professions included the following: (a) were formal, specialized training with an emphasis that the training be highly

intellectual; (b) demonstrated mastery of skills through practical applications of skill; and (c) had mechanisms inside of the profession that would ensure that those with specialized skills would use them responsibly. Later, Benveniste (1987) maintained the characteristics highlighted by Parsons (1968), but extended the definition to specifically include ethics and the importance of being accountable to the public.

Along with Parsons (1968) and Benveniste (1987), a large number of researchers (Bayles, 1989; Freidson, 1983; Greenwood, 1957; Larson, 1977; Lieberman, 1956; Moore, 1970; Pavalko, 1988), emphasized that a profession must also provide a definite and essential service to society, have the autonomy to self-regulate, and have an established code of ethics to ensure competent performance. Outside of the field of sociology, a more modern definition of what it means to be a profession is provided by the Professional Standards Council (2016): A profession is,

a disciplined group of individuals who adhere to ethical standards. This group positions itself as possessing special knowledge and skills in a widely recognized body of learning derived from research, education and training at a high level, and is recognized by the public as such. A profession is also prepared to apply this knowledge and exercise these skills in the interest of others. (para. 6)

Freidson (1983) proposed, researchers should explore the social-historical contexts to “determine who is a professional and who is not, and how they ‘make’ or ‘accomplish’ professions by their activities” (p. 27). Using both Freidson’s (1983) and Adams’ (2010) arguments contextualizing the history surrounding any profession is important for understanding the profession as a whole. Some of that history can be seen in how occupations were characterized as professions as per Parsons (1968) and Benveniste (1987) and in the activities members engaged in, such as the creation and maintenance of a code of ethics

Historically, the establishment of a code of ethics has been seen as a significant characteristic of professions (Coady & Bloch, 1996; Montagna, 1977). Since 1935, teachers in Saskatchewan have practiced according to the STF Code of Ethics, which specifies teachers’ obligations to the public to act in an ethical manner. Hence, it can be argued that teachers can be identified as professionals.

Monteiro (2015) stated that, in fact, “Every professional occupation, both humble and proud, holds an ethical dimension insofar as it implies some trustworthy relationship between persons and some kind of responsibility over what it does” (p. 69). Further, Monteiro (2015) argued that the ethical dimension for a profession grows infinitely more complex “in proportion to the extent to which the profession deals most directly and essentially with the human person ... and broader its public exposure” (p. 69). For teachers, the ethical dimension existing between them and the public is immense. In 2008, the Saskatchewan Teachers’ Federation (STF) stated, “The public trusts professional teachers because they have the qualifications, including specialized knowledge, skills, and judgement, to serve students’ educational needs” (para. 5). Correspondingly, teachers have a responsibility to “act at all times in a manner that is worthy of this public trust and consistent with the teaching profession’s expectations” (STF, 2008, para. 5).

The concept of public trust includes the belief that professions—teachers included—should hold the interests of society above their own. All professions must have a system of accountability to govern them, in turn “protecting the profession’s client—the public—from

incompetent and dishonest practitioners” (Grimmett & Young, 2012, p. 2). One of the ways that teachers have tried to “foster a reputation of integrity, competence, and commitment to the public interest” is through their code of ethics (STF, 2013, p. 2). In other words, teachers procure increased public trust by upholding their professional code of ethics.

To understand codes of ethics, one must first know how they are defined and where they come from. Historically, the word “code” came from *codex* or *caudex*, a Latin word etymology, meaning “a special kind of book, namely a systemic written collection of laws or rules” (Siggins, 1996, p. 56). Likely the term *code of ethics* has its beginnings in “Hebrew law collections incorporated into the Old Testament scriptures” (Siggins, 1996, p. 56) and is more modernly codified in the French civil, commercial, and criminal laws enacted in 1804–10, which, though amended, are still in force today and have been imitated by other code-law countries (p. 56). In relating ethics to the concept of *profession*, “The word ‘profession’ in its Latin form meant a public declaration or vow” (Iacovino, 2002, p. 63). Ethical codes, then, should clearly be seen as the modern day vow made by professionals. Because ethical codes are a “formal and public proclaiming [of] core values, which are the source of professional responsibilities, laid down in principles and duties” (Monteiro, 2015, p. 70), they function as commitments on the part of a profession to itself and to the public.

Traditionally, codes of ethics had strong implications of oath-taking—the ritual of declaring oneself set apart to fulfill an extraordinary commitment or assume an exalted and authoritative calling (Siggins, 1996, p. 56). Jonsen and Butler (1975) paraphrasing Bourke (1968) wrote, “Thus from the time of the first Greek philosophers, ethics had but one meaning ... It is the reflective study of what is good or bad in that part of human conduct for which man has some personal responsibility” (p. 22). To emphasize the relationship between ethics and responsibility, Siggins (1996) highlighted how and why professions such as medicine and law were set apart from the rest of society. Members of those professions bestowed with elite status (generally divinity, law, and medicine) took oaths to prove their virtuous character, their avowed duty to others, and their prudence of etiquette for their craft (Siggins, 1996, p. 58). Historically, ethical codes were the method through which religious and political stakeholders—those with the right to “supervise and regulate morality, family life, education, and even commerce and warfare” (Siggins, 1996, p. 64) assured the public that professions were fulfilling their “dut[ies] to society, law, and truth” (p. 62). In this way adherence to ethics was tantamount to public trust.

In both the past and the present, the argument over why professions need a code of ethics remains standard. Professions possess and use a particular knowledge and expertise to help people who are in need of their services. The public, utilizing the services of those employed in professions, need to be able to trust that the profession demonstrates sufficient expertise and will not abuse the user of their services (Banks, 1998). In general, most people do not possess all of the knowledge they need to tap into specialized knowledge and skills without utilizing the supplier of services expressly educated to fulfill such needs (Fullinwider, 1996). According to Larson (1977), professions are occupations with special autonomy and prestige, so codes of ethics serve as an essential part of protecting the public’s potential exploitation of vulnerability (Fullinwider, 1996). In this light, codes of ethics can be defined as documented declarations of what professions should do (Strike & Soltis, 1998) and “enunciate what ... their responsibilities and obligations are” (Campbell, 2000, p. 211). Codified ethics “describe duties professionals must perform, conduct they must forgo and situations they must avoid” (Fullinwider, 1996, p. 72). Codes of ethics are the tangible portrayal of quality practice.

Beyond a definition of ethics, Banks (1995, 1998) identified four distinct purposes of ethical codes that can be applied across professions. First, because an ethical code is a key feature of professions, “the adoption of a code of ethics is ... about establishing the professional status of an occupational group” (Banks, 1998, p. 218). Second, an ethical code plays a role in the creation and maintenance of professional identity: “It affirms the fact that members of an occupational group belong to a community of people who share and are publicly committed to the same values” (Banks, 1998, p. 218). Third, ethical codes provide guidance to professionals about how to act, and finally, these codes serve as protection of users from malpractice or abuse (Banks, 1998). Not only can codes of ethics be defined as a framework that formally and publicly states professional responsibilities, principles, and overall values, they also have clear purpose and function.

Monteiro (2015) pointed out that the ethical dimension for teachers is more demanding than other professions because teachers constantly deal with the public (p. 69). Monteiro (2015) compares teachers to being like a “goldfish bowl” (p. 74) where teachers are constantly exposed to public scrutiny. This scrutiny is a result of being in day-to-day contact with students who echo the behavior of their teachers back to families and society. Teachers cannot afford to make decisions based on “moral subjectivity and relativity” because if their “competence and conduct are not professionally acceptable, the profession’s public image is significantly and negatively affected” (p. 74).

In the fish bowl that is education (Monteiro, 2015), ethics and teaching cannot be seen as separate entities because teachers’ “cognitive and ethical dimensions are, in practice, deeply intertwined” (Monteiro, 2015, p. 69). The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) in the United States sums this intertwining of complex job requirements and ethics perfectly:

The ethical dimensions of teaching also distinguish it from other professions. Unique demands arise because the client's attendance is compulsory and, more importantly, because the clients are children. Thus, elementary, middle and high school teachers are obligated to meet a stringent ethical standard. Other ethical demands derive from the teacher's role as a model of an educated person ... Teachers, consequently, must conduct themselves in a manner students might emulate. Their failure to practice what they preach does not long elude students, parents or peers (NBPTS, 2002, p. 6).

The NBPTS highlights the idea that teachers’ codes of ethics and public trust in the teaching profession go hand in hand. The STF (2000) also considered the importance of ethics, teaching, and public trust:

In teachers’ evolution towards professional status, it has been decided that a high level of public respect and confidence is best achieved when teachers themselves establish and maintain a reputation for integrity, competence and commitment. The level of esteem within which the teaching profession is held by the society it serves will be determined by the collective will of teachers not to compromise the highest standards of professional ethics. (pp. 4–5)

In truth, teachers’ ethical codes not only bolster public trust, but these codes function as a symbolic statement about the profession itself (Fischer & Zinke, 1989), encapsulating teachers’ ethical activities, motives, and responsibilities to the larger society, stakeholders of education,

and even to themselves. In fact, Hostetler (1997) described teaching as a fundamentally ethical activity because “teachers are continually searching for, and being responsible to, what is ethically right and good” (pp. 195–196). It is within teachers’ quests to demonstrate the highest degree of ethical conduct so that teaching can be considered an ethical profession.

Ethics are not laws. Indeed, there is often a gap between what is legal and what is ethical. Law is deficient as an ethical system because “codified law focuses on actions and outcomes rather than values” (Iacovino, 2002, p. 58). Laws imply a legislative process and ethics imply a professional process. Ethics and law can, like ethics and morals, overlap—they are not in opposition of one another. “They can and should complement each other as a system of control over human behavior” (Iacovino, 2002, p. 58). Laws, similar to rules, do not denote choice. They enforce minimum standards of what is right and wrong and administer consequences when the laws are breached (Iacovino, 2002). Conversely, as Annis (1989) stated, ethical codes “do not promote minimalism, the idea that one need only satisfy requirements of minimally acceptable behavior. Instead professionals are to be judged against high standards, standards that require more than the minimal” (p. 6). Looking beyond minimum/maximum standards, codes of ethics—unlike laws—denote choice in the behavior of the part of the professional. Though laws are breakable implying that some individuals choose not to follow them, they are intended to be non-negotiable. Ethics “cannot be imposed from without” (Lichtenberg, 1996) and are organizationally negotiated values that guide the ethical behavior of a profession.

However, Bourke (1968) pointed out that there is a relationship that exists between the law, society, and ethics when he traced the history of ethics from Greco-Roman times to the modern era, demonstrating that philosophers and social theorists began to study ethics as a way “to provide a foundation for their theories of society and law” (p. 221). Although Leys (1952) claimed that “connections between ethics and policy decisions are not very clearly understood” (p. 3), we consider ethics to be, in part, legislated policy.

Dye (1994) described policy as “anything a government chooses to do or not to do (p. 4) and Easton (1965) stated that public policy consists “of decision rules adopted by authorities as a guide to behavior” (p. 358). Extrapolating from this, it could be interpreted that anything that the government chooses to do in terms of directing behavior is ethical policy. In this way, codes of ethics can easily be seen as policies adopted by professions by way of legislation. Not only do ethics relate to policy, but professions relate to both in that “the characteristics of a profession are increasingly determined to a significant extent by the state, which is now a major stakeholder in defining professionalism in modern societies. Most professionals are employed, or at least regulated, by governments” (Whitty & Wisby, 2006, p. 44). The type of bargain that a profession and the government strike influences the professions’ mandate (Whitty & Wisby, 2006). One integral piece of a professions’ mandate is that of ethical codes. The relationships between ethics, policy, and legislation are inherent and this complex relationship can most certainly be applied to the teaching profession.

As Walker and Bergmann (2013) found in their analysis of teacher education policy in Canada, “very few articles or studies on Canadian teacher educational policy exist” (p. 68). Even fewer than the single article Walker and Bergmann (2013) found, are articles on *ethics as educational policy* or *professions as legislation*. As such, it is difficult to fully substantiate the teaching profession and its codes of ethics as policy inside of existing literature. That being said,

one is able to make connections between the teaching profession, ethics, and legislated policy through the fragmented resources that touch on this topic.

Education can be viewed in part as a political act. Robertson and Dale (2013) reinforced this notion, stating that “education is governed through policies, politics, and practices” (p. 433). In fact, research shows that teachers are “primarily understood as implementers of policy decisions made by their organizational superiors” (Bascia & Rottmann, 2011, p. 789). In this vein, ethics can be seen as legislative policy decisions which teachers implement. Furthering this thinking, ethical codes are one major characteristic of professions and, thus, are a critical component in professionalism. Hoyle (1980, as cited in Sockett, 1990), described how professionalism relates to professions, arguing that, “professionalism describes the quality of practice. It describes the manner of conduct within an occupation, how members integrate their obligations with their knowledge and skill in a context of collegiality and of contractual and ethical relations with the client” (p. 9). We can infer from this definition that codes of ethics are a form of professionalism. We can further infer from what we know about policies overall that policy is a governmental tool used to regulate professions. Thus, ethics could reasonably be considered to be legislated policy regulating the behavior of teachers. As Ozga (1995) maintained, “Professionalism is best understood in context, and particularly in policy context” (p. 22). Codes of ethics then, can be viewed as Ozga (1995, p. 35) believed, as a form of occupational control.

Beyond research regarding the definition and characteristics of professions, recent research has been conducted on professionalism and professionalization of occupations. More current research investigating teacher professionalism encompasses the increasingly bureaucratic tendencies of education overall, such as standardized testing, curriculum policy, school improvement plans, and teacher workload, as well as topics related to the ethical implications that come from teaching ethics as a school subject, teacher interaction with students, grading procedures, confidentiality, supervision, interprofessional relations, conflicts of interest, and other topics relating to in-school happenstances and relationships (Boylan, 2006; Keith-Spiegel et al., 2002; Popkewitz, 1994; Strike & Egan, 1978;). When specifically targeting ethics, investigations primarily examine how ethical codes are a mandatory characteristic of professions overall. Little research has been completed that examine how ethical codes relate to teachers as professionals. Research conducted on the historical evolution and interpretation of codes of ethics of the teaching profession internationally, nationally, or in the province of Saskatchewan, is virtually non-existent.

## **Methodology**

The perspective of time is essential when attempting to conduct historical research. As Tosh (1991) wrote, “In all spheres of life, from personal relationships to political judgements, we constantly interpret our experience in time perspective, whether we are conscious of it or not” (p. 1). It is impossible to grasp the full picture of an event and represent the past “without some perception of where it fits into a continuing process” (Tosh, 1991, p. 1). Grasping the full picture of an event involves utilizing history as “collective memory” and as a “storehouse of experience through which people develop a sense of their social identity and future prospects” (Tosh, 1991, p. 1). Historical methodology relies on the interpretation of the past, drawing on available sources, and it is the historian, as researcher, who does the interpretation. As Rousmaniere

(2004) proclaimed, “There is not one true historical story out there waiting to be told if only the correct facts are pulled together” (p. 33).

Instead, historians rely heavily on primary sources as written evidence. It is the work of the historian to examine this written evidence, make sense of it, and tell a story based on the reconstruction of their findings. This reconstruction of the past through source documents is known as historiography. Reconstruction of past events can be difficult for the historian because there is an immense amount of diversity within the sources found to reconstruct the past, available evidence can be limited or vast, and historians can only analyze those sources that are obtainable. In short, a historian’s “main methodological concerns [has] to do with sources, or the different types of historical data available to them, and the way in which they might interpret them” (Rousmaniere, 2004, p. 45). In trying to understand and reconstruct the past, a historian must have some process for locating and evaluating the particular sources that are most relevant to the research.

### **What Sources Were Utilized?**

To uncover the understandings about conduct as stipulated in the evolving STF Codes of Ethics over time, this study made use of both primary and secondary sources. Secondary sources include books and articles, usually based on primary sources, that are written by historians and other scholars, after the fact—that is, put together later than the time period under study. Primary sources include written document and/or artifacts “generated at the time of the event or by the subject in question” (Rousmaniere, 2004, p. 46). Hence, primary sources can include letters, speeches, contemporary newspaper articles, photographs, meeting minutes, academic journals written, and surveys recorded during the time period(s) under study.

In this particular case, the primary sources employed as “data” for our study included meeting minutes of the STF executive, the STF Bulletin, pamphlets, other newsletters and news articles, legislative acts issued or enacted over the time periods we studied, and the STF Codes themselves. Academic journals and books, providing context and background, made up the bulk of secondary sources we consulted.

### **Analytical Approach**

Fact checking and analysis of sources as Tosh (1991) explained, is an important regular routine employed by historians. This involves corroboration of details revealed in one source with details reported in other sources. This is similar to the approach used when witness statements are corroborated in a court of law. It is the fact checking of subjective sources that helps historians create a story based on evidence that matches as closely as possible with what actually happened in the past.

In particular, the historical document analysis that was performed in this study was in alignment with Denzin and Lincoln’s (2005) interpretation and suggestions of this method of analysis wherein the researcher/historian behaves like a “quilter [who] stitches, edits, and puts slices of reality together” to represent complex situations (pp. 5–7). Relevant sources of historical information were specifically located in archives, digital and special collections, and libraries, with primary sources sought based upon their relevance to our questions about teacher conduct/misconduct as delineated in teachers’ Codes of Ethics in Saskatchewan. Data from these sources were summarized and evaluated using a document analysis approach, which included

skimming, thorough reading, interrogating, interpolating, assessing, interpreting, and selecting of excerpts and quotations that addressed our research questions and represent any potential emerging themes (Bowen, 2009; Collingwood, 1946/1993). As Peräkylä and Ruusuvaori (2005) noted:

Qualitative researchers who use written texts as their materials do not try to follow any predefined protocol in executing their analysis. By reading and rereading their empirical materials, they try to pin down their key themes and, thereby, to draw a picture of the presuppositions and meanings that constitute the cultural world of which the textual material is a specimen. (p. 870)

However, the document analysis approach employed by historians does rely on primary source authenticity, which can be both external and internal (Tosh, 1991). External criticism of sources asks questions about a source's veracity. Author, place, and date of writing should be corroborated. Sources must be able to be traced back to people and places that produced it. The content of the sources must be fact checked. That is, the source must substantiate facts found in other unimpeachable documents from the time. The corroboration between sources creates authenticity. Internal criticism examines interpretation of sources. Once a source has passed the external criticism test, it is important to question overall meaning and reliability.

Constant analysis of sources does not begin after sources are located. Rather, source analysis transpires simultaneously and continuously (Pole & Morrison, 2003). Miles and Huberman (1994) described this consistent analysis of sources as "anticipatory data reduction": "Even before the [sources] are actually collected, anticipatory data reduction is occurring as the researcher decides (often without full awareness) which conceptual framework, which research questions, and which data collection approaches to choose" (p. 10). Once an appropriate body of sources is found and analyzed, the historian can display their findings and draw conclusions. Because historiography often begins from a particular conceptual framework or an idea that is then refined through conducting research, finding sources and redefining the research question, it is possible to argue that the historian never stops analyzing sources through the entire research process.

## **Findings**

### **Precursor to Teacher Codes of Ethics**

In the years preceding the creation of the STF and its first official Code of Ethics, teachers' work was dictated by a set of conduct rules that stipulated everything from skirt length and hair color, to where, what, and with whom teachers could spend their leisure time. One such document is available for viewing at the Evolution of Education Museum in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. The 1872 and 1915 "Rules for Teachers" is prominently posted in the preserved one-room historic schoolhouse. Although one set of these rules is reported to have been taken from the records of a British Columbia school district and another from an unnamed teacher's magazine, the existence of such rules proves that documents intended to guide teacher conduct were important enough to be published, dispatched to teachers, and worked into teachers' contracts. These rules were explicit in expectation, highly regulatory, and difficult to misinterpret. For example, teachers,

after ten hours in the school, may spend the remaining time reading the Bible. ... Any teacher who smokes, uses liquor in any form, frequents pool or public halls, or gets shaved in a barber shop will give good reason to suspect his work, intention, integrity, and honesty ... You may not dress in bright colours. ... You may not under any circumstances dye your hair. ... Your dress must not be any shorter than two inches above the ankle. ... Sweep the floor at least once daily; scrub the floor at least once a week with hot, soapy water; clean the blackboards at least once a day; start the fire at 7:00 a.m. so the room will be warm by 8:00 a.m. (Evolution of Education Museum, 1872 & 1915, p. 1)

To our 21st century eyes, these rules seem archaic and intrusive. However, these rules of conduct reflected the values that society held and the expectations society had for teachers at that time. The high degree of specification made these rules next to impossible to misunderstand, thus providing teachers with an excellent understanding of what was and was not expected of them in terms of professional conduct. These rules functioned as a precursor to codes and fully “describe[d] duties professionals must perform, conduct they must forgo and situations they must avoid” (Fullinwider, 1996, p. 72). Their degree of specificity was echoed in Saskatchewan teachers’ first official code of ethics entitled *Canons of Teaching Ethics* (STF, 1935b).

### **1935—The STF’s First Official Code of Ethics**

Saskatchewan teachers obtained professional status soon after the 1935 provincial election. The re-elected Liberal government requested that the STF become “unified to such an extent that they have a professional consciousness that [would] support an ethical code” (STF, 1935a, p. 2). In order to comply with Government wishes as well as fulfilling the obligations of their new professional status, a motion was made at the January 1935 STF Executive Meeting that “A committee of one, Mr. J.H. Sturdy, be appointed to formulate a code of ethics” (STF, 1935c, p. 1). Sturdy’s report on ethics was subsequently written and published in the June 1935 edition of the STF newsletter, *The Bulletin*, and distributed to teachers across the province. As in 1915, the 1935 Canon was exclusively regulatory in tone, and referred to itself as a “set of rules which particularize all the duties of the teacher” (STF, 1935b, p. 7). Indeed, the five-page Canon included 45 highly detailed duties to the following entities: The State, The Board of Trustees, The Department of Education, The Pupils, Fellow Teachers, The Professional Organization, and Himself.

Each section of the Canon began with the following variations emphasizing duty: “He owes a duty to...”, “It is the duty of the teacher...”, or “It shall be the duty of the teacher...” (STF, 1935b, pp. 7–11). Strong verbs typically followed these statements. For example, teachers were to cooperate, avoid, seek, submit, send, exercise vigilance over, report, deliver up, familiarize, accept, teach, maintain, organize, provide, secure, refrain from, and so on (STF, 1935b). The entirety of the Canon specified detailed chores, comprehensive duties, and precise behaviours expected of teachers. Though it could be argued that the entire document concerned conduct, there are several examples that specifically related to teachers’ professional behavior. For example, the Canon specifically ties teacher conduct to competence and stated that it was the duty of the teacher to familiarize themselves “with the terms of the School Act, Superannuation Act, the Act respecting the Teaching Profession, the Curricula, and the rules and regulations set by the department ... [as well as] ... accept any task, rule or regulation imposed by the department and conscientiously execute the terms of the same (STF, 1935b, pp. 8–9). Teachers were also duty bound to cooperate with inspectors of schools, diligently teach all required

subjects as prescribed by the department, maintain order and discipline, manage the school, organize a time table, keep an accurate register, promote students to another class or grade as the teacher deemed expedient, provide to department officials any information they requested about the school, and to give permission for new teachers to practice in their classroom and be observed in their practice teaching (STF, 1935b).

Not only were teachers to competently perform all classroom-related functions, their behaviour towards students was also stipulated in the Canon. It was the duty of teachers to “secure the respect and confidence of the pupils by being proficient, just, honorable, tolerant and sympathetic (STF, 1935b, p. 9). Further elaboration was often included to elucidate the reasoning behind a listed expectation throughout the Canon. For example, teachers’ conduct was to at “all times [be] exemplary” because they were “at all times under the observation of the pupils” (STF, 1935b, p. 9). “Nothing so readily and completely destroys the respect and confidence of the pupil as to observe blameworthy conduct on the part of the teacher; nor must the teacher forget the adverse effect his misconduct has on the character of the pupil (STF, 1935b, p. 9).

The 1935 Canon also included expectations regarding how teachers should conduct themselves towards others and which habits they should seek to emulate for themselves. For example, it was the duty of the teacher “to maintain an attitude of helpfulness, courtesy and consideration to his fellow teacher” (STF, 1935b, p. 9) and to never “speak disparagingly of the ability, character, or conduct of a fellow teacher, but rather to defend his good name as he would his own” (STF, 1935b, p. 10). The teacher was also expected “to cultivate habits of neatness, cleanliness, sobriety, courtesy, toleration, industry and all other desirable qualities of character” (STF, 1935b, p. 11). Demonstrating the importance of Anglo-Protestant values during this time period, the Canon’s list of personal character traits, read strikingly similarly to the moral characteristics described in Scripture such as “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” (*Holy Bible, New Living Translation*, 2007, Galatians 5:22-23), to “do unto others whatever you would like them to do to you” (*Holy Bible, New Living Translation*, 2007, Matthew 7:12) and to “love your neighbor as yourself” (*Holy Bible, New Living Translation*, 2007, Mark 12:11) and resembled those characteristics that were also included in the Rules for Teachers (Evolution of Education Museum, 1872 & 1915). All of these examples demonstrate that the explicitness of the Canon’s delineation of professional conduct left little doubt for teachers as to how to behave themselves.

It would be remiss to not point out the patriarchy of the Canon. Its last expectation stated that a teacher was “to bear in mind that he can only maintain the high traditions of his profession by being by fact as well as in a name a gentleman” (STF, 1935b, pp. 10–11). Given that a large percentage of teachers in the province were women at the time—in fact, an official from the Department of Education in 1938 was reported to have said that unemployment problems could be solved if only “the 55, 000 lady teachers in Canada were eliminated from their positions, making way for men” (STF, 1988, p. 4)—it is interesting to note that Sturdy, author of the Canon, penned the importance of being a gentleman (STF, 1935b). The use of this descriptor and the many instances where the male pronoun was used was problematic for several reasons. First, the Canon (STF, 1935b) does not make clear what being a “gentleman” involves. Secondly, if all teachers did know what the statement meant, it would have been difficult for the many women teachers in the province to enact it. This statement speaks to the probable bias of the writer who was a man, and of societal biases. It also represents a time period in history where teaching was

seen as an extension of mothers' work where females could hold primary teaching positions, but not secondary or administrative ones or be paid the same as their male counterparts (Hallman, 1997).

### **Bridging to the Present**

No matter the particular section of the Canon, it is important to recognize that teachers' ethical responsibilities were described overall as "duties." Teachers' ethical responsibilities prior to the Canon were called "rules." The use of the terms rules and duties is significant because these word choices implied strict obligation and binding adherence. The Rules for Teachers (Evolution of Education Museum, 1872 & 1915) and the Canon (STF, 1935b) explicitly defined the ethical responsibilities of teachers, leaving little to individual interpretation. In the most literal sense, the Canon (1935b) was an enunciation of teacher responsibilities (Campbell, 2000) describing "duties professionals must perform, conduct they must forgo and situations they must avoid" (Fullinwider, 1996, p. 72). The duties that were explicitly included were not simply a list of professional values and ideals that should guide behaviour, but rather were identified as obligations that must be strictly adhered to. Even though the majority of these duties have been removed from inclusion in the present-day Code, teachers are still largely responsible for conducting themselves in alignment with, at least in some ways, the 1935 expectations. However, between 1935 and the present, the specificity of expectations regarding appropriate conduct embedded in the STF codes has diminished over time.

### **The 1957 Code of Ethics**

In 1954, the minutes of the STF Executive indicate that a committee was formed to create a new ethical code. The committee accomplished this by holding ethics workshops across the province over a 3-year period, and by working with teachers "to define the ethical issues [they faced] and articulate the profession's standards for ethical conduct" (STF, 1999, p. 1). This process resulted in a new four-page Code of Ethics in 1957.

No longer called rules or duties, the 1957 version emphasized five key *principles* regarding appropriate conduct in relation to students, then parents, then the public, then the employer, and finally the profession. It is interesting to note the shift in the ordering of those to whom teachers were responsible. While government, stakeholders, policies and contractual matters had been listed first in earlier versions of the Code, in 1957, students were listed first. Additionally, upon examination of principles specifically referring to conduct, the 1957 version of the STF ethical code was decidedly less prescriptive than it had been in 1935.

The 1957 Code sprinkled several items relating to conduct into numerous sections of the document. The 1957 Code preamble recognized "that the quality of education reflects the ideals, motives, preparation, and conduct of the members of the teaching profession [and] that whosoever chooses teaching as a career assumes the obligation to conduct himself in accordance with the ideals of the profession" (STF, 1957, p. 1). However, in contrast to previous codes, specifics were now tempered in detail and other STF codes (e.g., the Standards of Practice and the Code of Collective Interests) that eventually did address such specifics were not published until 2013 to 2015. The 1957 STF Code of Ethics excluded, for example, explicit information about "the ideals of the profession," so teachers were left to decide what conduct was acceptable—or not—based on their own understandings of what such ideals entailed. Teachers were also expected to "adhere to any reasonable pattern of behaviour accepted by the profession"

(STF, 1957, p. 2), but once again, no description of reasonable patterns of behavior were included, leaving uncertainty about what exactly “reasonable patterns of behavior” were. Other word choices throughout the document referred to conduct such as “acting fairly,” “cooperating,” and even mention “working towards strengthening the community’s moral, spiritual and intellectual life” (STF, 1957, p. 2), but unlike the Rules for Teachers and the 1935 Canon, teachers were no longer explicitly told how to behave, which specific characteristics to emulate, or what exact chores/duties were necessary to complete.

### **The 1973 Code of Ethics**

The 1957 Code of Ethics was utilized until March 1973 when the STF archives show that teachers new to the profession asserted that the Code was “cumbersome, unnecessarily moralistic, characterized by trite expressions, and inflexibility.” They pointed out that the 1957 Code “interfered” in many ways “with their individuality” (STF, 1972, p. 1). A new committee was struck to create a new code which employed new language and a new structure. For example, the term *Principles* was replaced with *Commitments*, a section dedicated to teachers’ obligations to parents was eliminated, and with all conduct addressed on a single page, the 1973 Code was decidedly brief in comparison to previous codes.

In the 1973 Code teachers’ ethical commitments are reordered once again, listing them in the following order: (a) the student; (b) the employer; (c) the profession; and (d) the community. When examining the 1973 Code for commitments that spoke specifically to conduct, it is difficult to locate detailed information relating to what exact behaviours were required of teachers. Any mention of morals or spirituality was eliminated and the word “conduct” only appears once in the whole document. Under the section, Commitments to the Profession, a teacher was instructed “to conduct himself at all times, so that no dishonour befalls him, or through him, his profession” (STF, 1973, p.1). There was no information regarding what dishonorable conduct was, or conversely, what was considered to be honorable conduct that a teacher should display. This document was used to guide the conduct of teachers in Saskatchewan, with only minor language changes, until the year 2000.

### **The 2000 Code of Ethics**

In December of 1997, a committee was asked to “examine the professional ethics of teachers, review the Code of Ethics, examine teacher competency and standards of practice, and consider the structure of the teachers’ professional organization” (STF, 2013, p. 9). In the resulting Code, category headings that had been included in previous STF Codes, including Duties in 1935, Principles in 1957, and Commitments in 1973, were eliminated. The term *conduct* is excluded completely from the 2000 STF Code of Ethics. In fact, all moralistic language regarding the cultivation of qualities of good character, or stipulations about how teachers should conduct themselves, was almost completely omitted. The only article that addressed notions of conduct indicated that teachers were expected “to act at all times in a manner that brings no dishonour to the individual or the teaching profession” (STF, 2000, p. 7). However, no details were provided about the conduct that could bring honour or dishonour, leaving judgements about appropriate conduct up to individual teachers.

### **In the Present (2021)**

#### **SPTRB is Mandated**

As noted in our introduction, the media debate questioning the appropriateness of STF disciplinary structures (e.g., French, 2013) and the public release of recommendations arising from the Kendel (2013) report, eventually resulted in the establishment of the Saskatchewan Professional Teachers Regulatory Board (SPTRB) by the Government of Saskatchewan. The Registered Teachers Act (Province of Saskatchewan, 2015) proclaimed on July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015, enabled the SPTRB—a single, independent authority responsible for regulating teachers—to begin operations including teacher certification and registration, as well as receiving, investigating, and hearing of complaints regarding teacher conduct and competence (SPTRB, 2015a). The Registered Teachers Act (Province of Saskatchewan, 2015) effectively rescinded the STF’s power to discipline members accused of professional incompetence and professional misconduct.

Shortly after its establishment, the SPTRB (2015a) published a document entitled, *Standards of Professional Conduct*, which laid out how teacher professional conduct would be regulated and investigated by the Board. This brochure sets out five standards of conduct that delineated principles for behaviour expected of Saskatchewan teachers. The SPTRB (2015b) standards state that registered teachers:

1. base their relationships with learners on mutual trust and respect,
2. have regard for the safety and academic, physical, emotional and spiritual well-being of learners,
3. act with honesty and integrity,
4. take responsibility for maintaining the quality of their practice, and
5. uphold public trust and confidence in the education profession.

Included along with each of the five standards, are several indicators (or examples) of how teachers could demonstrate each standard. For instance, should teachers wonder how best to demonstrate standard number two—that is, that they “have regard for the safety and academic, physical, emotional and spiritual well-being of learners,” they can consult indicators described along with that standard—for example, teachers could “demonstrate this standard when they implement appropriate, consistent, and clearly articulated rules and expectations” (SPTRB, 2015b). With the provision of such guiding information for each standard, teachers have access to defined parameters of conduct which, though not as prescriptive as the rules of 1915 and Canon of 1935, afford more structure than offered in the present-day STF Code of Ethics.

### **The 2017 STF Code of Ethics**

Given the legislation passed in 2015, it is apparent that the Saskatchewan Government believed that public trust in teacher professionalism had eroded to such an extent that the separation of STF advocacy and disciplinary functions was necessary. This legislation directly impacted the most recent version of the STF Code of Ethics.

With implementation of the new regulatory measures, the STF Executive established the Teacher Success and Professionalism Working Committee in August 2015 to review changes to teacher regulation in Saskatchewan as well as to review current STF codes and standards. The Committee’s work, among other items, resulted in revisions to the Code of Ethics—last changed in 2000—and now contained in STF Bylaw 6 (STF, 2017). The majority of the proposed

revisions concerned minor changes in wording, especially when a more positive framing of a statement was possible (STF, 2016).

As in 1973 and 2000, the 2017 STF Code does not include the word “conduct.” Teachers are still expected, “To act at all times in a way that maintains the honour and dignity of the individual teacher and the teaching profession,” (STF, 2017, p. 40) but no information about how to demonstrate honour and dignity was included. While individual teacher’s sense of acting honorably and with dignity is reflected in choices they make regarding their professional conduct, without more specificity about particular behaviours that demonstrate acting honorably and with integrity, teachers are left to rely on their personal beliefs, which may or may not meet ethical standards expected by the profession.

Other ambiguous commitments can be found in this document such as: “To strive to make the teaching profession attractive and respected in ideals and practices,” and “To act in a manner that respects the collective interests of the profession” (STF, 2017, p. 40). Once again, each individual teacher must decide and enact for themselves the degree to which they will “strive,” and each individual teacher must define what “attractive” and “respected” ideals and practices are. Based on their interpretation of what these terms mean, individual teachers must then delineate which actions would be considered respectful to the collective. There may be as many interpretations of the language of the Code as there are teachers, further diluting specificity.

This pattern of ambiguity intersperses the entirety of the document. For example, in the Commitments to Teaching and Learning section teachers are to commit “To provid[ing] professional service to the best of [their] ability” (STF, 2017, p. 40). However, the professional services expected are not defined and one teacher’s best ability may be significantly different from another’s ability. If required services and providing one’s best are not clearly articulated, teachers are at risk of not meeting appropriate professional standards of conduct and facing disciplinary action if reported, investigated, and found guilty of misconduct.

Indistinctness is evident in the last section of Commitments to the Community as well. For example, teachers are “to maintain an awareness of the need for changes in the public education system and advocate appropriately for such changes through individual or collective action” (STF, 2017, p. 40). As in other sections, more clarity is needed so that teachers have unambiguous guidance in pondering questions such as: To what level should teachers be aware? What changes are required? What is appropriate advocacy? If the advocacy actions they undertake are deemed professionally inappropriate, can they be punished for trying to enact this commitment to the best of their individual interpretation?

If statements regarding expected commitments by teachers cannot be written using clear and coherent language, it begs the question whether such statements should be included in the professional code of ethics in the first place. Monteiro (2015) wrote that teachers cannot afford to make decisions based on “moral subjectivity and relativity [because if their] competence and conduct are not professionally acceptable, the profession’s public image is significantly and negatively affected.” (p. 74). Martin (2000) stated that ethical codes must “(a) [identify] the duties that are or should be standardized within professional codes of ethics applicable to all members of a profession, and (b) [grapple] with how to apply the duties to particular situations where they conflict or have unclear implications” (pp. 3–4). When codes of ethics include only the collectively agreed upon fundamental duties and explicit standards of conduct expected of

registered teachers (The Teaching Council in Ireland, 2012), teachers are less confused and more accountable. When ethical codes are free from morals and values that differ from individual to individual, they “enable us to appreciate professional ethics as a source of meaning in work, rather than merely a set of onerous requirements” (Martin, 2000, p. 7) and become complementary to legislation.

## Discussion

The STF Code of Ethics evolved in the context of a changing society, which is made clear in the findings of this historical analysis. It is apparent that what was considered appropriate conduct and embedded in the evolving Code was, at least in part, a response to shifting societal norms, values, and expectations.

In the years preceding the creation of the STF, teachers’ work was dictated by a set of rules stipulating everything from skirt length and hair colour, to where, what, and with whom teachers could spend their leisure time. These rules, which left little room for individual interpretation, made clear that professional conduct was considered to be synonymous with moral uprightness based on Christian principles. Rather than looking to personal understandings of professionalism, the rules insisted that teachers should look to the authority of church and government to understand appropriate conduct. Teachers of unquestionable moral standards were to “instill in the next generation a sense of obedience to a rigid moral and religious code” (Schwimmer & Maxwell, 2017, p. 149).

To a large degree the 1935 Canon articulated professional expectations that also represented the thinking of the dominant Anglo-Protestant elite and emphasized the need for “British” citizens of good character as a sign of Canadian nationalism. The Canon (STF, 1935b) emphasized the idea that the school was the training ground meant to teach British norms and values where teachers would break children of their family traditions (read “foreign” cultural/spiritual traditions) and encourage their students in “Anglo-Saxon ideals, traits, and historic traditions” (Foght, 1918, p. 18). The Canon’s (STF, 1935b) list of expected personal character traits for teachers reads strikingly similarly to the moral characteristics rooted in Anglo-Protestant values and described in scripture. Hence, appropriate conduct for teachers, as indicated in the Canon, extolled the requirement that teachers both obey and collaborate with the church, government, school boards, and Department of Education (STF, 1935b) in order to reach “comprehensive understanding” (STF, 1935b, p. 8) of appropriate conduct.

While the 1957 STF Code of Ethics remained anchored in expectations of conduct based on the authority of church and state, the one-page 1973 STF Code represents a clear break with former expectations. The idea of explicitly following the rules without complaint in subservience to those in authority was usurped by an increasing demand for flexibility based on the rise of individualism, especially as connected to judgements about appropriate professional conduct. As the 1960s unfolded, Saskatchewan society was increasingly influenced by emerging popular culture and “liberalization” introduced sweeping ideological change. Exemplifying this movement, the [Canadian Bill of Rights \(Government of Canada, 1960\)](#), considered groundbreaking at the time, demonstrated the liberal ideological shift impacting citizens across the entire country. By the early 1970s, teachers expressed their wishes that the Code become more flexible and less moralistic (STF, 1972) since the old Code had “interfered with their individuality” (STF, 1972, p. 1). No longer as didactic or duty-driven, the 1973 Code’s content mirrored a shifting society that allowed for individual

interpretations regarding appropriate conduct. By 2000, the STF Code appears to reflect how Saskatchewan society was grappling with understandings of acceptable norms of behaviour, as was Canadian society in general. Even though there seemed to be a shared “accepting attitude towards the country’s ethnic diversity” (Parkin & Mendelsohn, 2003, p. 4), there appears to have been an undermining of trust in authority, including government, as well as an undermining of appreciation for collective action (Vail, 2000) that once seemed to be the backbone of Saskatchewan political and societal values. In addition, by the late 20th century, it was generally understood across Canada that questions about appropriate conduct differed according to varying cultural traditions. How to determine agreed upon standards of behavior was complicated given the understanding that values and morals were perceived to be “relative.” Perhaps it should not be surprising, therefore, that the 2000 STF Code of Ethics completely excluded any references to teacher conduct based on religious principles and that specificity regarding expected behaviour was missing. By 2017 following establishment of the SPTRB, the STF, stripped of its disciplinary functions, produced a revised Code of Ethics that was, fundamentally, a replica of the 2000 Code of Ethics. Neither version provided clarity with respect to how teacher should demonstrate behaviour in line with the expectations outlined in the code documents.

However, as we highlighted above, the SPTRB’s regulatory bylaws do serve to provide teachers with more detailed information about expected conduct than that which they have access to by way of the STF’s Code of Ethics. Not only do the SPTRB (2015b) regulatory bylaws describe both standards and examples related to conduct, the bylaws also provide specificity regarding what is to be considered misconduct. The document specifically indicates that “the following conduct on the part of a registered teacher is misconduct:

- conduct which is harmful to the best interest of pupils or affects the ability of a registered teacher to teach;
- any intentional act or omission designed to humiliate or cause distress or loss of dignity to any person in school or out of school which may include verbal or non-verbal behaviour;
- physically abusive conduct which involves the application of physical force which is excessive or inappropriate in the circumstances to any person;
- sexually abusive conduct that violates a person’s sexual integrity, whether consensual or not which includes sexual exploitation;
- an act or omission that, in the circumstances, would reasonably be regarded by the profession as disgraceful, dishonourable or unprofessional;
- being in violation of a law if the violation is relevant to the registered teacher’s suitability to hold a certificate of qualification or if the violation would reasonably be regarded as placing one or more pupils in danger;
- signing or issuing a document in the registered teacher’s professional capacity that the registered teacher knows or ought to know contains a false, improper or misleading statement;
- falsifying a record relating to the registered teacher’s professional responsibilities; or

- providing false information or documents to the registrar or to any other person with respect to the registered teacher’s professional qualifications. (SPTRB, 2015c, pp.10–11)

Clearly, both the SPTRB and government legislation provide teachers with unambiguous information about expected conduct as well as insight into what is to be considered conduct unbecoming. Unfortunately, the 2017 STF Code of Ethics does not.

### **Conclusion**

Recently issued versions of the STF Code of Ethics are distinctly aspirational rather than regulatory, and appear to reflect current societal views regarding authority, individual rights and freedoms, along with, perhaps, a dose of “me-centeredness” (Wishlow, 2001). Though faith in individualism and the right to self-expression may shed a positive light on human abilities, suggesting that we should be confident that individuals have the capacity to decide how to conduct themselves professionally, such freedom can also lead to confusion when clear expectations are not provided. As Campbell (2000) stated, codes framed in a positive perspective are “fundamentally optimistic and uplifting [but also] may be easier, clearer and thus more useful in an application sense to be specific from the negative perspective” (p. 212). If ethical guidelines are not generally understood by all teachers in Saskatchewan, then each teacher must act on their own understandings, which may or may not lead to professionally appropriate behaviour. As Schwimmer and Maxwell (2017) stated, “The more open and flexible [code] has the advantage of enlarging the range of possible situations and ethical concerns. ... Of course, what is gained in terms of openness is lost in terms of precision” (p. 146).

When comparing the 1935 and 2017 STF ethical codes, it is immediately apparent that the present-day version is decidedly more aspirational than regulatory and no longer provides the explicit guidelines of the past. While this diminished explicitness in the STF Code of Ethics certainly meshes with current ways of thinking about freedom of expression and anti-authoritarianism, it could be argued that the lack of specificity leaves teachers uncertain as to what is and is not appropriate conduct. Because teaching professionals are given an enormous amount of trust, we posit that development of a collective and concrete understanding of professional behaviour and conduct unbecoming, is essential.

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## **Better Together: The Role of Critical Friendship in Empowering Emerging Academics**

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### **Abstract**

Starting a career in academia is often fraught with uncertainty, turbulence, and isolation, as aspiring professors manage multiple, often contract-based roles in order to advance their curriculum vitae and secure a livelihood. In this research study, we use narrative inquiry to illuminate the role our critical friendship has played in our academic experience. Turning to the ethic of care (Noddings, 2006) as a theoretical and conceptual framework, we reveal to ourselves, and to the academic landscape, the common themes that contextualize academia for emerging scholars, including seeking employment, managing our roles as graduate students, dealing with tensions in the workplace, and managing the logistics of personal life events as they pertain to the workplace. The ethic of care was steeped into the continued development of each cyclical phase of our critical friendship (Wideman-Johnston & Brewer, 2014). Furthermore, our critical friendship provided empowerment, an overarching theme in our data, as we engaged with the joys and pains of being emerging academics through continued unguarded conversations (Baskerville & Goldblatt, 2009; Wideman-Johnston & Brewer, 2014). As our critical friendship grew more trusting and empowering, the fulfillment of “natural care” (Noddings, 2006) was realized. We share our findings to offer a new way forward, whereby authentic critical friendships provide the care necessary to empowering emerging academics.

*Keywords:* Critical friendship; emerging academic; narrative inquiry; ethic of care; incivility; precarious academic.

## **Better Together: The Role of Critical Friendship in Empowering Emerging Academics**

In this article, we explore how critical friendship can serve to empower emerging academics as they manage the multiple roles and expectations associated with graduate and contract academic work. Critical friendship was operationalized in our study as an authentic friendship between people with mutual understanding of one another's career context and aspirations (Baskerville & Goldblatt, 2009; Wideman-Johnston & Brewer, 2014). We use Noddings' (2006) ethic of care as a theoretical and conceptual framework to ground the study. We used narrative inquiry to illuminate how critical friendship was enacted during turbulent times experienced in our emerging academic careers. The findings indicate common experiences in the emerging phases of academic work, including seeking employment, managing roles as graduate students, dealing with tensions in the workplace, and managing logistics of personal life events as they pertain to the workplace. Moreover, an overall theme of empowerment was evident throughout the data and informs the benefits of critical friendship for emerging academics. Our study transforms utility-based understandings of critical friendship (Swaffield, 2003; 2004; Swaffield & MacBeath, 2005) into a model that is based on trust, provides necessary care, and empowers emerging academics as they pursue both individual and collective goals.

### **Critical Friendship as a Concept in Education Contexts**

*Critical friendship* as a concept emerged in the 1970's and was considered to be an activity related to self-appraisal (Storey & Richard, 2013). The concept was further developed by Costa and Kallick (1993) who defined critical friendship as follows:

A trusted person who asks provocative questions, provides data to be examined through another lens, and offers critique of a person's work as a friend. A critical friend takes the time to fully understand the context of the work presented and the outcomes that the person or group is working toward. The friend is an advocate for the success of that work. (p. 50)

Further, in the context of education, Costa and Kallick (1993) operationalized critical friendship as a formalized process that includes a set conference time for the critical friends to meet and a six-step process for conferencing:

1. The critical friend learner shares their practice.
2. The critical friend asks questions to further understand and add clarity to the context.
3. The critical friend learner shares the intended outcomes for the conference.
4. The critical friend provides thoughtful feedback that will support elevating the work.
5. The critical friend asks questions and critiques the practice to offer alternate perspectives.
6. Both critical friends reflect independently and write.

Limited research has been done on the role of gender in critical friendship. Behizadeh et al. (2019) utilized critical friendship groups to develop problem solving and reflective practices for preservice teachers. The participants in Behizadeh et al.'s study differed in genders. The researchers' found that gender did not influence how preservice teachers reframed obstacles in educational contexts, and showed how critical friendship can be a significant tool to interrupt ideas and practices in educational contexts such as deficit based views of students.

Swaffield (2003; 2004) and Swaffield and MacBeath (2005) took up the concept of critical friendship through several scholarly projects, situating critical friendship within the field of educational leadership, particularly in K–12 schools. Swaffield’s work with critical friendship has added volume to the literature about critical friendship, though as Gibbs and Angelides (2008) pointed out, Swaffield’s definition of critical friendship does not sufficiently honour the true nature of friendship. Where Swaffield and MacBeath (2005) asserted that critical friends can be implicated in formal school evaluations (and that trust in a critical friendship can be developed over 2 days of “intense” relationship building, Swaffield, 2004), Gibbs and Angelides turned to a history of philosophical debate and reasoning about what a “friend” entails. Swaffield (2004) did admit that critical friendships work better when the friend is authentic rather than “imposed” (p. 273). Gibbs and Angelides argued that Swaffield’s understanding of trust is more of a contractual agreement than actual trust, which would be needed in a true friendship. Gibbs and Angelides suggested that Swaffield’s version of critical friendship offered inferior advantages compared to an actual friendship and offered a hierarchy of relationships that they believed better defined the various types of interactions Swaffield suggested. These included critical friendship, critical companionship, and critical acquaintance. Gibbs and Angelides (2008) proposed that critical friendship can be defined as:

Critical friendship is based on friendship where the participants mutually critique their practice. This critiquing is within the nature of their friendship, which extends prior to and beyond the specific of the critique. The worthiness of the critical intervention is based on trust and respect for the vulnerability and wellbeing of both partners who have mutual concern, status and regard. The critique is made with its purpose being the critiqued. (p. 222)

Gibbs and Angelides (2008) supported Swaffield’s position of situating critical friendship within the school, but concluded that the goal of a critical friendship (within a school) is “a long-lasting, engaging and loving relationship with the school” (p. 223).

Baskerville and Goldblatt (2009) added more to the research about critical friendship by offering a model of how a critical friendship develops. The authors described their journey to critical friendship when they were working as teacher advisers in New Zealand. They grew into critical friends and used the techniques of critical friendship as they advised teachers in their practice. Their definition of a critical friend is “a capable reflective practitioner (with integrity and passion for teaching and learning) who establishes safe ways of working and negotiating shared understandings to support and challenge a colleague in the deprivatisation of their practice” (p. 206). Baskerville and Goldblatt (2009) frequently cited Swaffield’s (2003; 2004) work on critical friendship and although they seemed to theoretically understand critical friendship as a formal process, their evidence speaks to critical friendship being more of an organic and authentic process than they initially positioned it. Baskerville and Goldblatt (2009) stated that “the choice of a critical friend arose naturally as a result of a team of people working together towards a common goal” (p. 215) and explained that after they realized they were critical friends, they turned to Swaffield to better structure their work together. Baskerville and Goldblatt’s (2009) phases of developing a critical friendship included the following: (a) professional indifference, (b) tentative trust, (c) reliance, (d) conviction, and (e) unguarded conversations.

Wideman-Johnston and Brewer (2014) furthered the development of the concept of critical friendship by refining the concept into the academic field, suggesting that the phases operated in a cyclical way, and that entrance into the cycle of critical friendship growth depends on the status that each member of the friendship holds. The literature about critical friendship revealed that some scholars tend to favour the “critical” function of a critical friendship, while others balance both concepts.

### **Precarity and Incivility in the Academy**

In situating critical friendship in the academic field, it becomes necessary to explore the literature pertaining to the context of precarious work in higher education (with an emphasis on contract academic work as it applies to this current study) as well as critical friendship in action in academic settings. Heffernan and Bosetti (2021) researched the presence and implications of incivility in higher education settings between faculty. *Incivility* is described as bullying by “smart bullies who know what bullying is and how bullying is identified by university policies” (Heffernan and Bosetti, 2021, p. 1). Incivility in academic settings is increasing across all levels within the university setting. Research indicated a sustained disconnect between universities existing as an educational institution and as a corporate setting with faculty being defined by “performative and quantifiable measures” (Heffernan & Bosetti, 2021, p. 3). Enslin and Hedge (2019) described the neoliberal university setting as a capitalist market-driven place where academics are pushed to perform better and do more each iteration of performance appraisals. Enslin and Hedge (2019) turned to literature about friendship to validate their claim of being friends beyond a utility need and that their friendship, though not “ideal” according to Aristotle, is “real.” Though they did not label their friendship as a critical friendship, Enslin and Hedge (2019) did advocate for friendship in the academic setting that mirrors many of the elements of a critical friendship, noting: “Concomitantly we have indicated that it can entail generative intellectual and moral activity and growth through trusting and honest reflection on, for example, ideas of practice and principles in research and scholarship and teaching and learning” (p. 394). Turning to contract academic work as self-identified racialized early career academics (ECAs), Mbatha et al. (2020) described their roles in such a context as being undervalued, highly competitive, lacking guidance, and disposable. They noted, “Overall, more often than not, we feel overwhelmed, confused, isolated, and sometimes even inadequate as we grapple with teaching, research, service, and having to complete our doctoral studies” (Mbatha et al., 2020, p. 33). Mbatha et al. talked about attaining their positions because they were exceptional students but as soon as they entered the role, they became void of a voice within their institution. They stated, “We argue that institutions of higher learning should approach ECAs with an intersectional approach and avoid seeing them as individuals without doctorates and thus, underqualified; but rather, allow them the opportunity for growth without being stifled, suppressed, and marginalised” (p. 41). In developing a critical friendship over time as a group of four early career academics, they were able to share information to support one another in their growth and success as scholars. They were also not bound to pervasive values for competition as scholars within the same field: “Normally in a competitive and individualistic environment, the different stages would have created a hierarchy. But within the critical friendship, we embrace and see intersectional differences as an opportunity to learn from each other” (Mbatha et al., 2020, p. 37). Friendship, in these studies, was used to buffer against the hegemonic, individualistic, competitive, and demanding landscape of contract academia in neoliberal university settings.

## **Intersectionality in Critical Friendship**

Scholarship about intersectionality (Carbado et al., 2013; Crenshaw, 1989; 1991), within critical friendships is sparse (Mbatha et al., 2020). Clarke and McCall (2013) imagined that intersectionality can be recognized and studied in identities beyond race and gender and within each classification, there are additional intricacies of identity creating one's position in a given setting. Clarke and McCall (2013) also argued that intersectionality is evident in social sciences research even though it is not explicitly named as such, and explain how intersectionality can move beyond being a definition to being thought of as a process within research. Mbatha et al. (2020) noted their work as ECAs was tied up in intersectionality related to age, gender, race, culture, and inexperience in scholarship and teaching. Adding to the realities and possibilities of intersectionality in academia, Young et al. (2012) stated that Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples need to attend to their relational responsibilities to “begin to trace the intergenerational narrative reverberations of colonization continuing to shape the curricular, the institutional, and the structural narratives” (p. 49). Further, Wideman-Johnston (2016; 2020) shared her narrative of being a woman with a disability working as a contract academic. Through Wideman-Johnston's adversities related to gender, fertility, disability, and precarious work status, she reframed stereotypical understandings of chronic illness to bring attention to the individual intersectionalities and uncertainties that come from being an emerging academic.

The academic space continues to privilege the voices, opinions, and interests of the dominant. In the research we have explored for this study, the dominant refers to male (Mayhew & Rydstrand, 2019; Mbatha et al., 2020), White (Crenshaw, 1989; 1991), able-bodied (Wideman-Johnston, 2016; 2020), individualistic (Mayhew & Rydstrand, 2019), competitive (Enslin & Hedge, 2019), and tenured (Enslin & Hedge, 2019; Mbatha et al., 2020) people. Like Clarke and McCall (2013), we imagine many other areas of intersectionality within the context of precarious labour in the academy and we bring an assumption that intersections outside of the dominant players will continue to marginalize aspiring scholars. This assumption is highlighted by Cranston (2019) who stated,

Almost self-indulgently, we want to believe, or maybe even convince ourselves, that if we listen carefully and take in someone else's story, then we have contributed to their betterment, and the world's by simply paying attention, listening, and then celebrating their resilience. Comforting sentiments such as these ring hollow in terms of social change. (p. 90)

Critical friendship offers an opportunity for marginalised emerging academics to embrace the context they are in and find ways to mitigate the neoliberal conditions of the academy while supporting one another to make positive change in each of their academic careers.

## **Feminist Approaches to Critical Friendship**

Studies focusing specifically on critical friendship from feminist perspectives were not found in our literature search; however, there was research that incorporated the values of friendship in academic settings, and studies about critical friendship such as Mbatha et al. (2020), which describe disparities experienced by female scholars in neoliberal academic contexts. In an article about academic friendship, Mayhew and Rydstrand (2019) described their friendship in an academic setting by describing a significant event—the giving of a poster depicting a feminist author that both scholars cherished—and using the significance of the event and poster to explain

their friendship. The authors focused on “risks” associated with collaborative academic settings, including being seen as less-than-capable compared to the “model of lone masculine genius” (Mayhew & Rydstrand, 2019, p. 287). Mayhew and Rydstrand wrote their paper on the premise that risks would need to be taken to both engage in an academic friendship, and to advocate for the benefits of such collaboration, especially between females who continually have more to lose and less to gain. Mayhew and Rydstrand (2019) stated:

Collaborating with her on this project has made me a better scholar—more creative, open and adventurous—and I want to acknowledge how powerful that is in an industrial climate that operates on a logic of competition. In this context, collaboration with the enemy—the rival early career researcher—is undertaken in joyful shared defiance. (p. 288)

Furthermore, Noddings (2006) described the ethic of care with feminist approaches to educational philosophy, though Noddings clarified that caring should not be considered a feminine or women’s ethic. Within the ethic of care, the ultimate goal is to promote natural caring and to do this, Noddings repeatedly turned to the need for trusting relationships and mutual agreement on what caring and cared-for represents in a given relationship. More attention to feminist perspectives on critical friendship is needed.

### **A Model for Critical Friendship in Academia**

Our experience (Wideman-Johnston & Brewer, 2014) was that our critical friendship blurred the lines between professional and personal contexts and offered strength to our abilities in both. We recognized that power imbalances can contribute to different entry points in the trust building aspect of developing a critical friendship as proposed by Baskerville and Goldblatt (2009) and that our critical friendship existed in a cyclical manner where we revisited each phase beyond trust so that the friendship was in continual growth and serving the changing needs of each critical friend (see Figure 1). Therefore, we reject Swaffield’s construction of critical friendship. Swaffield’s concept of critical friendship assumes trust can be built quickly and that critical friendships are developed as a means to an end, with a clear goal and timeline fixed to the relationship that ultimately concludes. We take an authentic approach with equitable emphasis on the “friendship” aspect of a critical friend, similar to what Gibbs and Angelides (2008) suggest. In an effort to reconcile the varying constructions of critical friendship with our own experiences and purposes, we situate our understanding and experience of critical friendship in Noddings’ (2006) explanation of the ethic of care. In the ethic of care, there is a focus on trusting and caring relationships. Noddings (2006) stated that “ethical caring’s great contribution is to guide action long enough for natural caring to be restored and for people once again to interact with mutual and spontaneous regard” (p. 222). We suggest that the development of a critical friendship should be cradled in the ethic of care, but that the full experience of being in a critical friendship is ideally the fulfillment of care beyond a prescribed ethic.

### **Methodology**

We utilized narrative inquiry to make sense of our experiences as emerging academics. Our research question for this study was “What is the role of critical friendship for emerging academics?”

### **Narrative Inquiry**

This research study is rooted in narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000); an interdisciplinary methodological approach. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) defined narrative inquiry as, “a way of understanding experience” (p. 20). According to Polkinghorne (1988), narrative functions as a means for people to give meaning to their experiences. Furthermore, narrative is a way for people to understand their lives through their actions and the occurrences of episodic daily events. In other words, narrative inquiry allows researchers to make sense of the connections between the personal understanding of experiences, the role of our co-constructed relationship, and the sociality of contexts one finds themselves situated in (Clandinin, 2013). Narrative gives a framework for one to understand the past circumstances of one’s life and make plans for the future. Through narrative, individuals are able to bring together many events and relate the significance of each to one another. Narrative meaning is not static, has the capacity to evolve, and is continuously reconfiguring through “reflection and recollection” (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 15). Narrative is an ongoing interaction between one’s cognitive schemes and what is happening in the environment. One’s awareness involves, “timely human actions [that] are linked together according to their effect on the attainment of human desires and goals” (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 16). We utilized narrative inquiry as a means to study our individual experiences of being emerging academics and the role of our critical friendship. Connelly and Clandinin (2006) stated, “Narrative inquiry, the study of experience as a story, then, is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience. Narrative inquiry as a methodology entails a view of the phenomena” (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 477). Our stories are grounded in being emerging academics and how we mitigate the complexities associated with academia by employing the ethic of care.

### **The Context of Our Critical Friendship**

To further illuminate our experiences as emerging academics, it is necessary to situate ourselves. We both identify as women. Taunya’s status as a woman is intersected with chronic illness, and therefore, she carries an identity as a person with a disability. At the time of this study, we worked at a small regional campus in a Faculty of Education in southern Ontario, Canada. We were both engaged in contract academic teaching at the campus that served approximately 700 teacher candidates, working as research assistants for most of the full-time faculty at the campus, while actively pursuing full-time doctoral studies each at different universities, though Taunya was in the process of transferring to take studies at the university we both worked at. We met when Taunya was in her first year of teaching and Courtney was a Master’s student working as a research assistant. Eventually, we were both hired for the same research project and our friendship began to develop. As time went on and we became more proficient researchers and instructors, our friendship transformed into a critical friendship (Wideman-Johnston & Brewer, 2014). We taught some of the same courses, took on most of the same research contracts, and applied to many of the same doctoral programs to study in. In many ways, we could be seen as each other’s competition, though we never felt this way personally. Members of the faculty we worked in and people in our personal lives had started to compare and contrast us in many ways (asking, wondering, and describing who was teaching more, who got accepted to programs first, how prestigious each of our doctoral programs were). Our perspectives of one another were opposite to the competitive context that surrounded us. We had not engaged in viewing one another as a competitor. We were not willing to put forth the “typical” level of deception required in “typical” professional relationships when we were both hoping for similar successes. It is this dissonance that inspired this study. We wanted to know

how our engagement in a critical friendship that employed an ethic of care (even when the messages we were receiving were focused on reasons we should “watch our backs” and “look out for ourselves”), affected how we responded to difficult situations as we continued to emerge in the academic context.

### **Data Collection**

The data in this research study came from narratives that we had created (Polkinghorne, 1988). These narratives were focused on our experiences in navigating difficult situations as emerging academics. Each author had 1 month to compose written narratives. Narratives were used as a means to delve into the complexities of our research question. As a way to develop an inquiry, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) noted the duality between “inward” and “outward” experiences and, “the task of composing field texts that are interpretive records of what we experience in the existential world even as we compose field texts of our inner experiences, feelings, doubts, uncertainties, reactions, remembered stories, and so on...” (p. 86). We developed loose guidelines to compose reflective journals about the nature of the critical friendship between us. The narrative reflected back in time, could focus on any number of situations, could be as vague or in-depth as deemed necessary or appropriate by the writer, and the severity of the situation had to be based on personal perception. When the narratives were composed and completed, we exchanged copies and shared copies with another trusted colleague on our research team. We used thematic analysis to code the data and understand the content of the narratives. As we read through both narratives several times to deconstruct the data and illuminate themes that emerged from the two narratives (Ellis, 2004), we moved from our narratives being field texts to research texts (Clandinin, 2013). Relying on methods by Punch (2009), we engaged in a process of summarizing, documenting, organizing, analyzing, and synthesizing until small units of meaning were collapsed into larger ideas, and eventually, themes. Utilizing narrative inquiry for this study gave us the opportunity to “come to new understandings” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 89) about our critical friendship and its role in growing an ethic of care (Noddings, 2006).

### **Findings**

After coding the data, a set of contextual themes indicated the common experiences we noticed in the precarious field of our emerging academic work. These contextual themes included: seeking employment, dealing with tensions in the workplace, managing logistics of personal life events as they pertain to the workplace, and managing our roles as graduate students. Furthermore, a central theme—empowerment—persisted throughout the narrative data. Each of these themes were situated in the “unguarded conversations” stage of critical friendship development and helped to establish examples of the ethic of care in action.

#### **Seeking Employment**

While we were working as contract academics and doctoral students, we continued to look for steady employment. We could not rely on teaching the same courses each year as we had low seniority and any changes in student numbers would mean we were out of a job. We also wanted employment that would allow us to pursue our own research rather than relying on contract research work, which at times positioned us as “ghost writers” and left us with little to add to our curriculum vitae. Our research and writing skills were improving and we were outgrowing the complacency we once felt with devoting the majority of our time to research projects that did not serve our aspirations. We had committed to the path of academia, even

though we had our own needs for health benefits and desired a financial savings plan such as a pension. We were trained teachers who had entered into academia for different reasons, and it seemed demoralizing to us at times to be earning less than what we could make teaching in elementary school, which would also have provided us with flexible work options, job security, health benefits, maternity leaves, and a pension plan. We often discussed these issues and supported one another in seeking employment, even when it meant sharing a job posting that we would both like to apply to. Our narratives revealed specific references to seeking employment and the feelings we had about the ongoing process of looking to secure work. For example, Courtney's narratives explained, "Taunya and I are very committed to obtaining full time employment as quickly as possible; but in the meantime, our critical friendship has provided a source of security while we face constant uncertainty." As well, Taunya's narrative stated, "Whenever Courtney and I find a job that each of us qualifies for we send each other the position and say 'We should apply for this!' Never has it crossed my mind to apply for a job without Courtney; I don't see her as my competition but as someone who truly deserves the opportunity to shine at that particular position." At this time, the field of education was saturated with teachers seeking employment and we had grown accustomed to seeing friendships bruised by jealousy over one member securing a job while another remained on the occasional teaching list. We knew we wanted to avoid this in academia, which was proving to be even more competitive. We knew that eventually, both of us would gain some sort of desired employment and as long as we supported one another, we could not only keep our friendship intact, but also we could help one another thrive. We edited each other's resumes and cover letters, sent each other job postings, and provided guest lectures for each other's classes. We found that in acting as a source of unwavering support for one another, we made gains in our careers that we could not have done on our own. Taunya secured a job working at a local college and Courtney began to be more specific about the conditions of her research contracts so they would contribute to the growth of her curriculum vitae.

### **Dealing With Tensions in the Workplace**

We greatly valued the autonomy of being emerging academics. We had the opportunities to choose which research contracts we would work on and had the flexibility of catering our schedules to meet our individual needs. We were experiencing our first few years of teaching at the post-secondary level and found it to be very rewarding. We were so committed to what we were doing that we wanted to ensure we continued to do everything "right." We wanted to make sure we handled all obstacles in the best way possible to ensure future research and teaching opportunities. When we experienced obstacles, we would problem-solve together. We would offer each other different perspectives and solutions to aid the other. Excerpts from our narratives speak to the way we worked together to resolve dissonance and difficulties in the workplace. Courtney described a particularly difficult situation:

We have worked together to carefully craft a professional email to explain how I am feeling to a colleague; in other situations, we have discussed how deeply an issue has been affecting me and have come up with coping strategies and even exit strategies.

At one point, after completing a teaching contract that was renewed for the following academic year, Taunya was required to take a medical leave that left her with many questions about her future employment. She worried how taking one leave would continue to impact her in years to come. She wrote: "What about taking time away from research contracts? Will I no longer be

offered these opportunities in the future? I remember telling Courtney I had to take a [medical] leave and we spent much time discussing how I would proceed.” Whether we supported each other in writing professional emails or navigating health obstacles, we were invested in each other’s success. We relied on a strong sense of trust to confide our worries, insecurities, mishaps, and next steps in one another. We knew how important our own and each other’s aspirations were and we worked hard to help each other respond to difficulties as they arose. In doing this, we were enacting the ethic of care to promote resilience in our workplace.

### **Managing Logistics of Personal Life Events as They Pertain to the Workplace**

The implications of being a contract instructor not only had an impact on our work life but it also affected our personal lives. The decisions we made in our personal lives continued to affect our livelihood. Once Taunya had taken her medical leave it meant giving up her job security and she worried if and how this could negatively affect her career. By having such a trusting and supportive critical friend, Taunya did not experience all of the obstacles associated with taking a medical leave:

As a contract instructor, taking a medical leave also meant unemployment and no longer getting paid. This was another critical situation in my life as an “on-hold” aspiring academic. I found this stressful as I wanted to continue to aspire but also, in regards to the financial strain on my family, I worried about how I would be able to “delve” back into teaching and being a research assistant. Courtney could have chosen to exclude me from further opportunities as I had been away for a year but when the time came she was happy and willing to update me to continue as though I had never been away.

Courtney described the value of critical friendship in general terms during difficult times:

We continued to support each other’s endeavours and we continued to plan for both of our needs. There were times when we faced barriers and things did not go as planned. Times when we were disappointed and felt rejected from a world that we were trying so hard to be a part of.

Courtney also described the delicate task of applying for jobs in the same field, and at times, applying for the same position:

Taunya and I spent a lot of time discussing our options during this time but our security as friends and our commitment to each other’s careers meant that we made the best choices for our needs and supported one another every step of the way, even if it was not convenient and even if rejections and acceptances of one another stung at times. The end result was that we ended up where we needed to be and having a critical friend throughout the entire process made the sting much less intense.

Our critical friendship continued to offer us a safe space to work through the obstacles we faced and gave us the opportunity to offer comfort to one another, help find solutions to problems, and offer much needed perspectives.

### **Managing our Roles as Graduate Students**

The decision to pursue our doctorates was filled with uncertainty. We knew we wanted to pursue doctoral studies, that it was integral to our continuation as academics, and that we had specific research interests we wanted to explore through the type of intensive study that a

dissertation journey provides. We took the process of applying and completing our doctoral studies for granted at first but quickly learned that we were not on linear paths. From the initial application process to figuring out what the best program of study was for each of us, we faced challenges, mixed emotions, and rejection in various forms. Courtney delayed her studies to pursue what she truly desired and Taunya ended up changing schools altogether to ensure her medical needs could be adequately met. Data extracted from our narratives helps to highlight the journey we took in attending doctoral studies. Courtney described a time when she had to decline an offer to a graduate program and accept an offer from a school she initially did not imagine attending:

I needed to make a choice based on what was best for me ... I took an offer from a school that just seemed to work well for my needs as a student ... It was also nice to have someone who was truly happy for me when I made my decision. Taunya understood the ins and outs of each choice I was presented with and so knowing that she valued my final decision made it much more meaningful.

Taunya described the challenges associated with being a student while everyone else in her life had moved into flourishing, linear careers:

Courtney and I are both pursuing our PhDs and I feel she is crucial to my sanity in continuing this endeavor. We have sent many texts to each other asking for advice and asking, “This is worth it, right?” As we see many of our friends persevering in their lives, we are still “students” trying to get jobs, completing schoolwork, trying to make ends meet, and pursuing our familial lives.

In our roles as doctoral students, our critical friendship continued to flourish as we navigated our developing research program. Our love of research and our desire to advance scholarship in our chosen fields was met with some disillusionment and harsh realities. Taunya had to come to terms with relocating her studies to a university that had a better record of accessible learning and Courtney had to come to terms with choosing to decline an offer that was not providing her with what she had hoped for in a graduate studies program. After talking through our values related to our doctoral studies and our options in moving forward, we were able to confidently make decisions that ended up steering us into very rewarding research programs.

### **Empowerment as Emerging Academics**

No matter what contextual issue we faced as emerging academics, we knew that our friendship had provided the care needed to resist the neoliberal academic workplace. We were invested in each other and were completely empathetic to the other’s needs. The trust that we built in our critical friendship ultimately empowered each of us in our lives even when our contexts were less than ideal. We acted as carers and cared-for (Noddings, 2006) by building each other up when needed and acting as each other’s champion during difficult experiences. We also celebrated the progress each of us had made in our academic journeys and in our personal lives because as time had shown us, the world of academia is fairly anticlimactic and we both had the insider knowledge to recognize that what might seem like something small to a person looking in, was actually the result of a lot of hard work and struggle. Paired with the life events that we were transitioning in and out of, the ethic of care established in our critical friendship helped us achieve what we wanted in our careers without having to sacrifice the type of personal life we wanted for ourselves. For Taunya, this looked like spending the first summer of a two-

summer residency program in a college dorm while pregnant for the first time. While she was homesick and physically ill from her pregnancy she was trying to conceal, Courtney made a 5-hour drive to visit with her and leave a few larger clothes behind to get Taunya through the last few weeks of her stay. For Courtney, this looked like navigating the transition into living on her own and beginning a relationship with the person who would eventually become her life partner, while also balancing her entrance into doctoral studies. We celebrated big events like marriages, births, funding acceptances, and publications, as well as small things like finally finding the right words to label a theme we had coded, figuring out how to hyperlink a table of contents, and successfully passing an ethics application. Our critical friendship empowered us to feel celebrated as whole people, rather than existing in bracketed worlds where our personal and professional selves always remained at an arm's length. Our critical friendship was the bridge that brought coherence to the fragmented academic path we were centred in, cradling our whole-person journeys. The following data from our narratives illuminates the empowerment that superseded the obstacles we continued to endure as the result of incivility and marginalization in academia. Courtney talked about having an ally in her academic journey:

I think what the most important thing is about our critical friendship in this situation is that I have someone that I can turn to who has likely experienced a similar situation, who can offer sound advice, and who will not make me feel inadequate.

Taunya explained the empowering shift from identifying as a student to identifying as a scholar: “We have come a long way in our research experience from when we completed our Master’s ... we had a bit of an illuminating moment when we both acknowledged that we need to stop thinking of ourselves as solely students.” Further, Courtney described the empowerment she felt from being in a trusting friendship that she could use to help problem-solve in the workplace:

Having someone to talk to about these situations in confidence was important to how I felt in my own workplace. Without these conversations and the trust I have within my critical friendship, my ability to thrive as a researcher in my greater network of colleagues may not have taken place.

Finally, Courtney described her growth as a contract instructor in large part because she had someone to provide guidance and perspective along the way:

I know that I am a much stronger researcher and teacher because of my critical friendship with Taunya and I also know that this friendship has given me the skills and perspectives needed to face many of the future challenges that are likely to arise in my field.

In every obstacle we faced and every step we made forward as emerging academics, our critical friendship promoted the ethic of care to provide us with feelings of empowerment set against the backdrop of incivility and marginalization. Our thoughts and feelings were validated and we grew more confident in the various roles we embodied.

## **Discussion**

Through narrative inquiry, we have examined our critical friendship and recognized the empowerment in our experiences as emerging academics. We return to Noddings’ ethic of care and our own critical friendship development model (See Figure 1). The narratives we contributed to this research were written under the pretext that we were already critical friends and were interested in learning more about how critical friendship was operating while we worked as

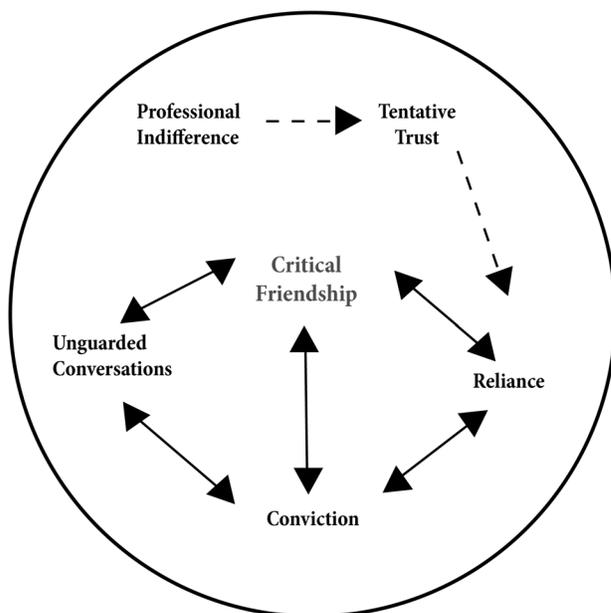
emerging academics. Our narratives allowed us to turn both “inward” and “outward,” as (Clandinin, 2013) explained:

Turning inward, we attend to our emotions, our aesthetic reactions, our moral responses. ... Turning outward, we attend to what is happening, to the events and people in our experiences. We think simultaneously, backward and forward, inward and outward, with attentiveness to place(s). (p. 41)

Our narratives weaved our internal individual lived experiences with our critical friendship as a relationship within the social reality of the academy and daily life.

### Figure 1

*Process of Developing and Maintaining a Critical Friendship*



*Note.* Our critical friendship existed in a cyclical manner where we revisited each phase beyond trust so that the friendship was in continual growth and serving the changing needs of each critical friend.

In revisiting the critical friendship development model (Baskerville & Goldblatt, 2009; Wideman-Johnston & Brewer, 2014), the cycle of reliance (working towards a common goal without fear of faltering), conviction (the recognition and commitment to the friendship while managing our responsibility towards our own and each other’s work), and unguarded conversations (the ability to balance the integrity of our friendship while also feeling confident and safe in saying what needs to be said in order to help each other take necessary steps in meeting work goals) was still taking place, but the bulk of our growth stemmed from the unguarded conversations phase of our critical friendship. Our narratives focused on the conversations we had with one another at various points in our academic pursuits, and often, our narratives were so meaningful to our journeys that they are ingrained in our minds and have formed the basis for how we now approach incivility and marginalization.

The reliance and conviction phases (as well as the professional indifference and tentative trust phases which were not necessary for our own enduring critical friendship when we collected data for this study) are cradled in Noddings' ethic of care. Noddings (2006) stated:

The ethic of care requires each of us to recognize our own frailty and to bring out the best in one another. It recognizes that we are dependent on each other (and to some degree on good fortune) for our moral goodness. (p. 225)

At each obstacle, life transition, and even success that we faced, we were, in Noddings (2006) words, "frail." There was always the possibility that one member would disclose information and be met with coldness or a self-serving response by the other, as incivility in academia nurtures. However, our deep sense of trust, which Noddings suggests, requires several years to develop, has given us the ability to offer ourselves up as frail individuals, experience empowerment through our critical friendship, and persist stronger than we were. The fullness of our critical friendship after years of working together and journeying through our academic lives as complete beings is so deeply rooted in care, that we believe it embodies Noddings' understanding of "natural care," which is no longer reliant on an ethic to guide it. Noddings (2006) explained that, "Ethical caring's great contribution is to guide action long enough for natural caring to be restored and for people once again to interact with mutual and spontaneous regard" (p. 222). We see critical friendship as an important way of enacting an ethic of care in the academic setting. As Mbatha et al. (2020) stated, "Nosipho's story exemplifies the dilemmas we have experienced as ECAs, where we have been marginalised due to age, gender, lack of experience, and even culture" (p. 32). Similar to Mbatha et al. (2020), in times when we were met with isolation, self-doubt, par-for-the-course criticism, and continued obstacles, our critical friendship held us to respond in caring ways and to seek care from one another. The cyclical aspect of our friendship model became so fluid that worry about how the other would respond to any given situation was replaced with trust that a caring response would always result.

### Conclusions

Positioned against the backdrop of academic incivility, the neoliberal market-driven academy, and the continued privilege afforded to dominant beings (lone, male, white, settler, able, tenured), our study employs critical friendship as both an act of resistance and a harbour for growth. With parallels to our own research on critical friendship, Cranston's (2019) research illuminates the importance of "allies" continuing to bring forth alternate stories:

People who have suffered from conflict or who are under forms of oppression, need allies who can help them get their stories out into a wider sphere. They need people who are committed to bring their experiences and their stories, out of the shadows and into the light. (p. 98)

This work is an attempt to bring our story of a better way forward, "out of the shadows" (Cranston, 2019, p. 98). Our narrative inquiry shows that critical friendship has the potential to empower emerging academics to thrive while rejecting the neoliberal conditions and incivility that currently mar the academy. By using critical friendship to enact the ethic of care, we hope to shift critical friendship from being a means to an end in professional development (as suggested by Swaffield, 2003; 2004; Swaffield, & MacBeath, 2005) to one that builds enduring trust, fuels empowerment, and ultimately, provides sustained care to each member, and as a result, to the entire academic profession.

Our study helps to fill in the gap of feminist approaches to critical friendship while also building an important bridge between incivility in academia and the ethic of care. Further, with a documented understanding of how intersectional voices are frequently met with hostility and barriers, our work shows that critical friendship can serve as an act of resistance to the dominant narrative that is rooted in the academy. This research shares the stories of emerging academics who are supporting each other in finding power within themselves in an institution that often leaves them powerless. Critical friendship offers the means by which emerging academics can change their narratives. We imagine critical friendship as having the potential to reveal how relationships in the academy can be fostered to empower the growth in individuals, and to demonstrate the possibilities of what can be achieved together.

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# **The French Play: An Ethnodrama About Applied Theatre for Social Justice Education in Middle School**

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## **Abstract**

In this study, I investigate the use of applied theatre with French Immersion Grade 8 students to better understand social justice issues. Through unstructured interviews, four participants were asked to recall their past experiences participating in applied theatre projects as a learning experience and as a process to better understand social justice issues. Participants' words and feedback were then used to create an ethnodrama script, performed by the participants and me via video conference. Findings are grouped under five categories; Doll's (2013) 4Rs: Richness, Rigor, Recursion, and Relations and Freire's (2000) concept of conscientization. Participants in applied theatre reported they had a space to tell authentic stories in their own words, became more self-confident, and work towards being catalysts for change. The purpose of this article is to inform educators of the possibilities in using applied theatre and problem-posing education for social justice education and to share the process of ethnodrama as a methodology in arts-based research.

*Keywords:* applied theatre; ethnodrama; problem-posing education; social justice education



IN  
EDUCATION

## **The French Play: An Ethnodrama About Applied Theatre for Social Justice Education in Middle School**

Social justice and multicultural education have become increasingly important in the past few years with ongoing Truth and Reconciliation, the Black Lives Matter movement, and a wider public understanding that systemic racism exists in every corner of the globe. In Canada, “teachers are accustomed to ‘teaching about’ multiculturalism through activities considered to represent cultural diversity” (Ward, 2017, p. 31), which Ward refers to as the “dance, dress, and diet” (p. 31) approach. What is missing from this approach is a deeper understanding of social justice education and “‘critical dissonance’ (calling into question current school practices)” (p. 31).

As a middle school French-immersion teacher, over the past 6 years, I have been using an applied theatre process with Grade 8 students, which they have nicknamed “The French Play,” to explore social justice issues, improve French language production, and to attempt to be a catalyst for change. *Applied theatre* is a broad term that describes theatre done often in alternative spaces such as prisons, community programs, and schools with a focus on social and political change. Applied theatre is participatory and often includes participants with little to no theatre experience (Belliveau & Lea, 2011; Conroy et al., 2018; O’Connor & Anderson, 2015; Taylor, 2002).

Starting from a prompt, either a setting or a time period in history, students in my Grade 8 French Immersion classes worked alone or in small groups, co-wrote French scenes based on their educational research and inquiry, their personal experiences, and/or improvisational work in the group. Those scenes were then workshopped as a large group to modify and interweave them into a united narrative for performance by reading scripts as a group, rewriting, and rewording the texts. Often characters from one scene would be added to other scenes as the students felt their individual characters needed to interact in order to tell a full story. The final script was produced and directed by the students. As they worked toward performance, students continued to negotiate and change the scenes and the staging in a recursive cycle of praxis: reflection and action, all in French. For this study, I wanted to examine what value there is in using an applied theatre approach rather than other “teaching about” approaches to social justice and second language education. The purpose of this article is to inform educators of the possibilities in using applied theatre and problem-posing education for social justice education and to share the process of ethnodrama as a methodology in arts-based research.

The two French Plays written and performed by the participants in this study were *Le gobelet d’or* (*The Golden Goblet*) in 2016 and *Le tyran* (*The Bully*) in 2018. *Le gobelet d’or* is a play about a time-travelling archeologist who is attempting to steal the golden goblet. As he travels through time, he learns about slavery, sexism, racism, and social class inequities. By the end of his journey from Ancient Egypt to The Second World War, he learns that human rights are more valuable than gold. *Le tyran* is a play about a high school bully who is trapped in the school gym over the weekend. He is visited by the ghosts of past bullied students over a 100-year period and learns empathy and kindness. He changes his ways and makes amends for his past behaviour.

### **Pedagogical Frameworks**

Paolo Freire (2000) talked about the importance of abandoning the banking model of education where teachers seek to, “‘fill’ the students by making deposits of information which he or she

considers to constitute true knowledge” (p. 76). In *The French Plays*, I provided only a prompt. In *Le gobelet d’or*, the prompt was to set the play anywhere in history between 750 CE and 1800 CE. The prompt for *Le tyran* was an existing set of a high school gym that we would have access to for the performances. Students worked through a process of co-creation and reflection to create a script for performance to both gain a better understanding of the theme and to share with an audience of their peers in an attempt to be a catalyst for truth and change. This is common in applied theatre genre as, “frequently, applied theatre is constructed as a response to social or political challenges and is seen as a process where difference and change can be wrought through its making” (O’Connor & O’Connor, 2009, p. 471). The scenes and plays do not come from the teacher’s belief or decision about what is important or true but the students’ voices. Applied theatre provides this space for true dialogue between teachers and students and the world. The participants in *Le gobelet d’or* chose to widen the time frame I had given them as they worked to include ancient Greece and Egypt and the Second World War because of their own interests in those time periods. “The teacher cannot think for her students, nor can she impose her thoughts on them. Authentic thinking, thinking that is concerned about reality, does not take place in a tower of isolation” (Freire, 2000, p. 77). Freire’s goal is conscientization, which implies that an action is taken beyond simple awareness of the issue. Key here is the idea of authenticity for the student in what is being learned. Students in both plays chose issues that they wanted to investigate, research, and share with an audience of their peers.

Applied theatre connects to the research genre of ethnodrama and ethnotheatre that uses real life events to create a performance piece to engage an audience in the findings of the research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). In research, using ethnodrama as a means of representing findings, the claim is that there is no one universal truth but instead multiple individual truths. Knowledge is therefore subjective, interactive and open to interpretation (Nimmon, 2007). Research data are transformed into scripts using the words of the participants in combination with the words of the researcher and the existing body of knowledge. The scripts my students wrote came from their own educational inquiries and their own lived experiences and knowledge, paralleling the way ethnodrama is used in qualitative research or arts-based research to generate the material from which a script is written and developed (Saldaña, 2003). In essence, this applied theatre approach means the teacher facilitates the students becoming researchers of their own social reality. My goal of encouraging the students to seek knowledge is for it to become a catalyst for conscientization. Throughout the process, each class that participated in *The French Play* expressed both the excitement of examining their own lives and understandings of the world and working collaboratively through the process of trying to transform the information so that others could share these new understandings.

My research purpose was to find out more about the experience of applied theatre of my former student-participants. I ask the following questions in this study: What was important for the applied theatre process to be successful for the students in their opinion? Has it changed their actions and ways of understanding the world in any way?

### **Drama as an Educational Tool: Applied Theatre as a Model of Problem-Posing Education**

Paolo Freire (2000) described the difference between a banking concept of education and problem-posing education:

Whereas banking education anesthetizes and inhibits creative power, problem-posing education involves a constant unveiling of reality ... Students, as they are increasingly

posed with problems relating to themselves in the world and with the world, will feel increasingly challenged and obliged to respond to that challenge ... their response to the challenge evokes new challenges, followed by new understandings, and gradually the students come to regard themselves as committed. (p. 81)

Applied theatre as a pedagogical tool for learning and teaching is an example of problem-posing education. Freire (2000) outlined the following requirements for authentic dialogue as necessary components of problem-posing education: critical thinking, humility, faith in humanity, hope, and love. All of these aspects promote a climate of mutual trust. As in ethnodrama as a research methodology, applied theatre is co-created and is driven by the participant/student voices. For these voices to be heard, the criteria for problem-posing education and authentic dialogue must be central components of the process at all stages: script creation, staging, reworking the story, and performing. Boal (1993/1985) posed an important question in his work *Theatre of the Oppressed*: “Should art educate, inform, organize, influence, incite to action, or should it simply be an object of pleasure?” (p. xiii). Boal’s (1993/1985) work outlined a model for *forum theatre*, a similar participatory theatre approach to applied theatre that is both political and participatory. For applied theatre to be effective and genuine as a pedagogical approach, it must be clear that theatre is being used as an intentional agent of change stemming from our collective needs as teachers, students, and communities (O’Connor & O’Connor, 2009; Prentki & Pammenter, 2014).

### **Ethnodrama**

Throughout human history, theatre and oral storytelling have been used to inspire thought, provoke understanding, evoke an emotional reaction, and create a catalyst for change between performers and their audience. Ethnodrama takes a critical stance that sees reality in praxis—research and action.

As a methodology, ethnodrama comes from the traditions of ethnography, involving collecting data about the human condition from careful observation and detailed participant stories. Saldaña (2003) indicated that

an ethnodrama, the script, consists of analyzed and dramatized significant selections from interview transcripts, field notes, journal entries, or other written artifacts. Characters in an ethnodrama are generally the research participants portrayed by actors, but the actual researchers and participants themselves may be cast members. (p. 218)

Research is done with a co-constructivist approach in which the participants and researcher build understanding and continually refine and redefine their understandings.

Mienczakowski (2019) describes ethnodrama as theatre that includes live discussion, feedback, and interaction between the researcher, audience, participants and/or the actors with the goals of social and cultural change (p. 3). Ethnodrama can be written with the intention of production on the stage or as an alternative to a traditional academic paper. Malhotra and Hotton (2018) included reader reflection questions in their script as academic paper to engage the reader/audience to participate in the shared experience of ethnodrama. Saldaña (2018) cautioned any researcher attempting to use ethnodrama who is not versed in theatre or drama conventions, that their script could easily fall short of the goals of the genre. The researcher should then seek collaboration with those possessing the knowledge for dramatic representation and combine their

expertise. The goals for ethnodrama, then, include creating social change, giving voice to silent voices in society, and creating understanding and empathy between the participants and the audience in order to become a catalyst for change (Prentki & Pammenter, 2014; Saldaña, 2018).

### **William Doll's 4Rs**

Rhoades (2018) drew a connection to complexity theory with William Doll's (2013) 4Rs, Richness, Rigor, Recursion, and Relations, to frame an understanding of ethnodrama. The 4Rs not only help frame ethnodrama as a methodology but also the applied drama projects used in this study. *Richness* "refers to a curriculum's depth, to its layers of meaning, to its multiple possibilities or interpretations" (Doll, 2013, p. 254). In ethnodrama, the wide range of personal participant perspectives, texts, and stories provides a rich base of data to work from. Like a curriculum, a script needs to have depth and breadth to provide a rich experience for the audience. Researchers also draw on the existing literature and sometimes autoethnography to build the script.

*Rigor* is key to analysing and interpreting the data into a script for performance. Doll (2013) defines rigor as a conscious effort to uncover assumptions with a combination of indeterminacy with interpretation. The interpretation of the data in ethnodrama includes the author's assumptions and bias as well as the assumptions of the participants and the audience. The understanding of the play will differ between audience members. The goal is not to present one truth but to present a truth with multiple interpretations.

*Relations* are valued between the participants' experiences, the actors' interpretations, and the audience's understandings of what they have experienced. Ethnodrama is a call for action. It invites participants and audiences to engage with topics presented in the scripts in a reflective manner, and encourages participants to make personal connections and the unveil oppressions (Mahotra & Hotton, 2018; Rhoades, 2018). This multidimensional truth can assist in improving the script through feedback and dialogue. This *Recursion* occurs earlier in the process of ethnodrama between the researcher and the participants and then again when an audience is included.

### **Data Generation**

For this study, I generated data during unstructured interviews with four former students who participated in The French Play in both 2016 and 2018. The participants were teens, so I conducted the interviews in pairs to give more comfort to them and to allow for more natural dialogue about their experiences. Two of the teens were siblings that participated in different years of The French Play and two were friends who had co-written their original scene. I obtained signed ethical consent from both the students and their parents. The students chose to use their own names in the research. The script excerpts and video clips from the original French Plays used in the research were those written and performed only by the participants and were not shared publicly.

My questions were intended to gain an initial broad understanding of the phenomenon of participation in applied theatre: What were your experiences of participating in an applied theatre production as a learning experience and as a process to better understand social justice issues in society? What do you feel is important for teachers to know if they are trying to use applied theatre as a tool for teaching and learning?

According to Sparkes and Smith (2014), the unstructured interview can allow the researcher to explore a broader topic and can spark spontaneous stories, ideas, understandings of reality (p. 85). I provided photos to both pairs of participants from their own past shows and copies of their original scripts. Due to new COVID-19 restrictions during the interview period, one pair had the opportunity to walk around the theatre and take their own photos in order to encourage talk. The second pair was interviewed over Zoom. These artefacts combined with both researcher and participant generated photo-elicitation “ha[d] the multiple benefits of helping people to remember key events and assist them in reliving their experiences” (Sparkes & Smith, 2014, p. 98). The participants were asked to share what they remembered and what they thought was important for others to know about the applied theatre experience. I provided photos of themselves in the original plays and they chose sites such as the Green Room in the theatre for me to photograph. This approach to data generation provided a rich base of information especially with the pair that had the opportunity to be in the theatre. The participants who had the opportunity to revisit the theatre spoke longer on the topic and shared more stories than the pair that viewed past photos of themselves in *The French Play* and conducted the interview via Zoom. Although the research project was adapted to what was possible rather than what was ideal, the richness of the response showed that the adaptation did not appear to reduce the meaning-making process for the participants.

### **Data Analysis**

I used narrative analysis to find themes in the interview transcripts. Narrative analysis takes stories as a source of data. Stories are a complex interweaving of our pasts, our relationships and the contexts in which we are situated (Vieira, 2014). As noted by Sparkes and Smith (2014), “Narrative analysis fits well with ethnodrama because it reveals a great deal about the socio-cultural fabric of lives, subjectivity, feelings, agency, and the multi-layered nature of human experience” (p. 130). I generated the transcripts from the video recordings of the stories shared during the unstructured interviews using YouTube auto-transcription (Hopper et al., 2021). I cleaned up the transcripts and added names to identify the speakers; however, I chose to leave the spacing as it was created. The spacing that naturally occurred in the auto-transcription process mirrored the nature pauses and breaks in each person’s speech patterns. Because I planned to use verbatim extracts for the eventual script, I wanted the transcript to not only reflect participant words but also ways of speaking that differed between participants.

I followed Sparkes and Smith’s (2014) outline of steps to do this type of analysis: first, writing initial thoughts, then identifying key themes, then tracking within a narrative, then making conceptual comments, next naming the theme and writing the script/story, then comparing and contrasting the two sets of interviews, and finally, writing the report (script). As I read the transcripts, I noticed that Doll’s 4Rs (2013) were emerging as key process themes. The participants were describing the experience of working through the drama in the theatre project and I had noticed significant similarities between applied theatre and ethnodrama as a research tool during my initial readings. I began with recursion, relations, rigor, and richness as initial organizing themes to test the similarities I was noticing between ethnodrama and applied theatre in my initial readings in the literature.

From these initial themes, I added sub-themes that better described the theme in the context of the data. I noticed that whenever I had coded Rigor as a theme, it was centered on portraying sensitive topics. The participants spoke about the continual conscious effort to portray

a story truthfully but also respectfully. “In dealing with indeterminacy, one can never be certain one ‘as it right.’ ... One must continually be exploring, looking for new combinations, interpretations, patterns” (Doll, 2013, p. 259). Participants described the indeterminacy inherent in anticipating the audience reaction with how to best stage a sensitive scene such as a teen suicide or how to use authentic language that may be offensive in their scenes.

I broke the Relations theme into three sub-themes after the initial coding: The interpersonal relations in co-creation of text between the student participants, the participant/actors with the audience, and the relationship with the self through emerging confidence and self-awareness. Recursion emerged as a dominant theme as the script and staging were being adjusted throughout the writing, staging, and performance aspects of the applied learning project. Richness was apparent in the script development as the participants described the “layers of meaning, [the] multiple possibilities or interpretations” (Doll, 2013, p. 254) that were possible with each decision. I added a theme of conscientization as I read the transcripts and as the ideas of praxis—reflection and action—either fit in multiple areas of Doll’s 4Rs or in none.

Once the text was coded into the themes and sub-themes, I copied them into a table so that I could see the interviews side-by-side by theme. I then used a combination of three of Saldaña’s (2018) outlined methods of generating scripts for ethnodrama: adaption of interview transcripts, adaptation of nonfiction texts and devised work through improvisation. I also used two more methods that fit this particular research study: previous script excerpts and researcher voice.

### **Adaptation of Interview Transcript**

I used verbatim excerpts of transcripts, cleaned up and adapted to create a script (Nimmon, 2007). When cleaning up the transcripts, I was unsure as to whether I should take out the use of “yeah” and “like” that were repeated throughout the interviews. Their inclusion made the voices of teenagers sound more authentic but at times made it difficult to follow. I asked the participants before we recorded the script if I had made the correct choice. They all agreed that they preferred that I had taken out the majority of these voiceprints as the result was a clearer, more “professional” version of their opinions.

As I highlighted in the script the few lines I had added to create transitions between scenes so that the participants could see what was or was not their original words. As I pulled verbatim extracts, I highlighted them in my coded text tables so that I could keep track of what I did and did not use for the script. In ethnodrama, “you don’t compose what your participants tell you in interviews, but you can creatively and strategically edit the transcripts, assuming you wish to maintain rather than ‘re-story’ their narratives” (Saldaña, 2003, p. 223).

### **Previous Script Excerpts**

I also pulled scenes from the original two scripts written by the students when they were in Grade 8 as they fit with the themes that emerged. I left these scenes in their original French and, as part of the research performance, they were played as video clips from the past performances of the student plays rather than read aloud. The past scripts and video clips were ones the research participants had written and performed initially. I did not use scripts from students who were not participating in the research project. The ethnodrama, a panel of experts

in discussion, was performed via video conference due to COVID-19 pandemic protocols that prohibited theatre gatherings or live audiences.

### **Devised Work Through Improvisation**

When we performed the first draft of the script via video conference, participants were encouraged to add new lines, change their original lines, and create their own stage directions for their characters as we recorded. The stage directions and additional or changed lines were added to the script after this first “performance” via video conference from the recording.

### **Adaptation of Nonfiction Texts**

Like Nimmon (2007), I built in knowledge from existing research in or around the participants' words through the voices of Saldaña and Freire as characters in the script. In the video run of the script, participants “changed hats” to play these two characters as well as themselves. Nimmon (2007) added the voice of the theorist in her ethnodrama on immigrant experiences of healthcare in Canada. In Nimmon’s ethnodrama, she finished each scene as a separate voice to connect the scene with the existing literature. Similar to Malhotra and Hotton’s (2018) addition of research into the dialogue of the characters in their ethnodrama, I also added quotes into the Studio Host character’s script to add more of the literature to the script. I added these when I felt that a key finding was emerging from the participant voices. I chose to include the existing research through the characters of Freire and Saldaña as well as through the character of Studio Host to share the literature in a more aesthetic and engaging way than through conventional academic prose. Saldaña (2011) discouraged the addition of research in a script or dialogue but made the conscious choice to add this to the script. As the ethnodrama was written as a panel discussion, I wished to have Freire and Saldaña on that panel as characters for creative purposes. Similar to research-creation models outlined by Loveless (2019), I chose to push the limits of both traditional and artistic outputs by interweaving the fictional setting and characters and participant verbatim dialogue with the existing literature.

### **Researcher Voice**

Because as a researcher I had also been the teacher for my student-participants at the time of the French Plays, I situated myself in the research as a participant-observer. This role had advantages because rapport and trust were already established with the participants, and it reduced the amount of time needed to complete the research steps as I was already familiar with the process we had followed to write the original plays. I was mindful throughout though to allow the participants to share their stories without my actively valuing or over-contributing to the conversation. I was transparent with the participants about wanting their honest opinions even if they perceived them as negative towards the process we had followed during the applied theatre projects. I told them that I was looking for ways to improve the program as well as honest feedback as an educator. When I wrote the script, I wrote myself in as the Studio Host character and kept all participant lines of dialogue true to the original interview transcripts.

After writing the script, I sent it to the participants for feedback and changes. Participants had 5 days to read and make suggestions or changes before our first performance. During our live video-conferencing Session 2, participants put on a different hat, literally, to show the characters of Freire and Saldaña in contrast to when they were playing themselves in the script. Due to these restrictions, I wrote the script as a fictional webcast on the topic of applied theatre

with the four participants as the panel of experts and Freire and Saldaña as guest experts. As the researcher, I played the role of the Studio Host in the performance. I offered the role to the participants to play but they all felt that it needed to be my voice in the conversation. I called the Studio Host “Sheila” because I wrote it with the tone of Sheila Rogers who I have heard interview multiple panels over the years. The errors in the reading added a less stilted flow and some humor. The actor playing Freire stumbled on the word *conscientization* and improvised to recover which improved the final version of the script.

### Script Excerpt With Post-Performance Additions: Introducing the Panel of Experts<sup>1</sup>

SALDAÑA (*donning Saldaña hat*)

Pleased as well. ... Will we be moving on soon? As “theatre’s primary goal is to entertain ... [both] ideas ... as it entertains spectators” (Saldaña, 2018, p. 664), this introduction has the danger of becoming (*looks directly at camera*) stilted (*pauses for effect*) and forcibly academic in tone.

ASA (*Smiling and shaking head*)

Oh, I hate stilted dialogue ...

STUDIO HOST (*Smiling indulgently*)

Hopefully the recursive nature of this approach will correct that as we move along ... Our theme for today’s episode is Co-creation of script in an Educational ethnodrama or applied theatre. Mr. Saldaña, can you give us an introduction to ethnodrama as a research tool to ‘set the stage’ (*air quotations*) for all our listeners and viewers out there?

SALDAÑA (*Smiling indulgently at the camera. Refined voice well-articulated*)

Gladly, Sheila ... In ethnodrama, knowledge and truth are co-constructed and come from lived experiences. There is not one universal truth but instead multiple individual truths. You collect data and transform it into scripts using the words of the participants in combination with the words of the researcher and the existing body of knowledge.

FREIRE (*madly dons hat*)

This knowledge is catalytic for **conscien ... conscienti ... conscientization!** (*pauses trying not to laugh*) **I know that word because I am a scholar ...** The researcher not only wants to share insights on the human condition but also be a catalyst for social change. **Conscientious ...** (*awkwardly long pause*) **Con-sci-en-tia-za** implies that an action is taken beyond simple awareness of the issue! Praxis! Reflection and action!

SALDAÑA

“In well-written ethnodrama, scholarly discourse is pushed aside to communicate both the everyday and the exceptional through more authentic and accessible language” (Saldaña 2018, p. 664).

CHARLOTTE

Your explanations were very ... er ... accessible ...

OLIVIA

No scholarly discourse there. ...

STUDIO HOST

Very ... illuminating ... **and Freire, I know that you actually did not want that word translated into English you prefer it in its native Portuguese which is why I feel you stumbled over this evening because you made quite a point that it should never be translated!**

**FREIRE (*quickly puts back on FREIRE hat and nodding sagely and gesturing with both hands spread to the audience*)**

**Of course.**

STUDIO HOST (*enumerating steps on right hand*)

So ... Collect data and write a script and perform it in an effort to change society ...

SALDAÑA (*Quickly donning hat for Saldaña—Grandiose voice*)

You must perform it well though! “Boring theatre (*looks up and shakes head sadly*) is bad theatre!” (Saldaña, 2018, p. 664).

Which raises the question as to why we are on Zoom ... where are the costumes? The staging?

STUDIO HOST (*Radio voice*)

Global pandemic, Johnny.

### **Findings**

My criteria included both creating interesting scenes in the ethnodrama and attempting to represent reliable information by drawing most heavily on repeated or frequent themes and ideas in the transcripts. Goldstein (2017) reminded that “research-informed theater practitioners must find a way to negotiate conflicting commitments to veracity, authenticity, and theatricality (p. 443). Outlined in what follows, five key findings emerged.

#### **Richness and Problem-Posing Education—The Process of Co-creating Scripts Based on Student Voice and Choice**

All of the participants talked about the allowance they had been given when they were Grade 8 students to tell any story and to work with whomever they chose to connect to their chosen topic from a prompt or time period, and to build both their confidence in, and their relationships with, peers. Some chose to write alone so that they could have full creative control over their scene before adding it to the greater narrative and others wrote as a group. Asa, Charlotte, and Hazel worked on the play *Le tyran (The Bully)* in 2018. The premise the students

decided upon was a high school bully trapped in a gym being visited by ghosts of bullied past students over 100 years. Each student or group of students chose a reason that students were bullied to write their scene. Asa and Charlotte wrote about homophobia. This came out of a mutual desire to address this issue as well as mutual trust as friends and co-writers. Hazel wrote about misogyny in the education system. Other themes that arose were racism, classism, slut shaming, and poverty. Olivia contributed to *Le gobelet d'or (The Golden Goblet)* in 2016, a story about a time traveling archeologist who learned that equality and social justice are more important than fame and fortune. Olivia co-wrote a scene that showed the contributing factors to the French Revolution.

The participants talked about the importance of working collaboratively as a class to weave the individual scenes into a story that they wanted to tell without the “meddling” of a teacher. This finding from the research supports Freire’s (2000) criteria for problem-posing education:

The teacher’s thinking is only authenticated by the authenticity of the students’ thinking. The teacher cannot think for her students nor can she impose her thoughts on them. Authentic thinking, thinking that is concerned about reality, does not take place in ivory tower isolation, but in communication. (p. 77)

The communication skills the students built as partners, groups, and then as a class allowed them to write stories that they reported were important and authentic.

### ***Script Excerpt: Making a Connection***

CHARLOTTE

Originally I think I was going to be with Jane and then she was like, “I’m off to work with someone else ...” and I was like ... (*sarcastic little kid voice*) “okay.” When I realized that I was going to be with you, (*laughing conspiratorially*) I remember being like ... oh good. (*Asa gestures as, oh me?*)

[*laughter*]

ASA

I remember when we were thinking about the ideas that we had and I think I raised my hand and was like ... uh ... homophobia? You were like, (*gestures in air with fist*) “yes!” I remember you were on the other side of the room and I thought ... I hope I’m with Charlotte.

CHARLOTTE

I really enjoyed I being able to write with someone who I was confident ... (*looking up thinking*) was going to be ... really ... good ... (*nodding*) at ... what we were doing ... (*smiles knowingly at Asa*)

*Hazel and Olivia nod in agreement with the statement.*

ASA

You have to trust the kids. They'll have their own ideas because kids have a lot of wisdom even if when they say it, it comes out ... childish. If you listen to what they're actually trying to say .... you might find that it's real and impactful. ... and it means a lot to them.

### **Rigor and Recursion—How to Write and Represent Sensitive Topics on Stage**

One of the challenges of using ethnodrama is the responsibility of respectfully and authentically constructing the script (Goldstein, 2017). The personal and sometimes traumatic nature of lived experiences has to also be at the forefront of the researcher's mind so that dialogue and continued co-construction is not damaging to the participants or the audience. There should be an effort to predict any ethical or moral dilemmas and any triggers for the potential audience. In an effort to remain true to the data, the risk may be “unforeseen emotional responses to the performance” (Sparkes & Smith, p. 169).

This is a similar concern when using applied theatre as an agent for change. The second finding from this research was the importance of rigor and recursion to properly tell stories that have sensitive and possibly triggering effects on the audience in applied theatre. The audience of *The French Plays* were middle school students aged 11–13. The students made some very bold choices but expressed that their belonging to the silenced or oppressed community in question helped to give them courage to tackle the topic in a more authentic way. The recursive process of workshopping scenes and rewriting/restaging was equally important to the participants in applied theatre as it is in ethnodrama as a research tool. The students rehearsed the scenes they had written and then rewrote and restaged each one until they felt it was ready for their audience. The scene in *Le tyran* about teen suicide was very short on paper but required the most discussion, reflection, and adjustment on stage until the participants felt that it honored the seriousness of the topic but still conveyed its central emotions to the audience without triggering trauma or a negative reaction in the audience. The choice to include a slur in the scene about homophobia in *Le tyran* was also the product of extensive dialogue and reflection. They wanted to tell the story well but they also wanted to be honest about what they were hearing in the middle school context.

#### ***Script Excerpt: The Swear Word***

STUDIO HOST

Whoa ... um. Cut. This is a play for middle school .... Is that language ... um ...

CHARLOTTE

We ... we both decided that we felt okay about it ...

ASA

We had a long ... think ... about that ...

CHARLOTTE

There was a big discussion about using that word. ...

ASA

I felt like personally better about it in French ... in English, I'd definitely have more qualms about it!

CHARLOTTE

Steer away from it for sure ... but in French? I remember when you brought up that idea we were like ... okay ... let's talk about this. ... *(laughing)*

ASA

Yeah, yeah, like should we do this?

CHARLOTTE

I remember watching the script get so long sitting at my computer in my room you'd added little notes right next to the "bad word" ... like "heehee" this is a bad word...

ASA

Okay, in my defense, I swore a lot more then but I didn't know you well enough that I knew I would be able to swear around you ...

CHARLOTTE

Yeah, *(voice goes higher and cutesy)* it was so cute. *(Back to regular speaking voice)* But seriously though, we made sure that we felt okay about who was saying it as well.

ASA

It was good that we were both queer because—

CHARLOTTE

—because being a part of that community made it feel safer.

STUDIO HOST

What if you make someone feel uncomfortable ... I mean ... If you weren't even sure that Charlotte would be ok with it ...

ASA

Isn't that kind of the goal? *(sighs)* I love Social Justice Theatre ....

### **Conscientization: The Power of Theatre to Create Change**

Another important finding reported by participants was the importance of theatre as opposed to assemblies, books, or presentations to create social justice change especially for youth. All of the participants talked about the power that drama has to connect emotionally with an audience and create empathy for oppressed voices. They all spoke about situations they experienced during and after performances of audience reactions and shifts in understanding.

***Script Excerpt: Toying With Emotions***

CHARLOTTE

I had a lot of fun doing this because I felt good about what we were performing.

ASA (*relief/quietly emphatically*)

Same.

CHARLOTTE

I felt proud and that we were helping even in a small way to make a difference to the people watching. Sharing people's experiences with these issues can help change people's points of view because you can hear something a million times but not actually see it, you know?

ASA

I also agree with that. I mean part of me was worried that somebody was gonna like yell something homophobic from the audience ... (*finishing each other's sentences*)

CHARLOTTE (*smiling awkwardly*)

or laugh ...

ASA

... or laugh. (*sigh*) Honestly, I was worried about that.

STUDIO HOST

“There is the potential for folks to develop empathy and to connect with vulnerability—the vulnerability of others, and our own—while providing empowerment to those who have been silenced.” (Malhotra, 2018, p. 158) It sounds like you all really connected during this process ...

CHARLOTTE

Just knowing that our script and the way we performed—the fact that it actually really impacted people's ... is important. Our other teacher, who came up afterwards and had and told us that he had cried. I was like, “I'm sorry that we made you cry” ... but at the same time that's kind of good because that's sort of what we were going for—to feel that connection. For the audience to the point of feeling emotion themselves towards the characters and their situations is something that people strive for in theater... . Yeah ... like toy with your emotions ...

ASA (*enthusiastically interjecting*)

Oh it's so fun! It's one of my favorite parts of theater because I really like that there's so many facets that can really come together to create like an emotional impact. (*finishing each other's sentences again*)

CHARLOTTE (*conspiratorial*)

A nice cocktail of emotions ...

ASA

So nice ... I love that!

SALDAÑA (*donning Saldaña's hat*)

I also love it! As I've said before to my public, "Stop thinking like a social scientist and start thinking like an artist!" (Saldaña, 2018, p. 686)

CHARLOTTE

I remember one of my favorite things that I got told from the point of view of someone

watching our scene was Hazel informing us...

ASA (*making two fists enthusiastically interrupting*)

Oh my god, yes! Yes! Oh my god I loved it so much ... it made me so happy! Sorry, I totally interrupted you, yeah ... continue ...

CHARLOTTE

There was a boy in the audience in the front row ...

ASA

Was it one or two?

CHARLOTTE

I think there were two and they were joking with each other during our scene when we first come on being like—oh look at these guys—you know? and like kind of just not taking it that seriously and Hazel had been of course watching our scene and she informed us of this afterwards. About halfway through our scene, when ... when things started to escalate, and Vincent had his rage coming out, and then they had this moment together ... both boys' expressions changed and they went from like mocking it to genuinely watching the scene and being interested. I really hope that that stayed with them. Especially in middle school ... for whatever reason ... a lot of people joke around about subjects that are more sensitive to many people and I hope that after watching they realized .... Even if you're told something, you don't necessarily get it ...

ASA

You're so far removed from it ... yeah ... You're just like—gay people exist, cool.

CHARLOTTE

Good to know.

ASA

Wonderful. But watching it ...

CHARLOTTE

Even if you're having a conversation with someone or with a group of people about a social issue, you might not get people listening or really paying attention. They'll hear you but they won't take it to heart but just the ability to stand on stage and perform and to give it in that sense of reality ... I think like as a society, people kind of know that if someone's acting or someone performing on the stage, then you listen ...

ASA (*nodding*)

It's their time.

CHARLOTTE

You watch and listen.

### **Relations: The Importance of Adults Listening to the Voices of Teenagers**

A very clear message that emerged from this research from all of the participants is that the voices of teenagers are not always valued. They expressed the frustration that they not only have been weighted with the responsibility of fixing the current world by adults but also at the same time they are not always heard. According to the participants, the relationship between adults and teens needs to include listening on the part of adults.

#### ***Script Excerpt: Save the World***

CHARLOTTE

Kids and teenagers in general, especially in our generation, have got this mindset now that's been given to us of, 'okay, yeah ... now we have to deal with all these things going on and fix them because it's currently up to us ... and yeah with help from other generations as well but ...

ASA

Yeah ... go save the world now ... um (*raises eyebrows questioningly*)

They reported that the process of applied theatre had given them an opportunity to make themselves not only heard but respected for their thoughts and ideas. Their message to adults was to trust in youth and to listen even when they aren't able yet to express themselves in a linear or cohesive way. They said that they can handle the responsibility of tackling serious issues if they are given the opportunity

#### ***Script Excerpt: Sensitive Material ... in a Smart Way***

HAZEL

You know .... telling the story that has like this weight to it. I think that was really big for me. (*smiling and nodding*) It is good .... It makes Grade 8s think.

OLIVIA

Especially this year ... It's such a heavy year. I mean people have probably have a lot of feelings and things that they want to talk about and there's so much happening ... You can always just use that for your stories and your theater. It's cool giving students an outlet—a creative outlet—is so cool.

SALDAÑA (*donning Saldaña's hat*)

“Ethnodrama provides opportunities for participants with marginalized ‘offstage’ status in everyday life to stand centre stage and tell their stories” (Saldaña, 2003, p. 67). This is important every year. We always have a story to tell. There are so many silenced voices.

MACEDO (*ranting*)

Marginalized? Oppressed. It is the “liberal educators [that] remain complicit in the erasure of language—an act that empties out, for example, the meaning of the term[s] ‘oppressed’ ... ‘disenfranchised’, ‘economically marginalized’, ‘minority’, and ‘at-risk’ among other[s] [that are used] to refer to the oppressed, but in doing so obfuscate the true historical conditions that explain the ‘here and now’!” (Macedo, as cited in Freire, 2000, pp. 17–18)

STUDIO HOST

Macedo ... I appreciate you wrote the introduction to Freire's 50th anniversary edition but I don't think you were invited to this script ...

OLIVIA

Um ... Thanks, Macedo ... It is important, I think, that we give kids a chance to talk about difficult topics. To talk about the ... “oppressed.” Grade 8s are old enough to understand that they're dealing with sensitive material and ... they can do it in a smart way.

HAZEL (*smiling at Olivia and nodding in agreement*)

(*softly*) Yeah. They really are.

OLIVIA

It worked. It never felt awkward seeing them handling material like that. It just kind of felt like they'd put thought into it ...

HAZEL

I think because we were covering very serious topics, along the way we did a lot of read-throughs from the very beginning, which I think was really good because you kind of grew the space so it was comfortable to be in. It's really scary getting up in front of your classmates. By doing that, you have the people who you're performing with being really confident with each other.

CHARLOTTE

Yeah ... we poured our souls into *Le tyran*, to make it what it was. But I had worries about certain kids in the class because I had had slightly negative experiences with jokes and comments about certain issues like homophobia and misogyny that we dealt with in this play, but by the end of it, I noticed that everyone knew the severity of the issues.

OLIVIA

I think it's sort of like having a lot of faith that the kids, at the end of the day, do want to put on a show that they're proud of and then therefore will do the work. The amazing thing about theater is that you have this amazing result at the end of seeing your work paying off and seeing people's reactions to your work unlike doing a math sheet ... where, you're like ... great! I got a good grade ... Theater actually pushes me to do something like the hardest work ever done.

FREIRE (*donning the Freire hat*)

Ah, yes, the worksheet ... the test ... the banking model of education ... Teachers are the depositors and students are the depositories—ready to receive, memorize and repeat .... (Freire, 2000, p. 72)

OLIVIA (*interrupting*)

Well ... you do have to memorize and repeat in theatre ...

### **Relations: The Personal Impact on the Participants' Self-Development**

One of my original research questions was to investigate the impact on the participants more specifically in social justice understandings and conscientization but there was also personal development that occurred for all the participants. Gallagher and Mealy (2018) proposed that

any theory of self-creation for young performers/cultural producers should be understood as embedded in relationships; that the artistically discovered possible selves are authorized and critically supported by a community of self-searchers, willing to take risks, experiment, succeed and fail, together. (p. 150)

I found that the process had a significant impact on participants' confidence and interpersonal skills. They reported that they also learned to make better connections with peers and to work collaboratively towards a common goal. All four participants have continued working in theatre since their experience in Grade 8 as both actors and writers.

### ***Script Excerpt: Confidence to Address Things Head-On Because of Comfort With Each Other***

OLIVIA

You do get really comfortable as a class when you're getting up on stage and performing for each other or doing a scene with them. Everyone becomes close and good friends, I would say. You're spending so much time together. You're doing important but also kind of challenging work with them which then leads to bonds forming. The unity of

the creative experience kind of works out to form really nice friendships along the way which you don't get in a classic classroom setting of like—desk work.

HAZEL

I just found that you got very comfortable with the people around you and you were able to address things more head-on because .... because of that comfort—which I thought was really good. (*nodding*) I really got a lot more confident. (*nods and smiles at the camera*)

OLIVIA

I would say it really helped me with coming out of my shell a little bit in terms of like ... seeing myself as a leader. I had probably more experience with what we were doing than a lot of other people. I sort of had to come to terms with the fact that I could actually use this to be helpful. Giving kids opportunities to feel that way is amazing! Letting them explore what they are passionate about from a young age and share it with other people.

### Conclusion

Ethnodrama as a research tool and applied theatre have similar impacts on helping audiences to develop a better understanding of the world and to make change based on those reflections. Researchers choosing ethnodrama to represent their data and findings are committed to telling the stories of their participants as accurately and authentically as possible and to use that data as a catalyst for social change. The participants' words, dialects, and ways of speaking are conserved as much as possible in an attempt to create verisimilitude. The audience knows that the stories are lived experiences and not a fictional construction of the researcher to problematize or idealize a situation. This authenticity gives ethnodrama more power to achieve its goals of creating empathy, calling the audience to question their own privileges and beliefs, and taking action. The participants echoed this in their experiences in *The French Play*. They felt they had a space to tell authentic stories in their own words and to learn how to work collaboratively in a respectful manner. The audiences for the Grade 8 performances, both adult and peer, gave positive and supportive feedback to the actors that empowered the participants to continue in theatre as a tool for social change. The process was driven by the students/participants and the ideas that became scenes in the script were derived from the stories they felt important to tell. A teacher of applied theatre, like a researcher using ethnodrama, needs to build in space for voice and recursion. Through the recurrent process of reworking and revising the script and the performance, students benefited more than if the content and staging had been teacher driven. Participants all voiced that this was key to their experiences in *The French Play*. Some of the stories the students chose to tell were sensitive in nature and much thought was put into how to stage them without triggering audiences in a negative way. Teacher guidance and checking is key to monitoring these potential unintended consequences to social justice theatre but they must “practice co-intentional education. Teachers and students (leadership and people), co-intent on reality, are both subjects, not only to the task of unveiling that reality, and thereby getting to know it critically, in the task of recreating that knowledge (Freire, 2000, p. 69).

Another challenge of this genre is theatrical quality. If the researcher is not versed in theatre writing and production, the script can become stilted and lack realism (Saldaña, 2018).

As a teacher, I have 20 years of working in drama education, both with writing scripts and producing other dramaturges' plays. This experience made the process of adapting the transcripts into scripts easier. The participants in this study had also co-written scripts with me during their French Play experiences and were comfortable with the role of co-writer and contributor. It is important for researchers using ethnodrama or any research-informed theatre to find ways to present both authentic and accurate information and create an engaging piece of theatre (Goldstein, 2012/2017). Unlike genres that are designed for print, ethnodrama should be more than words on the page divided between characters. The script and audience viewing needs to include the aspects of theatre that make it an aesthetic experience such as staging, costuming, and action. This sense of action and storytelling should also be apparent in the text script with actor cues, stage directions, and character descriptions. This was a limitation in my study due to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions on gatherings and theatrical presentations. I wrote the script to be presented via video conference but I was concerned that some of the impact, which can only be experienced with a live audience, would be lost. The technical difficulties and awkwardness of any meeting or drama in this online format actually added to the script as I had written it. Video failures, wifi connectivity, and uncertainty of where to look added not only humor but also a new age of verisimilitude to this ethnodramatic production. Everyone who was living in 2020 will find a sense of connection with this theatrical endeavor. As they say, the show must go on!

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<sup>1</sup> Stage directions are in italics and some dialogue is in bold—to reflect the actual performance.

## A Review of Sheila Cote-Meek's and Taima Moeke-Pickering's (Eds.), *Decolonizing and Indigenizing Education in Canada*

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In the book *Decolonizing and Indigenizing Education in Canada*, Sheila Cote-Meek and Taima Moeke-Pickering, along with the contributors, set out to “share their experiences and provide diverse perspectives on what it means to decolonize and indigenize the academy” (Cote-Meek & Moeke-Pickering, 2020, p. ix). By gathering together the writings of Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars, the editors have successfully brought forward diverse voices to explore the nuances and complexities of the decolonization and indigenization of post-secondary colonial institutions in what is now Canada.

While reading the book, I found that it was not lost on the Indigenous and ally author scholars that “we were all contaminated with colonial European education that is built on racist assumptions that targeted Aboriginal people as inferior” (Battiste, 2013, p. 188). In the same fashion, I have always wondered if it is possible to decolonize educational institutions in Canada because they were created within the colonial project. If it is possible, then what would it look like? Or as Sheila Cote-Meek poses in the Introduction, “What do we aspire post-secondary institutions to do? What needs to be changed? How do we imagine that change can occur?” (p. xvii). The contributors to the various chapters illuminate the opportunities and challenges of such an enterprise.

The strength of *Decolonizing and Indigenizing Education in Canada* lies in the diversity of perspectives of what decolonizing and indigenizing means in education. Through the lens of relationality, the Indigenous and ally scholars critically and creatively share how post-secondary institutions need to make space for Indigenous Knowledges. This builds on the work of Dr. Marie Battiste's (2013), *Decolonizing Education: Nourishing the Learning Spirit*, in which she discusses the importance of an Indigenous renaissance and displacing cognitive imperialism. This Indigenous renaissance requires Indigenous educators and scholars to continue along the path of reclaiming and renewing their worldviews, environments, and languages (Battiste, 2013, p. 68). As an illustration, the Anishinaabeg, Kanaka Hawai'i, Kanien'keha:ka, Métis, Michif and nehiyawak scholars foreground their lived experiences and stories from the land as part of the Indigenous renaissance. Displacing cognitive imperialism requires the re-centering of these Indigenous knowledges, perspectives and experiences. The contributors in this book move the reader to interrogate the continued production of Eurocentric knowledge within Western educational institutions and how it continues to marginalize Indigenous knowledges (Galla & Holmes, Chp. 4) and voices.

It is astonishing to think about how long Indigenous scholars have insisted there be change within the educational system (see Laroque, 1975). The most profound appeal to change was the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (2015) *Calls to Action*, which various authors use to frame the work that needs to be done, as well as to problematize current institutional policies. What the authors of this book do is advocate for the disruption of the colonial project through the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives, histories, languages, and knowledges (Cote-Meek, Intro.). As educators, we see the need to rebalance curriculum and pedagogical practices to better represent the diversity that exists within our educational institutions to benefit all

students. For example, Métis content has been woefully underrepresented in the K–12 and post-secondary curriculum, which not only harms Métis students, but also it leaves all Canadians without a fulsome picture of Indigenous history, cultures, and contributions (Scott, Chp. 3). It brings to mind how Dr. Battiste (2013) writes about how “there is no magic bullet, but multiple ways to solve many issues” (p. 70-71). The contributors to this book provide multiple ways to address decolonization and indigenization through the inclusion of Indigenous ways of knowing (Weenie, Chp. 1; McGuire, Chp. 2; Galla & Holmes, Chp. 4; Steinhauer et al., Chp. 5), use of social media for Indigenous activism (Moeke-Pickering, Chp. 15), and mandatory Indigenous education courses (Fiola & MacKinnon, Chp. 9; Lavallee, Chp. 7; Purton et al., Chp. 10; Pardy & Pardy, Chp. 13). The text did well in balancing the strategies with the challenges of indigenizing the academy. In particular by identifying that Indigenous scholars are often left shouldering the burden of teaching mandatory Indigenous education courses or sitting on institutional committees (Fiola & MacKinnon, Chp.9; Grafton & Melacon, Chp. 8; Purton et al., Chp.10), as well as leaving Indigenous scholars to wrestle with colonial violence (Pedri-Spade, Chp. 6) when faced with faculty, staff and students who are resistant to change (Cheechoo, Chp. 14; Donnan et al., Chp. 11; Pardy & Pardy, Chp. 13). Hopefully this book can be a catalyst for further research by Indigenous scholars on their own experiences of Indigenizing the academy, and for non-Indigenous scholars to interrogate issues around decolonization. There is more work that needs to be done for post-secondary institutions to see how Indigenous knowledges “can be sources of inspiration, creativity and opportunity, and can make contributions to humanity, equality, solidarity, tolerance and respect” (Battiste, 2013, p. 72).

The book is logically organized according to two themes: Indigenous epistemologies and decolonizing post-secondary institutions. These themes provide for Indigenous voices to reflect upon their own experiences of Indigenizing the academy, and for non-Indigenous scholars to interrogate issues around decolonization. I also found that the chapters fell along a continuum of discussing the delegitimization and exclusion of Indigenous Knowledge to outlining the challenges and successes of working towards decolonization through the inclusion of Indigenous Knowledge and anti-oppressive pedagogies. The glossary at the end of each chapter will help those embarking on learning about Indigenous knowledges and pedagogies navigate the dynamics of indigenizing the academy, especially considering the multiple discourses in defining decolonization and indigenization.

Undergraduate and graduate students will find this book useful in developing and extending their understanding of Indigenous epistemologies. The discussion questions at the end of each chapter will lead the reader to consider their own biases and consider how they can engage in rebalancing educational spaces through the inclusion of diverse ways of knowing and the redistribution of power. The inclusion of further readings with each chapter not only supports enhancing the knowledge of post-secondary students, but they are also useful resources to scholars who are ready to move beyond the symbolic and performative actions of reconciliation (Coupal, Chp. 12).

This book will benefit Indigenous scholars in considering our role in Indigenizing education to ensure that we remain connected to the land and our communities and not succumb to being “palatable Indians” who will not disrupt the existing power structures of the academic elite (Lavallee, p. 125). Coupled with questioning our own complicity, as Sandra Styres so aptly described, is the need to “embrace the messy fluidity of an insider/outsider perspective” as we are both “privileged and complicit in so many ways, yet also simultaneously marginalized and

erased” (p. 177). For non-Indigenous scholars, this book will benefit them in illuminating their responsibilities for decolonization, which can occur alongside Indigenization by the re-centring of Indigenous knowledges and experiences (Grafton & Melacon, Chp. 8).

In *Decolonizing and Indigenizing Education in Canada*, Cote-Meek and Moeke-Pickering, and their valued group of contributors bring together years of experience and personal, theoretical, and practical knowledge in the field of education. They invite readers to reflect, interrogate, and transform.

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**A Review of *Silencing Ivan Illich Revisited: A Foucauldian Analysis of Intellectual Exclusion*  
by David Gabbard**

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I first encountered Ivan Illich's (1970) *Deschooling Society* in an undergraduate Educational Foundations course at the University of Saskatchewan. This introduction sparked an intense and long-lasting intellectual engagement with Illich's work. The instructor was Dr. Robert Carlson, an adult educator at the University of Saskatchewan, committed to the disestablishment of schooling, and in many ways at the fringe of what the College of Education was offering. Given the thesis of Gabbard's book, it might seem that my experience is an exception; however, it may be an exception that proves his point. That the only place I could encounter Illich was outside of the mainstream suggests something about the repressive force of dominant ideas in education.

The kind of intellectual exclusion that David Gabbard takes up in this work is unrelated to the current politicized notion of "cancel culture." Although there is some recognition of sanctions as part of the mostly American culture wars of the 1990s, the arguments in this book bear no resemblance to the current iteration of conservative hand-waving over public accountability. Rather, *Silencing Ivan Illich Revisited* is about the much deeper mechanisms that dominant educational discourses utilize to conserve and reproduce their central theses. In fact, this work stresses how there can be varied and deep (and sometimes contradictory) criticisms allowed within the archive of educational thought, as long as those ideas do not contradict the "messianic" principle of inclusion, which states:

You must present the institution of state-mandated, compulsory schooling as a benevolent institution capable of delivering the individual and/or society into some condition of secular salvation. (p. 3)

According to Gabbard, Ivan Illich's failure to even minimally uphold this principle accounts for his exclusion from mainstream educational discourse.

Following from Gabbard's dissertation work, this book is rooted in Foucauldian archaeology. Archaeological analysis seeks a "description of the archive," those collections of statements/practices that can be spoken, or are intelligible from within a particular discursive formation. Marking Foucault's own move away from the fixedness of the language of archaeology, Gabbard defines his approach as "theoretico-activist." In order to adopt this analysis of discourse, it is necessary to view discourse itself as a practice, recognizing that power and knowledge are mutually constitutive. Relatedly, this approach insists that both theory and practice are "at the same level," that theory is imagined within practices, and therefore it is not necessary/possible to meaningfully separate theory as being somehow above, or more important than the practices that produce/reify those theories. According to Gabbard, the work of a theoretico-activist analysis surfaces and explains the rules that govern the discursive formation.

Ivan Illich became something of an international educational celebrity in the early 1970s with his critiques of institutions, namely the Catholic Church, schools, and medicine. Chapter 3 is dedicated to excavating the main ideas that reinforce Illich's transgression of the messianic principle (without naming him specifically as the "critical functionary"). The chapter explores the rules of discursive formation that shape "the school" as an object in Illich's work. By tracing

some of the myths articulated in Illich's writing, Gabbard outlines how, "the human need for education has been transformed into a consumer's demand" (p. 43), which then can only be fulfilled by schools. While learning is innately human, translating this need into the framework of consumerism—through prepackaged curricula, the promise of "measurable values" (and the subsequent credential afforded successful achievement in school) and other mechanisms—affords obligatory schooling a monopoly on the supply of education. In contrast, Gabbard highlights Illich's imagining of a convivial institution, building on inter-relationships and authenticity to imagine a de-schooled society.

Chapter 4 explores the exclusion of Ivan Illich's work through cataloguing the two major sources of critique (what Gabbard refers to as discursive "commentary"). The chapter gathers a number of "meritocratic" commentaries, which focus on the individual and how schools produce leadership and professional expertise. These commentaries emphasize the way that merit is measured and rewarded through compulsory schooling, ensuring that the most worthy individuals develop the social capital to enable/justify their eventual leadership in the society. De-schooling, however, would create a space for elitism to flourish. Gabbard also gathers a number of critiques that he refers to as "social reconstructivist" commentaries. While the authors of these commentaries allow that Illich's critiques of school are useful, they offer that schools are also the place where societal change can happen. Schools can play a role in working against injustice, toward greater equality. De-schooling would remove a mechanism for constructive social change. It is necessary to note that Gabbard's text is not trying to argue that we should embrace Illich's ideas; this is not a book about the value or necessity of Illich. Rather, it is about the way some ideas can be excluded because of their transgression of the messianic principle in education. Because both the meritocratic and social reconstructionist critiques uphold the messianic principle, their critiques of schooling are allowed space, are rendered as intelligible, and included within dominant educational discourse.

I appreciate the way that this book takes up the conserving momentum of dominant educational discourses. What can be considered, thought about, and imagined is constrained through powerful discursive moves that render (some forms of) critique unintelligible. Gabbard brings to the fore some of the deep ways that dominant ideas about schooling are maintained. Another strength of this text is the careful attention to the theories that underlie the methodological choices. While it makes for a technically challenging read, the text bears up as a meaningful exploration of a theoretico-activist approach. Methodologically, this is an interesting example of archaeological work. Foucault does not offer a road-map to follow, or a narrow set of processes to work through; the methodological terrain is vast and confusing. Practitioners may read this as a valuable example of how archaeology might be performed.

On a different note, I was struck by Chapter 5. After the heavy lifting and narrow discursive focus of the previous chapters, to use Illich's relationships with the institutional church as an example of how the messianic discourse functions was revealing. It was also a more human picture of Illich's work/convictions. I understand why the author chose to strip some of this humanity away for the previous chapters, but I really appreciated these connections. Ivan Illich's convivial approach requires this sort of contextualization in order to serve as an antidote to the dehumanizing work of institutions.

As this book's title announces it represents a "revisiting" of an earlier work. Gabbard notes that after the book was originally published he had two choices: a negative path of critique

(to work in teacher preparation, encouraging preservice teachers to understand the propaganda of school reform); or, a positive path of building from Illich's ideas towards a de-schooled society. He followed the path of critique for decades, and in *Revisited* wanted to take up the more positive task. While the ending of the book suggests some starting places for this work, especially in a defense of discursive freedom, I was left unconvinced that that the pursuit of theoretico-activism would lead to the building of something other.

Gabbard's description of Illich's exclusion from mainstream educational discourse seems important in this moment. More than reactionary political takes, this work stresses some of the deep ways that dominant discourses function. Scholars interested in especially Foucauldian approaches to discourse will find this work useful. Scholars interested in Illich will perhaps be disappointed in the narrow emphasis on educational exclusion that necessitates the (temporary) erasure of Ivan Illich in the writing.