BU Journal of Graduate Studies in Education

Volume 16, Issue 1, 2024

Quarter Horse Mare Nudging Her Foal To Make Friends
Lenore, Manitoba

BRANDON UNIVERSITY

UCN

BU Journal of Graduate Studies in Education

Volume 16, 2024

Online access: www.brandonu.ca/master-education/journal and www.irbu.arcabc.ca
Individual articles are also indexed on the ERIC database: www.eric.ed.gov.com

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the thirty-sixth issue of the *BU Journal of Graduate Studies in Education*, devoted to rural, northern, and Indigenous education. Our authors for volume 16 are current and past BU Faculty of Education graduate students. I thank these educators for sharing their scholarship.

- Lyliam Jardine's ED.D. abstract summarizes describes her research with university educated Colombian immigrants to Canada.
- Jordana Etkin's refereed article advocates place-based education as an opportunity to celebrate Indigenous ways of knowing and the connection between students and their environment.
- Brenna Smith's refereed article
- Mabel Dzigbordzi's refereed article explains
- Adam Dobriansky's refereed article explores
- Matthew Buck's professional reflection reminds educators

Also included in this issue is our "Celebration of Scholarship," to honour graduate students who completed their M.Ed. degrees with theses in 2023.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

RESEARCH REPORT

Exploring the Intercultural and Holistic Transformative Learning Experiences of Professional Colombian Immigrants in Canada

Lyliam Janeth Jardine

Ed.D. Abstract

Colombians who acquire a university degree in Colombia may still face challenges finding employment. They may choose to immigrate to Canada because the opportunities that this country offers. However, these immigrants may have to apply various strategies to overcome obstacles in their path to success. So, when they immigrate permanently to their host country (Canada as their country of settlement), they may have to overcome barriers, such as discrimination (Quillian et al., 2019) while finding a place in their professional field and integrating into their host communities (community of settlement). As a result, immigrants may find that having a career and speaking the target language is not enough to communicate effectively and build meaningful connections in their host communities.

Thus, the purpose of this qualitative study with narrative inquiry methodology was to explore the journeys of eight professional Colombian immigrants who felt successful in Canada and had two or more years of adaptation and integration to answer the following question: To what extent did professional Colombian immigrants experience holistic Transformative Learning (TL) and enhance Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) after living in Canada for two or more years, in their path to professional success?

In this study, I explored how the eight participants were able to enhance their ICC through various strategies that fostered interpersonal connections. These connections allowed them to become more confident with their target language(s); they also became stronger, humbler, and more flexible, and open-minded. In turn, they enhanced their communication skills and their ICC in their host communities. Their positive attributes and interpersonal connections helped them reflect on changes in their identities and frames of reference experiencing holistic TL.

The study findings have the potential to inform the professional field of adult learning on how to incorporate learning spaces that promote interpersonal connections and learning through relationships to foster ICC and holistic TL.

Jardine, L. (2023). *Exploring the intercultural and holistic transformative learning experiences of professional Colombian immigrants in Canada* [Doctoral thesis, University of Calgary]. Open Theses and Dissertations. https://hdl.handle.net/1880/116628

About the Researcher

Dr. Jardine is a sessional instructor at Brandon University and the University of Calgary, and also an entrepreneur. Some of her research areas include intercultural competence and transformative learning around immigrants.

REFEREED ARTICLES

Beyond the Classroom Walls: Place-Based and Sustainable Education

Jordana Etkin

Abstract

This article explores the shift towards place-based education, prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic, advocating for innovative, flexible teaching methods. Integrating local environments and communities into education fosters active citizenship and social engagement, particularly benefiting Indigenous communities. Reflecting on personal experiences, the article emphasizes the intersectionality of sustainability and place-based education, promoting meaningful educational experiences that empower students as agents of change. It dives into the benefits, challenges, and implications of incorporating culturally relevant pedagogy, advocating for inclusive, equitable, and sustainable education practices. Through this holistic approach, schools can nurture environmentally conscious citizens deeply rooted in their cultural heritage, driving societal change towards justice, equity, and respect.

The COVID-19 pandemic accentuated the need for an overhaul of traditional education systems, showcasing a growing recognition to embrace place-based education. The pandemic prompted a shift away from the confines of physical classroom walls (Yemini et al., 2023), highlighting the need for innovative, flexible approaches to teaching and learning. The shift towards place-based education acknowledges the value of integrating communities and local environments into the learning process, ultimately strengthening experiences for students. Just as the transition to remote learning during the early months of 2020 aimed to minimize barriers to education, place-based education similarly focuses on strengthening connections to society and communities. By integrating local economic, political, cultural, natural, and social elements with instruction, place-based education drives active citizenship and social engagement among students (Uztemur & Dere, 2023). Raising awareness of sustainability education, fosters educational reform, and rethinking traditional strategies for instruction enhances a sense of accountability, especially within Indigenous communities, where it has been a longstanding practice.

Reflecting on my experiences as a white teacher in a densely Indigenous and newcomer inner-city school encouraged my exploration of the intersectionality of place-based and sustainability education. As a lover of the outdoors, and a child with an ADHD diagnosis, the classroom has always been stifling for me. By examining the relationship between sustainability and place-based education, I aim to show how they positively impact students and communities alike. Through this article, educators will gain insights into these approaches as teaching strategies. The objective is to advance both of these learning initiatives, inspiring meaningful educational experiences that empower students as agents of change.

Rationale

Embracing culturally relevant education is crucial in my role as a white female educator, particularly in an inner-city school setting. Recognizing my position within the oppressive traditional education system, I acknowledge the historical injustices that impact students, especially those identifying as Indigenous. My professional growth centres on exploring culture, racism, identity, and social justice within my school's Professional Learning Community (PLC), guided by the Mamàhtawisiwin: The Wonder We Are Born With document. Through place-

based education, I aim to confront colonial legacies that marginalize Indigenous knowledge and perspectives, celebrating Indigenous ways of knowing and the connection between students and their environment.

Reflecting on decolonization within my teaching practice, I critiqued my instructional approaches, interactions with students, and provincial curriculum, striving to decentre Western narratives and incorporate Indigenous history and voices. Reflective practices empower Indigenous students by validating their experiences and knowledge, fostering inclusive and equitable spaces. Place-based learning is not just about curriculum; it is the journey of advocating for decolonization, justice, and reform.

Literature Review

Traditional education often fails to bridge the gap between students and their environment, focusing primarily on classroom-based instruction. However, there is a growing recognition of the need for place-based education as a means to foster holistic learning experiences (Ritchie et. al., 2015). This shift is particularly urgent in light of the ongoing global environmental crisis, characterized by challenges such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and environmental degradation (Bascope & Reiss, 2021). To address these issues, there is a need to revise instructional approaches, while cultivating a sense of ecological responsibility and stewardship among educators and students alike.

For centuries, Indigenous communities have centred education on people, land, and culture. By recognizing and building upon these foundations, educators can create more meaningful experiences that resonate with students from diverse backgrounds. Integrating cultural perspectives into education not only honours Indigenous knowledge systems, furthering students' understanding of their relationship with the environment (Morgan, 2012). Acknowledging the significance of place-based sustainable education, educators begin to nurture environmentally aware students.

Place-Based Education: A Pedagogical Approach

Place-based education, as defined by McDonald (2023), is an instructional approach centred on the environment, community, and culture, drawing from students' lived experiences to shape curricular content. It is an umbrella term connecting educational activities and the physical environment where educators and students interact (Yemini et al., 2023). Through hands-on, experiential learning (McInerney et al., 2011), this approach empowers students to actively engage with their surroundings, strengthening a deeper understanding of real-world issues. Emphasizing local engagement advances active citizenship, contributing significantly to the development of social skills (Uztemer & Dere, 2023). Place-based education naturally produces critical thinking and problem-solving skills by exploring and tackling local issues (McInerney et al., 2011) across subject areas. Unlike traditional classrooms where students passively receive information, in place-based education models, students actively generate and create knowledge (Yemini et al., 2023). Learning this way facilitates community engagement by building partnerships between schools and local entities to address authentic community needs. The overarching goal of place-based education is to anchor students' learning in their own experiences, enabling them to generate knowledge rather than absorb information that perpetuates oppressive systems (McDonald, 2023).

Originating within environmental education movements in the mid-to-late 20th century, place-based education incorporates Indigenous pedagogies, acknowledging the importance of traditional knowledge, ancestral lands, and intergenerational learning (Yemini et al., 2023). Aligning with progressive educational philosophies from gurus such as John Dewey (experiential learning theory) and Maria Montessori (learning in authentic contexts), place-based

education stems from principles of community development, empowerment, and social justice in the pursuit of resilient, sustainable communities through educational practices (Boyd, 2019).

As an innovative pedagogical approach, place-based education challenges traditional Western education by prioritizing learning opportunities outside the conventional classroom setting (Yemini et al., 2023), highlighting the value of traditional Indigenous knowledge systems. These systems offer invaluable insight into sustainable living practices, ecological stewardship (Bascope & Reiss, 2021), and coexistence with the environment. By incorporating Indigenous perspectives into education, we not only honour and respect Indigenous cultures but also enrich our understanding of sustainable practices rooted in centuries of wisdom and experience (Arellano et al., 2019). This integration supports a more holistic approach (Uztemur & Dere, 2023) to sustainability, promoting cultural diversity, environmental awareness, and social equity within educational frameworks. Ultimately, it empowers learners to engage with sustainability issues through a lens that champions a deeper connection to Indigenous wisdom and to the land. Welcoming place-based sustainable education alongside Indigenous knowledge systems reinforces students' understanding of our interconnected world, empowering them as agents for change in their communities.

Sustainability as Environmental Education

Sustainability is rooted in the principle of meeting current needs without compromising the ability of future generations to fulfill their own, emphasizing the connection between people and the natural environment (Morgan, 2012). This foundational concept spans economic, environmental, and social dimensions (Morgan, 2012), collectively referred to as the three pillars of sustainability. In an educational context, integrating cultural connections into sustainability is vital. This integration involves recognizing the ways in which human interactions, shaped by cultural practices and beliefs, influence the health and functioning of local communities and the environment (Boyd, 2019). When educators acknowledge and understand these relationships, they are better able to create a holistic approach to sustainable education (Bascope & Reiss, 2021) that respects diverse cultural perspectives and promotes environmental stewardship.

Addressing global challenges such as climate change, resource depletion, and social inequality (Boyd, 2019), sustainability education advocates for practices that safeguard the wellbeing of both present and future generations. Morgan (2012) expressed the need for a shift towards sustainable education, ensuring students acknowledge and understand the connection between social and community dynamics, as well as the landscape and environment. Additionally, Bascope and Reiss (2021) emphasized the importance of the bond between students and local communities, stressing the critical role of conserving ecosystems, biodiversity, and natural resources for environmental wellbeing. Ultimately, sustainability education advocates for equity and justice in the fight for inclusive and resilient communities.

Discussion

The intersectionality of sustainability, place-based education, and Indigenous knowledge systems is crucial for educational reform. Incorporating Indigenous perspectives is vital for maintaining diverse knowledge systems and in shaping a sustainable future.

The Correlation Between Sustainability and Place-Based Education

My prior understanding of sustainable practices stems from research about land-based pedagogy. Rooted in Indigenous teachings, this pedagogy encompasses all elements of the environment: earth, air, water, and minerals (McDonald, 2023). Distinguishing between land and place-based pedagogy, Spillett (2021) highlighted the importance of learning from and on the land. She advocated the reclamation with the land and water, safeguarding spaces that may be

unfamiliar. As an educator, incorporating sustainability and place-based education into my practice offers a holistic framework that aligns ecological literacy with a sense of responsibility towards environmental preservation. By integrating these principles, students gain the knowledge and skills required to address environmental challenges, taking charge as active stewards of their environment.

Experiential learning remains at the forefront of both place-based and sustainability education. Through opportunities such as outdoor education and exploration, students directly engage with their surroundings, connecting more deeply to the land (Arellano et al., 2019) and attaining a greater appreciation for sustainable practices. Following the completion of a canoe trip, a participant in Johnson and Ehsan Ali's (2020) paddling excursion shared that these experiences educate students' hearts and minds, indicating the profound impact on outdoor experiential learning. The COVID-19 pandemic served as a catalyst for change in my teaching practice. Redirecting physical education and health classes outdoors, I prioritized the land not only to respect Indigenous knowledge but also to maximize outdoor learning benefits. Students engaged in tangible, sustainable learning practices, while actively contributing to their community's wellbeing.

Cultural connections play a crucial role in sustainability and place-based education, recognizing that environmental issues affect low-income neighbourhoods and people of colour (Morgan, 2012). When incorporating Indigenous perspectives and traditional knowledge, educators can strengthen students' understanding of sustainable living, generating a sense of respect for the land and its resources. Through place-based education, alternative ways of knowing stress environmental integrity, social equity, and cultural vitality, thus contributing to a sustainable society (Morgan, 2012). As a teaching strategy, this approach to education nurtures the sense of place while enabling educators to empower students to advocate for change. Through community-based thinking and action, students explore environmental issues within broader social, economic, and political systems (Arellano et al., 2019), thereby furthering their understanding of the root cause of environmental and social injustices.

Place-based education, centred on sustainability, remains a lifelong learning approach that encourages environmental citizenship, empowering students with the knowledge, skills, and values to engage meaningfully in sustainable development efforts (Bascope & Reiss, 2021) and build more resilient and equitable communities.

Place-Based Education and Sustainability: Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

Sustainability and place-based education are two concepts with immense potential in education, particularly when viewed through the lens of culturally relevant and responsive education. Culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy (CRRP) acknowledges the diverse backgrounds, identities, and lived experiences of students, emphasizing the importance of grounding education in local context and culture (Parhar & Sensoy, 2011). It centres around three aspects: (1) fostering the intellectual development of students through instruction that is both relevant and engaging; (2) prioritizing students' Indigenous culture as an avenue for learning, while creating space for others' cultural backgrounds; and (3) connecting curricular knowledge and skills to address real-world issues related to social justice (Chhin et al., 2022).

A key benefit of CRRP is the enhanced relevance and engagement for students. Implementing a shift in pedagogy encourages students to make direct connections between their own lives and the world around them (McDonald, 2023), leading to increased motivation and participation in their learning. In the context of sustainability and place-based education, CRRP stems from the gaps between the increasing cultural diversity in schools (Parhar & Sensoy, 2011). Additionally, cultural relevance integrates Indigenous perspectives, traditional knowledge, and cultural practices into curriculum and instruction. By honouring and valuing Indigenous knowledge systems and cultural heritage, educators preserve and respect diverse ways of knowing while enriching students' learning experiences.

Cultural relevance promotes equity, inclusivity, and social justice by unveiling the voices and experiences of marginalized communities. Ragoonaden and Mueller (2017) highlighted the tenuous relationship between culturally diverse students and schools that accentuate traditional Eurocentric educational methods. In addressing systemic barriers and power dynamics, educators and policymakers must prioritize cultural sensitivity and the integration of Indigenous perspectives into curriculum and instruction, navigating these critical considerations with care. Colonial discourse often neglects to acknowledge the foundational significance of Indigenous people or the harm inflicted upon them by government policies and uninformed educators (Tupper, 2014). With intentional efforts and collaborative partnerships between educational institutions (Parhar & Sensoy, 2011), Indigenous communities, and local organizations, culturally relevant and responsive place-based education has the potential to amplify students' voices when advocating for equitable access to resources and opportunities.

As a physical education teacher, health and wellness are at the forefront of my practice, recognizing the value of CRRP in this domain. While this approach has traditionally been explored in other educational areas, its integration into physical health education is recent. Halas (2006) discussed how Ladson-Billings' (1995) culturally relevant pedagogy has been adapted for physical and health education, aiming to affirm students' cultural identities within the curriculum and advocate for social justice. Culturally responsive physical education focuses on leveraging students' backgrounds to create optimal learning environments (Gay, 2000) that emphasize meaningful activities that celebrate cultural identities and boost engagement, leading to improved student achievement. During the spring of 2020, our physical education team launched a gardening club to teach curricular content while adhering to COVID-19 distancing rules, providing hands-on learning experiences about nutrition, food systems, and environmental stewardship. This pedagogical approach in health education is crucial for ensuring that curriculum resonates with students' diverse backgrounds, supporting inclusive and effective learning outcomes. By offering a range of physical activities and health education initiatives, schools empower students to make informed healthy choices, cultivating lifelong habits that benefit their overall wellbeing and contribute to community success.

Strengths and Challenges of Place-Based and Sustainable Education in Schools

Place-based and sustainability education offer valuable opportunities for students, educators, and communities, but they also present significant challenges. Within my experience, one advantage of these approaches is their ability to inspire relevance in learning. Place-based and sustainability education enhance student engagement and motivation by connecting curriculum to students' lives, interests, and local environments (Uztemur & Dere, 2023), raising a sense of ownership through meaningful activities (Boyd, 2019). These approaches instil a sense of responsibility and care for the environment through hands-on experiences and community involvement (Boyd, 2019). Additionally, they contribute to student learning by integrating academic content with practical skills, critical thinking (Uztemur & Dere, 2023), and social-emotional development while strengthening community connections and relationships among students, educators, and community members

While the benefits of these approaches are promising, they pose several challenges that educators must overcome. One major challenge is land acknowledgement (Greenwood, 2019) within curriculum alignment. Integrating place-based approaches with current curricula and assessments can be difficult within traditional educational systems.

Other significant challenges include the lack of resources: professional development among educators (Uztemur & Dere, 2023), access to outdoor spaces, community partnerships, and adequate funding. Additionally, contemporary educational systems that are shaped by traditional hierarchies perpetuate a myriad of inequalities (McInerney et al., 2011). Efforts to decolonize the curriculum and ensure equitable access to learning opportunities for all students, particularly those from marginalized backgrounds, are imperative to address these issues.

Despite these challenges, educators and policymakers must address historical trauma, overcome biases and assumptions, and prioritize cultural relevance in order to mitigate the obstacles and maximize the benefits of place-based and sustainability education.

Conclusion

Embracing sustainability through culturally relevant place-based education has the potential to enrich experiences for students while affecting large-scale societal change. By centring on Indigenous perspectives and values, schools will nurture a generation of environmentally conscious citizens who are deeply rooted in their cultural heritage and committed to social justice. Greenwood (2019) asserted that educators must engage in self-reflection regarding their own lived experiences, rather than solely focusing on refining teaching methods. For educators, especially white teachers, adopting this approach is essential both pedagogically and morally. By acknowledging Indigenous knowledge systems, participating in dialogue, and building collaborative relationships, educators create inclusive learning environments that empower students as agents of change in their local and global communities. In doing so, the principles of sustainability and place-based education uphold justice, equity, and respect, influencing policy decisions for a more equitable and sustainable future.

References

Arellano, A., Friis, J., & Stuart, S. A. (2019). Pathways to reconciliation: The Kitcisakik land-based education initiative. *Leisure/Loisir*, *43*(3), 389-417. https://doi.org/10.1080/14927713.2019.1629832

Bascopé, M., & Reiss, K. (2021). Place-based STEM education for sustainability: A path towards socioecological resilience. *Sustainability*, *13*(15), 8414-8430. https://doi.org/10.3390/su13158414

Boyd, D. (2019). Utilising place-based learning through local contexts to develop agents of change in early childhood education for sustainability. *Education 3-13*, *47*(8), 983-997. https://doi.org/10.1080/03004279.2018.1551413

Chhin, S., Petherick, L., Strachan, L., & Halas, J. (2022). Culturally relevant physical and health education: Perspectives from racially minoritized female high school graduates. *Revue PhénEPS-PHEnex Journal*, *12*(3), 1-23.

Gay, G. (2000). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice*. Teachers College Press.

Greenwood, D. A. (2019). Place, land, and the decolonization of the settler soul. *The Journal of Environmental Education*, *50*(4-6), 358-377. https://doi.org/10.1080/00958964.2019.1687412

Halas, J. (2006). Developing a white race-consciousness: A foundation for culturally relevant physical education for Aboriginal youth. In Ellen Singleton & Aniko Varpalotai (Eds.), *Stones in the sneaker: Active theory for secondary school physical and health educators* (pp. 155-181). The Althouse Press.

Johnson, J. & Ali, A. E. (2020). Paddling as resistance? Exploring an Indigenous approach to land-based education amongst Manitoba youth. *Diaspora, Indigenous, and Minority Education, 14*(4), 205-219. https://doi.org/10.1080/15595692.2019.1669015

McDonald, M. (2023). (rep.). *Indigenous land-based education in theory and practice* (pp. 4-22). Yellowhead Institute.

McInerney, P., Smyth, J., & Down, B. (2011). “Coming to a place near you?” The politics and possibilities of a critical pedagogy of place-based education. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, *39*(1), 3-16. https://doi.org/10.1080/1359866x.2010.540894

Morgan, A. (2012). Inclusive place-based education for “just sustainability.” *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, *16*(5-6), 627-642. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2012.655499

Parhar, N., & Sensoy, Ö. (2011). Culturally relevant pedagogy redux: Canadian teachers' conceptions of their work and its challenges. *Canadian Journal of Education / Revue Canadienne de l'éducation*, *34*(1), 189-2018.

Ragoonaden, K., & Mueller, L. (2017). Culturally responsive pedagogy: Indigenizing curriculum. *Canadian Journal of Higher Education*, *47*(2), 22-46. https://doi.org/10.47678/cjhe.v47i2.187963

Ritchie, S. D., Wabano, M. J., Corbiere, R. G., Restoule, B. M., Russell, K. C., & Young, N. L. (2015). Connecting to the good life through outdoor adventure leadership experiences designed for Indigenous youth. *Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning*, *15*(4), 350-370. https://doi.org/10.1080/14729679.2015.1036455

Spillett, T. (2021). Gender, land, and place: Considering gender within land-based and place-based learning. *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture*, *15*(1), 11-31. https://doi.org/10.1558/jsrnc.39094

Tupper, J. A. (2014). The possibilities for reconciliation through difficult dialogues: Treaty education as peacebuilding. *Curriculum Inquiry*, *44*(4), 469-488. https://doi.org/10.1111/curi.12060

Üztemur, S., & Dere, İ. (2022). "I was not aware that I did not know": Developing a sense of place with place-based education. *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research*, *36*(3), 481-497. https://doi.org/10.1080/13511610.2022.2092457

Yemini, M., Engel, L., & Ben Simon, A. (2023). Place-based education – A systematic review of literature. *Educational Review*, 1-21. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2023.2177260

About the Author

Jordana Etkin, a tenth year PE teacher in Winnipeg's inner-city, holds an M.Ed. in special education (2020) and is pursuing an M.Ed. in curriculum and pedagogy (due 2025). Fond of time with family and friends, reading, listening to live music, and exploring Manitoba's trails, she treasures summers at her family cabin enjoying the great outdoors.

Exploring Psychological Health and Safety Interventions and Their Value to Students, Classroom Teachers, and School Divisions

Brenna F. M. Smith

Abstract

Teachers are in a profession with high levels of stress, which play a role in absenteeism and burnout. Many studies have focused on teacher burnout; however, limited literature has examined how to support teacher well-being. Based on my research of school wellness initiatives, I discovered that the role and significance of teachers is the linchpin for establishing and sustaining school health. This article focuses on the stakeholders involved in the work of building a healthy school community, the role of school divisions, and how the whole school community benefits from teachers who are provided psychological health and safety supports in the workplace.

Monday Morning Struggles

It's a Monday morning before students have arrived at school and as normal, I turn on my computer and check my email. There is an update from the principal: an educational assistant (EA) will be away in one classroom and a teacher is sick in another classroom. No substitutes can be found for either, so the EAs' schedules are adjusted to cover for needs of students and recess duty, and the teachers' schedules are adjusted to cover for the missing teacher with either losing preparation time or combining classes.

Unfortunately, this scenario is typical and there are many times our school struggles to find substitute teachers for teachers needing time off for medical, sick leave, or professional development purposes. The extra stress of coverage for other teachers, not having adequate preparation time, and losing EAs from one classroom to supervise students in other classrooms likely contributes to burnout for teachers. On top of these changes being made for coverage and day-to-day teaching duties, teachers are burdened with a heavy load of administrative tasks. Faced with increasing expectations from all levels – students, parents, and government – teachers are putting in longer hours at work that is more emotionally demanding.

Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace

Over the past year, psychological health and safety in the workplace has been a topic of discussion within the school division where I work. As the Workplace Safety and Health Co-Chair and WSH Representative on the Swan Valley Teachers' Association, I am part of discussions relating to what steps our division needs to take to create better policies and strategic plans towards a culture of well-being. Our division is in the beginning stages of change as new programs are being implemented for students, new roles such as counsellors are available for students to talk to, and therapeutic learning centers are being created to support students in need of self-regulation strategies. Von der Embse et al. (2019) stated that many interventions for stress have largely been targeted for students rather than teachers, which I have noticed within my division because few supports are being created for teachers' well-being.

Whereas efforts to build and maintain healthy school communities in support of mental well-being usually focuses on students' needs, in this study I ask the question: What is the role and significance of teacher well-being in establishing and sustaining these healthy school

communities? Asserting the foundational importance of teacher well-being, this article explores key elements of the Comprehensive School Health framework (Stolp et al., 2023) to consider what strategies and interventions would best support teachers' psychological wellness, so that they do not burn out but can continue to provide positive caregiving in supporting student well-being.

Teacher Stress and Burnout

The Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (Government of Canada, 2023) defines job burnout as –

> A state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion caused by long-term exposure to demanding work situations. Burnout is the cumulative result of stress…professions with high job demands and few supports can increase the prevalence of burnout and reduce engagement. (What Are Other Issues in The Workplace That May Affect Mental Health? para. 6).

Within the research, teacher burnout has been a topic recently focused on more as the teaching profession experiences higher levels of stress. These stressors play a role in absenteeism, burnout, school climate, and teachers' behaviour management strategies (von der Embse et al., 2019). Research has found that "stress, burnout and lack of support can lead to poor mental health" (Alberta Teachers' Association, 2019, p. 26). Teachers are experiencing higher levels of emotional exhaustion, a condition in which one's emotional resources have been depleted, and can be characterized by fatigue, debilitation, loss of energy, and being worn out (Chang, 2009).

Teachers play a key role in setting the emotional tone within the classroom by providing timely and sensitive responses to children's emotional behaviour and consistently modelling respectful social interactions for students (Hatton-Bowers et al., 2022). In their research, Hatton-Bowers et al. (2022) discovered that when teachers are emotionally exhausted, there is a correlation between reduced sensitivity and increased harshness toward children, and lower levels of classroom organization and instructional support. They also found that teachers with more effective strategies for managing their personal emotions and dealing with negative emotions were better prepared to provide emotional support to their students. It is therefore important to discuss supports for reducing burnout, which will generate well-being. Well-being incorporates aspects of physical, emotional, sexual and spiritual health, food literacy, self-awareness, relationship skills, and injury prevention (Alberta Teachers Association, 2019).

According to the Alberta Teachers' Association (2019), there is "a renewed focus across Canada to move beyond student wellness to that of understanding and supporting teacher and school leader wellness" (p iii). Teachers will inevitably experience high levels of stress at work; however, research suggests by moving toward a more Comprehensive School Health approach a healthy school community can be developed (Stolp et al., 2023). Identifying and describing essential strategies to develop and sustain a healthy school community (Stolp et al., 2023), and attending to teachers' needs, could address "their feelings of detachment, absenteeism, and the desire to leave their occupation" (Ibrahim et al., 2021). Addressing teacher burnout through targeted supports and a Comprehensive School Health approach is crucial for supporting a healthier school environment, which can positively enhance teachers' well-being.

Teacher Well-Being

Based on my review of the literature regarding the causes of teacher stress and burnout, I discovered that teacher well-being is the linchpin for holistic school health. On this basis, I focus on identifying and describing specific elements of a holistic approach to school well-being that contribute to the successful development and sustainability of a healthy school community, particularly in my Canadian context. I assert the following as key elements:

1. There are many stakeholders involved in the work of building a healthy school community (teachers, students, administration).
2. School divisions play a role in providing job resources to support teachers' well-being (e.g. peer support, school health champion, and updating policies and procedures).
3. The whole school community benefits from teachers who are provided psychological health and safety supports in the workplace (e.g., teachers, students, and school divisions).

Teamwork of Stakeholders

Many stakeholders are involved in the school system, from students to teachers, administrators, superintendents, board of trustees, parents, community members, and government. Each of these groups work together in helping to build a healthy school community. The more people are involved in this work, the easier it is to develop and sustain a healthy school community (Stolp et al., 2023). Teachers are the entrusted people who often get programs operating within the classroom to support the students' well-being, so it is important that teachers are also provided opportunities for support with their well-being by principals and administrators.

Because teachers deal with the daily stress of student behaviours, excessive workload, and emotional exhaustion, they play a vital role in contributing to a healthy school community with action-oriented steps in the classroom and school. When teachers buy into a healthy school community, awareness that healthy students learn better encourages teachers to provide lessons and role modelling opportunities for student well-being (Storey et al., 2016). Teachers must also encourage their school principal to make healthy school development a priority for teachers by including wellness on the agenda at staff meetings, providing opportunities for staff well-being, and involving teachers in healthy school development planning (Storey et al., 2016).

To reinforce healthy practices and behaviours and sustain a healthy school community, teachers must provide students opportunities for leadership. This enables students to take responsibility and ownership of their actions, leading to a positive school environment. Storey et al. (2016) stated that students taking a leadership role towards a healthy school community development is critical. When teachers provide opportunities for students to take these leadership roles and responsibilities, they help to reinforce healthy practices and behaviours.

Administrators such as principals and superintendents also need to take part in developing a healthy school community because they support teachers and they influence the priority of divisional change. When an administrator makes psychological health and safety a priority, it is easier to do the work needed to make positive changes in the workplace. Within the research of Montemurro et al. (2023), one principal indicated that "when you have a superintendent who makes it a priority – It's a whole lot easier to start doing the work" (p. 5). Upper administrators are instrumental in influencing the prioritization of well-being and catalyzing district level change.

Job Resources as Supports

To deal with the job demands of teaching, school divisions would benefit from providing job resources to teachers to support their well-being. These resources can include providing professional development (peer support) opportunities, funding for a school health champion, and updating school policies and procedures (Stolp et al., 2023). System leaders who consistently provide clear and ongoing communication of well-being, and work on initiatives of psychological health and safety, reinforce it as a value worthy of attention (Montemurro et al., 2023).

Professional development (peer support) is one strategy used to support a healthy school environment. Providing time for teachers to meet allows school members to be aware of school

goals, build capacity to support well-being, and sustain knowledge and action plans to respond to emerging needs of students. Creating a workplace where teachers are provided the opportunity for involvement and influence of their workplace helps to support psychological health and safety (Government of Canada, 2023).

Another job resource school divisions can take advantage of is providing funding to hire a School Health Champion. This is a person who can initiate the process of developing a healthy school community by being a central coordinator who is knowledgeable about interventions to support teachers' psychological health and safety, and works with district leaders and staff to implement these interventions (Montemurro et al., 2023). Due to the busy structure of a school environment, many times it can be difficult for administrators and teachers to start change on their own. Having a school health champion is valuable because they are able to take on some of the work required to make change (Storey et al., 2016).

Another job resource that helps to sustain healthy school communities is the updating of school-wide policies related to health and safety (Stolp et al., 2023). Creating strategic plans for long-term goals is essential to reinforce well-being as a district priority (Montemurro et al., 2023; Stolp et al., 2023), and to promote alignment across schools to inform implementation (Montemurro et al., 2023). SAFEwork Manitoba (n.d.) is a public agency dedicated to the prevention of workplace injury and illness. Through prevention education, safety programming, and strategic direction, SAFEwork Manitoba strives to create a culture of safety for those within Manitoba. There are 11 elements of a safety and health program by which SAFEwork Manitoba encourages that psychological health and safety be adapted and incorporated into the workplace's safety and health program. Element 1: Safety and Health Policy, Element 2: Hazard Assessment, and Element 5: Inspections are areas in which school divisions can update and work toward improvements to ensure the sustainability of a healthy school community.

The School Community

School divisions that incorporate job resources involved in teachers' psychological health and safety will experience benefits for the whole school community. There are many stakeholders within the school. When psychological health and safety is addressed, not only teachers but also students and school divisions benefit.

When teachers' psychological health and safety is addressed, teachers feel supported both personally and professionally (Montemurro et al., 2023). Lower levels of emotional exhaustion and increased feelings of personal accomplishment help in dealing with teacher burnout (Montemurro et al., 2023). Within Chang's (2009) research, he found that emotional regulation strategies like suppressing, faking, or hiding emotions led to burnout. When teachers are encouraged to express their feelings and learn strategies for emotional regulation, and learn not to neglect their emotions, they are better able to role-model effective regulation strategies for students (Chang, 2009).

Fostering teachers' psychological health and safety also helps to support students' health and academic success (Alberta Teachers' Association, 2019). Hatton-Bowers et al. (2022) found that teachers who participated in a wellness program demonstrated stronger attention to children's emotional cues and an increased ability to describe and observe the emotions of the children they cared for and educated. When students are well, they learn better. Students are also able to make better relationships with their teachers, reducing the burden of student behaviour for teachers and enabling students to increase their knowledge and graduate from school (Montemurro et al., 2023).

By addressing teachers' psychological health and safety, school divisions positively impact their school community that may be struggling to retain staff and experiencing teacher absenteeism, sickness, depression, and low job satisfaction (Ibrahim et al., 2021). Like my personal experience at the beginning of this article where teacher absenteeism and sickness led to further burnout and stress of other colleagues, von der Embse et al. (2019) found that this

chronic understaffing in schools led to loss of high-quality instruction for students. Attrition not only lowers morale, job satisfaction, and job performance among teachers (Ibrahim et al., 2021), but it also leads to loss of financial and occupational resources for administrators needing to deal with teacher turnover (von der Embse et al., 2019). Merrill et al. (2016) also found that teacher participation in a wellness program resulted in lower average medical claim payments.

Discussion

Job stress, defined by Chang (2009) is a combination of high job demands and low job control, which impacts employees' well-being and productivity. Using the Job Demand-Resource (JD-R) model helps to better understand why it is important to research the elements that contribute to the successful development and sustainability of a healthy school community. Job demands refer to role ambiguity, task stress, and psychological stressors involved in accomplishing a heavy workload (Chan et al., 2021). Job control refers to "a working individuals' potential control over his tasks and conduct during the working day. Lack of job control leads to psychological distress" (Ibrahim et al., 2021, p. 4). Providing job resources such as social support, encouragement, and effective communication from school leaders helps to enhance teachers' well-being in the workplace (Ibrahim et al., 2021). This type of supportive supervision (Chan et al., 2021) increases self-esteem, sense of competence, good coping strategies, and the ability to accept change (Ibrahim et al., 2021). "Employees who receive high support from colleagues and supervisors are less affected by adverse emotional effects" (Ibrahim et al., 2021, p. 5), and job satisfaction increases.

The Comprehensive Health School framework is "an internationally recognized framework for supporting improvements in students' educational outcomes while addressing school health in a planned, integrated, and holistic way" (Stolp et al., 2023 p. 300). Because this framework focuses on developing a healthy school community as a whole, teachers' psychological health and safety benefits.

Conclusion

Incorporating psychological health and safety in the workplace helps to support new and experienced teachers who are part of the school system and may be experiencing stress. Resources are vital in a workplace that requires personal emotional regulation dealing with the heavy workload and student behaviours. These resources help teachers to provide role-modelling on how to deal with student emotions, which in turn supports students' behaviour regulation and learning. When students and teachers are well and cared for, such as by using The Comprehensive Health School framework, a healthy school community is developed and can be sustained – which benefits all stakeholders within the school.

References

Alberta Teachers Association. (2019). *School wellness and well-being initiatives across Canada.* https://legacy.teachers.ab.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/ATA/Publications/Research/COOR-101-27%20School%20Wellness%20and%20Well-being%20Initatives%20across%20Canada.pdf

Chan, M., Sharkey, J. D., Lawrie, S. I., Arch, D. A., & Nylund-Gibson, K. (2021). Elementary school teacher well-being and supportive measures amid COVID-19: An exploratory study. *School Psychology*, *36*(6), 533-545. https://doi.org/10.1037/spq0000441

Chang, M.-L. (2009). An appraisal perspective of teacher burnout: Examining the emotional work of teachers. *Educational Psychology Review*, *21*(3), 193-218. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-009-9106-y

Government of Canada, Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (2023, October 6). *Mental health – Psychological risk factors in the workplace*. https://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/psychosocial/mh/mentalhealth_risk.html

Hatton-Bowers, H., Clark, C., Parra, G., Calvi, J., Bird, M. Y., Avari, P., Foged, J., & Smith, J. (2022). Promising findings that the cultivating healthy intentional mindful educators' program (CHIME) strengthens early childhood teachers' emotional resources: An iterative study. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, *51*(7), 1291-1304. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-022-01386-3

Ibrahim, R. Z., Zalam, W. Z., Foster, B., Afrizal, T., Johansyah, M. D., Saputra, J., Bakar, A. A., Dagang, M. M., & Ali, S. N. (2021). Psychosocial work environment and teachers' psychological well-being: The moderating role of job Control and social support. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *18*(14), 7308. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18147308

Merrill, R. M., & LeCheminant, J. D. (2016). Medical cost analysis of a school district worksite wellness program. *Preventive Medicine Reports*, *3*, 159-165. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pmedr.2016.01.002

Montemurro, G., Cherkowski, S., Sulz, L., Loland, D., Saville, E., & Storey, K. E. (2023). Prioritizing well-being in K-12 education: lessons from a multiple case study of Canadian school districts. *Health Promotion International, 38,* 1-11. https://doi.org/10.1093/heapro/daad003

SAFE Work Manitoba. (n.d.). *Integrate psychological health and safety into existing programs.* https://www.safemanitoba.com/Resources/Pages/Integrate-Psychological-Health-%26-Safety-Into-Existing-Programs.aspx

Stolp, S., Wilkins, E., & Raine, K. D. (2014). Developing and sustaining a healthy school community: Essential elements identified by school health champions. *Health Education Journal*, *74*(3), 299-311. https://doi.org/10.1177/0017896914541818

Storey, K. E., Montemurro, G., Flynn, J., Schwartz, M., Wright, E., Osler, J., Veugelers, P. J., & Roberts, E. (2016). Essential conditions for the implementation of comprehensive school health to achieve changes in school culture and improvements in health behaviours of students. *BMC Public Health*, *16*(1). https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-016-3787-1

von der Embse, N., Ryan, S. V., Gibbs, T., & Mankin, A. (2019). Teacher stress interventions: A systematic review. *Psychology in the Schools*, *56*(8), 1328-1343. https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.22279

About the Author

Brenna Smith has been teaching within the Swan Valley School Division for the past 12 years in various positions, including early years music and homeroom subjects. She completed her Post Baccalaureate from the University of Manitoba in 2021 and is currently working toward completing her Master of Education with a focus on educational administration at Brandon University.

Marginalization, Intersectionality, and Social Justice Leadership: A Case of Internationally Educated Teachers (IETs)

Mabel Dzigbordzi

Abstract

This article discusses the different ways in which some groups of educators are marginalized within the Canadian education system. The author draws on existing literature to examine how intersectionality in complex identities causes severe marginalization for Internationally Educated Teachers (IETs), especially female IETs. Ryan's theory of social justice leadership offers ten strategies for school leaders to address teacher marginalization.

Per the Canadian federal law on Employment Equity Act (S.C. 1995, c. 44), most educational institutions and employment agencies declare an acknowledgement of diversity, inclusion, and equity in their recruitment processes; the aim is to (i) increase representation (women, persons with disability, Aboriginal people, and visible minorities), (ii) accommodate differences (cultural, religious, ethnic, individual/identity etc.), and (iii) ensure equal treatment of all individuals within institutions. However, reports on the experiences of some teachers indicate that there are still gaps in achieving diversity, inclusion, and equity within the Canadian teaching force (Duggleby & Badali, 2007; Vangool, 2020). Certain groups of educators are marginalized and continue to experience challenges due to systemic issues rooted in biases and discrimination, unequal access to opportunities, and cultural or societal perceptions (Carr, 2008; McMahon et al., 2014). [reviewer = "This paragraph needs a conclusion."] [**ME =** I think it's okay as is.]

Internationally educated teachers (IETs) are vulnerable to marginalization. Their foreign-earned educational credentials, cultural differences, perceptions of racialized backgrounds, and complexities in employment protocols often leave them in marginalized conditions resulting in experiences of discrimination, exclusion, and microaggressions within the learning organization. Pollock (2010) wrote explained:

> Not all teachers possess equal power. The power of a teacher is determined by their status within the group of teachers that makes up the workforce. Certain groups of teachers, particularly those employed in non-permanent arrangements generally have less access to power than those in permanent positions, placing them in a weaker position. (p. 109)

ME = The power imbalance particularly affects IETs who have been marginalized due to an inability to transfer their credentials to obtain teaching certificates in Canada.

The hierarchy of school structure positions certain groups of educators at the bottom indicating their limited access to power and subject to the authority of those with higher power (Pollock, 2012). Substitute teachers, educational assistants, and teachers in non-permanent positions are by "default marginalized" and work in arrangements that set them up for marginalization (Pollock, 2010, p. 3). They have the least sense of classroom autonomy, access to professional development, and power in decision-making (Kraft, 1980). Duggleby and Badali (2007) confirmed that 80% of occasional teachers are foreign-educated and may suffer additional marginalization in the education system. IETs) are not treated fairly and beliefs, biases, and discrimination against them as a group act as barriers limiting their interaction with other teachers (El Bouhali, 2019).

Statistics Canada's (2021) report reveals that almost 50% of black individuals aged 15 and above in Canada have encountered some form of discrimination. In the country, visible minorities constitute 27.3% of the population aged 25 to 64 and around 40% of those holding a bachelor's degree or higher in that age range. This data highlights a substantial presence of visible minority groups within the teaching profession, indicating potential discrimination experiences for educators from these diverse backgrounds.

Although teachers' experiences may differ from contexts and various influencing factors, the interplay of intersectionality and individual experiences may sometimes shape and intensify the impact of marginalization on educators.

In my personal experience as an internationally educated black female teacher, not only do I encounter challenges of securing employment with my foreign credentials but also grapple with the uncertainty surrounding my work as a substitute (occasional, casual) teacher. The disparities in treatment between colleagues and students stemming from factors like race, gender, and role as a teacher create a sense of isolation and a lack of belonging in the school environment. My encounters with disrespect stemming from disregard for the authority and contributions of substitute teachers – especially those with diverse backgrounds like mine – encourage unchecked microaggressions that persist without intervention or support from the school administration. These experiences can extremely damage the morale of teachers and impact their ability to work effectively. [reviewer = "Add a reference here."] Irrespective of their race, culture, gender, or role, every educator contributes significantly to the collective realization of the school's vision and mission. [reviewer = "Add a reference here."] As a result, leaders, stakeholders, and policymakers need to pay attention to the various ways in which teachers might face marginalization and take steps to enhance practices that promote diversity, inclusion, and equity for all teachers.

This article discusses the different ways in which (IETs) are marginalized and the factors that impact the severity of their marginalization. Specifically, it [examines] the case of female IETs and how intersectionality and multiple forms of identities compound their experience of marginalization. The article introduces the Social Justice Leadership (SJL) theory and discuss how the attributes of the theory bring hope in addressing marginalization faced by female IETs.

Literature Review

[reviewer = APA style = "The author needs to add at least a paragraph under the level one heading before using a level two heading."] [note from Marion = Even just one sentence would satisfy me here. Use it to introduce the level two heading ideas in this section of your article.]

ME = International educations marginalize Canadian IETs. Intersectionality double-marginalizes them. The following review of the literature focuses on these adversities.

Internationally Educated Teachers (IETs) and Marginalization

Immigration policy aimed at attracting highly educated and experienced individuals into the labor force is increasingly bringing internationally educated teacher professionals into the Canadian education system. Women constitute one of the groups mentioned in the Canadian federal law on Employment Equity Act (S.C. 1995, c. 44) as a visible minority. While there is insufficient data on the percentage of female teachers who are immigrants and have received education outside of Canada, research by Pollock (2010) and Duggleby & Badali (2007) suggests that many teachers in non-permanent positions are members of minoritized groups, 80% of whom are internationally educated, speak English as a second language, and may face additional forms of marginalization. [reviewer = "This paragraph needs a conclusion."] [**ME =** I think it's okay as is.]

The term [*marginalization*] was first coined by Robert Ezea Park (1928) as a phenomenon to describe the experience of individuals living between two different cultural groups, resulting in an unstable personality known as the "marginal" type (p. 881). It refers to the process of being pushed to the edges of society, where individuals may face exclusion and limited access to resources and opportunities. [See underlined. Park is not in your list of references. Either add it to that list or rewrite your paper to delete it.]

In the context of education, IETs are confronted with a unique "conflict of their divided selves," functioning within the Canadian educational environment "while preserving their own

cultural identities" (Park, 1928, p. 356). [See underlined. Park is not in your list of references. Either add it to that list or rewrite your paper to delete it.]

Female IETs with diverse backgrounds face marginalization at the workplace from their interactions with colleagues, students, and administrators. The experiences of marginalization come in the form of microaggressions and stereotyping (Dei & Rummens, 2010; Jungcurt, 2022) resulting from prevailing societal biases and preconceptions associated with race, ethnicity, and gender.

Compared to their Canadian-born counterparts, female IETs, especially those from visible minority groups, face many barriers to getting employment with their qualifications from foreign educational systems (Walsh et al., 2011). Research indicates that foreign-born women earn around 70% of what their male peers earn, highlighting a significant gender-based wage gap (Lindsay & Almey, 2006). Moreover, the employment landscape is daunting for female immigrants, because they experience higher unemployment rates compared to both Canadian-born women and immigrant men (Lindsay & Almey, 2006).

Despite the qualifications and experiences of female IETs, structural barriers hinder their job prospects, often leading to employment in non-permanent/occasional positions such as substitute teaching, emergency cover, casual, or relief teaching[,] and sometimes custodial positions (Pollock, 2012). Walsh and colleagues et al. (2011) noted:

> The categorization of female immigrants as a singular entity term "immigrant women" disregards their legal citizenship status and lumps them together based on historical gender, racial, and economic influences in Canada. This ingrained perception significantly contributes to the systemic marginalization of female IETs, constraining their professional advancement and impeding their assimilation into the Canadian education labor market. (p. 660)

[reviewer = You need a concluding sentence for this paragraph.]
[ME = International professional training and work history disadvantages IETs in comparison to educators with Canadian credentials and experience.]

School divisions, educational leaders and policymakers must see individual teachers as unique especially female IETs and understand that each has her own history, experiences, and abilities. Walsh and Brigham's (2007) report consisted of studies on the barriers that IETs face, including racial and language discrimination, both during the hiring process and in the workplace. Female IETs]often face bias and discriminatory treatment related to cultural and linguistic diversity that may not be appreciated by dominant cultures in the school environment (El Bouhali, 2019).

Intersectionality and Double Marginalization: A Focus on Female IETs

At the center of racial, gender, foreign, and the already existing forms of marginalization within the education system is the female IETs. Female IETs are severely marginalized due to multiple domination in terms of race, gender, and foreign credentials. In hiring practices where gender and educational credentials are a marker, the female IETs can be victimized on both gender and foreign credentials due to how foreign qualifications are regarded.

My own identity as a black female substitute teacher with an immigration status, and an international education certificate gives a first-hand account of the compounded forms of marginalization and how factors can create severe forms of marginalization to the female IETs in the education system. The intersection of my gender, race, and foreign credentials puts me at a significant disadvantage in hiring processes compared with both male and non-foreign counterparts. My job as a substitute teacher is one of the lowest in the school hierarchy and has the least security. My foreign-earned qualification is marginalized and undervalued. As a foreign black woman, societal biases and stereotypes hinder my prospects due to perceptions about my race (black), my capabilities as a woman, construction about the homogenized group labeled as "immigrant women," and contributions as an educator. These intersecting layers of

marginalization affect not only my career progression but also my sense of professional worth and belonging within the educational landscape. The systemic barriers based on race, gender, and varied backgrounds significantly shape the experiences of certain groups of educators within the education system emphasizing the critical need for educational leaders to address the unique challenges of female IETs for a more inclusive and equitable educational environment.

Consistency in research findings suggests that women in education are double marginalized. Compared with their male counterparts, internationally educated female IETs may face extra harassment or stereotypes about their professional abilities based on age, gender, pregnancy, or breastfeeding (Global Campaign for Education, n.d.; Statistics Canada, 2021; UNESCO 2023; Van Hek et al., 2016). A study conducted by the Global Campaign for Education [n.d.) found that female teachers were four times more likely than male teachers to report experiencing discrimination because of their gender. These disparities may stem from the systemic nature of gender inequality and power imbalances within educational institutions and traditional norms on gender-based roles perpetuate biases and unequal treatment (Blackmore, 2006). Female teachers may encounter stereotypes that undermine their capabilities in the classroom (Garcia et al., 2022). They are more likely to face challenges in hiring processes due to assumptions about their teaching style or competence based on gender rather than merit.

The absence of tailored support networks or mentorship programs specifically addressing the challenges faced by female IETs exacerbates their marginalization. The lack of resources and guidance targeted at addressing the intersectional hurdles they encounter restricts their access to vital support systems necessary for successful integration, professional development, and overcoming the barriers inherent in their unique position within the educational sphere.

Theoretical Framework: Social Justice Leadership

Defining social justice comprehensively has proven challenging due to its broad scope and the varying meanings it can have in different contexts (Blackmore, 2009). Scholars within the field of educational leadership explore the meaning and nature of social justice to conceptualize how practices of equity, equality, fairness, inclusion, and diversity can be implemented in institutions. They do this by critiquing injustices, inequalities, and exclusion within the education system, and by taking action to address these issues (Blackmore, 2002; Goldfarb & Grinberg, 2002). Ryan's (2006) definition of social justice emphasizes the importance of recognizing social injustices in communities and schools and doing something about them. According to Ryan, leadership in schools needs to be about deeper moral purposes like social justice because schools must do their part in contributing to a world that is fair for everyone.

Goldfarb and Grinberg (2002) defined social justice as "the exercise of altering institutional and organizational power arrangements by actively engaging in reclaiming, appropriating, sustaining, and advancing inherent human rights of equity, equality, and fairness in social, economic, educational, and personal dimensions" (p. 162). The application of social justice leadership theory to school leadership practices based on the existing body of works demonstrates dominant characteristics of how social justice work looks in schools. Kowalchuk's (2019) work helps to break down these characteristics into five strategies or practices that school leaders engage in to achieve a socially just school:

1. Demonstrate social justice.
2. Challenge the status quo.
3. Exercise critical instructional leadership.
4. Shape and preserve respectful relationships.
5. Honour voice. (p. 3)

[reviewer = "The author needs a concluding sentence for this paragraph."]
[**ME =** The application of social justice leadership theory to school leadership practices based on the existing body of works demonstrates dominant characteristics of how social justice work looks in schools.]

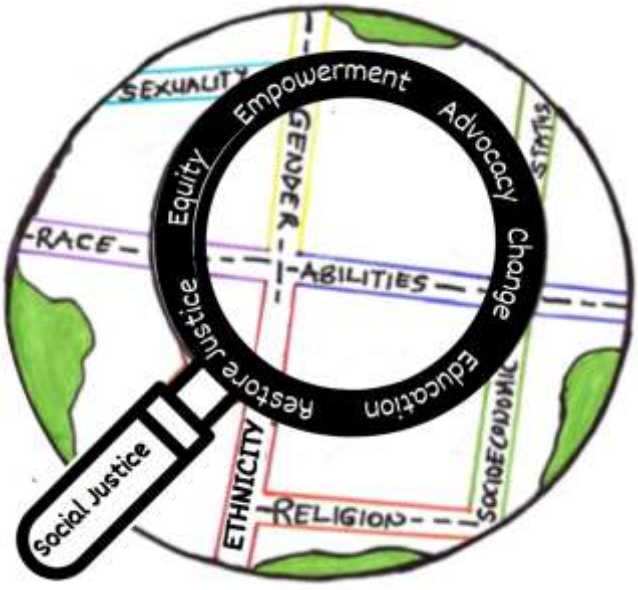
Theoharis's (2008) view of social justice in this context means “that principals advocate, lead, and keep at the center of their practice and vision issues of race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and other historical and currently marginalizing conditions” (p. 5) within learning environments. Social justice leadership, she insisted, goes beyond being a good leader. It involves a conscious blend of personality traits woven together with relationships within the school organization capable of exorcising the rigid and impersonal hierarchy that characterizes managed bureaucracies (Theoharis 2008) – what Ryan termed *critical consciousness*.

Inclusion is an important aspect of social justice leadership frameworks. Social justice and inclusive leadership ensure that students, parents, and teachers regardless of their background or identity, have a seat at the table, their voices heard, and they have equal opportunities to promote diversity and foster a sense of belonging (Carr, 2008). Socially just school leadership promotes inclusion through empowerment, dialogues, and collective or distributive or shared leadership approaches to decision-making (Ryan, 2006).

A conceptualization of education/school administration and leadership through the lens of social justice reveals that leadership in schools take an active process focused on those who are marginalized and grounded in the principles of equity created by historical notions of privilege and power within our schools (Kowalchuk, 2019). Through advocacy and critical discourses, social justice leadership raises awareness and addresses beliefs that underpin issues of discrimination and marginalization.

Figure 1 illustrates social justice leadership in educational institutions where teachers from diverse backgrounds mix. The various identity axes show the diverse racial, gender, ethnic, and religious, to name a few backgrounds that make the teacher workforce where IETs are found. The social justice leadership lens serves as a magnifying glass that helps school leaders and administrators understand and address marginalization within the diverse teacher workforce.

Figure 1
Social Justice Leadership Lens and Teacher Marginalization



Note: Figure 1 represents the education system with a diverse teacher population where the IETs are found with their multiple identities.

The magnifying lens is used to symbolize three concepts of social justice leadership in this context. First, the lens illustrates the critically conscious nature of social justice leadership in acknowledging marginalization and injustices within the education system. Secondly, the lens illustrates the nature of social justice leadership that criticizes and challenges dominant ideologies to unmask hidden intersectionality that often creates unseen yet severe marginalizing conditions for individuals such as IETs within education systems. Social justice leadership is not only interested in finding injustices within educational structures and systems because, as Ryan and Rottmann (2009) wrote, "M marginalized groups continue to be excluded even when systems are introduced to include them" (p. 476). Hence, the social justice leadership lens in this diagram illustrates the strategies and practices that school leaders adopt in their work to address marginalization.

Frames of social justice in education help school leaders and stakeholders to acknowledge the different ways in which teachers from diverse backgrounds are marginalized, and the interconnectedness of different forms of oppression such as racism, sexism, classism, and ableism, and how identities intersect as indicated in Figure 1 to create more complex forms of marginalization (Agosto & Roland, 2018; Roland, 2018). Using a social justice leadership lens, educational leaders can actively promote fairness, equality, and inclusion in every aspect of leadership through inclusive decision-making, advocating, educating, communicating, nurturing, and eliminating hierarchies (Blackmore, 2006).

Strategies for Moving Towards Inlcusion

Educational leaders have the greatest advantage in adding their voice to social justice within their jurisdiction and to the world at large. Ryan's theory of social justice leadership offers ten strategies or practices that school leaders can develop to contribute to a socially just school: eliminate hierarchies, collective or shared leadership, pursue inclusive ends, educate community members, develop critical consciousness, nurture dialogue, advocate for inclusion, incorporate whole school, adopt inclusive decision making, and emphasize teacher practices. These strategies provide concrete ways by which educational leadership can fight marginalization and address issues related to IETs.

Develop Critical Consciousness

Addressing issues relating to social justice will require conscious efforts on the part of leaders to critically analyze and understand how structures play a role in inequity and injustices in the school. Justice in school leadership can only begin with the leaders themselves. School leaders need to develop an open mindset and deep curiosity about non-foreign teachers, listen without judgment, and cultivate empathy to understand the root causes of their challenges – and be willing to do something about them. Principals may identify various factors, such as my case race (black), gender (female), educational background (foreign), and abilities (e.g., language/accent), which present challenges to my work as an educator within the Canadian education system. This also means that leaders must be able to recognize existing conditions, climates, behaviors, and assumptions that privilege certain groups of teachers and marginalize others – and be intentional in addressing them through their vision, mission, and purpose statement (Cherkowski & Ragoonaden, 2016).

Advocate for Inclusion

Social justice leaders are principal advocates for social justice. They are concerned with their role in ensuring fairness, inclusion, and equality. School leaders who are committed to

social justice actively advocate for equity and inclusion through their practices and beliefs. Principals, school heads, and other stakeholders can promote diversity and inclusion by engaging in a leadership stance that puts issues of race, class, gender, disability, and other marginalized conditions at the core of their practice. Leaders must first model their commitment to social justice in different ways and encourage followers to emulate. To address IET marginalization, leaders can improve upon or implement change practices, policies, and cultures that value respect for diverse backgrounds. Leaders can be advocates by discussing with staff and students the need to appreciate and welcome teachers from diverse backgrounds. For instance, in the case of female IET substitute teachers, trust in their abilities to fulfil their duties should prevail through the leader's advocate, unlike my experience where the school administration receptionist doubted that I was genuinely a substitute teacher and not an educational assistant, implying a lack of confidence in my capacity to manage a whole class.

Incorporate a Whole-School Strategy

Another way by which leaders can address teacher marginalization and intersectionality is to approach social justice as a fundamental aspect of their leadership and moral obligation to the entire education system (Theoharis, 2008). While it is important to focus on justice for students, it is equally important to focus on justice for all educators. Teachers are the backbone of education, and IETs play a critical role in shaping the future of the diverse student population. Ensuring that teachers are treated fairly and equitably is essential to creating a positive learning environment for students. By adopting a whole-school approach, leaders can create and support inclusive systems that benefit not only students but also marginalized groups of teachers.

Eliminate Hierarchies

The most obvious obstacle that impedes the practice of democracy in schools (Ryan & Rottman, 2007) is the hierarchical context of schools and school systems. Challenging the status quo becomes important here to eliminate hierarchical power within the education system that marginalizes certain teachers. Hierarchical power imbalances create the notion of some educators, such as permanent or regular teachers, having more authority than non-permanent or occasional teachers and their contribution to educational administration. Educators can create school cultures that accord equal respect of authority to educators of all backgrounds irrespective of their position through collaborative decision-making processes, a whole-school approach, and involving all teachers (including non-permanent and IETs) to dismantle hierarchies and create equal opportunities for teachers to contribute their expertise and opinions.

Share Leadership

After eliminating power inequalities, shared leadership can be a powerful tool to promote collaboration and include teachers. Shared leadership encourages input from various stakeholders, including teachers from different backgrounds and experiences. Leaders can provide opportunities for all teachers to take on leadership roles such as organizing events and leading committees. This collaborative approach allows IETs to share their expertise, ideas, and perspectives, fostering a sense of ownership and collective responsibility. By involving all teachers regardless of their position or identity in the decision-making process, leaders create an environment where teachers feel valued, belong, and are motivated to work towards a common goal (Whitney et al., 2010).

Nurture Dialogue

Effective communication is the foundation of any successful human institution. It is key to building trust, respect, and collaboration by embracing diversity (Cherkowski & Ragoonaden, 2016). The first step towards addressing teacher marginalization cannot be taken without communication. Leaders need to foster open communication to hear the voices of marginalized teachers within the education system. It is through meaningful conversations that teachers can come to "understand and accommodate differences and work together to shape the institution in which they live and work" (Ryan & Rottman, 2009, p. 479). Nurturing dialogue also includes having what Kowalchuk (2019) described as "courageous conversations" about issues that deal with privilege, power, and politics through communication. This can be achieved through regular meetings, suggestion boxes, online forums, or anonymous feedback mechanisms.

Inclusive Decision Making

Inclusive decision-making is another way to empower marginalized teachers by giving them a platform to contribute meaningfully to the educational process. Leaders can welcome the inclusion of diverse perspectives during meetings and create committees that include teachers from various backgrounds. This approach is not only pivotal in addressing teacher marginalization but it also enriches the school by providing leaders with a wealth of creative ideas to effectively implement culturally responsive strategies.

Educate the Community

Ryan's framework of inclusive leadership through community education can be an effective tool to address marginalization. Educating the community generates broader advocacy and support networks to accommodate IETs. Parents can add their voices to social justice and advocate for inclusive practices in schools. Community education can focus on developing appreciation, trust, and the benefits of having teachers from diverse backgrounds for the growth of students and preparations for the international world. Tackling marginalization through community-rooted approaches can also include the education and training of future leaders through preparatory programs that focus on developing culturally responsive skills and knowledge to assess schoolwide cultural competence (Cherkowski & Ragoonaden, 2016).

Pursue Inclusive Ends

Leadership based on social justice and inclusion acknowledges the underlying nature of exclusion and oppression, and aims to create leadership practices that go beyond participation in decision-making in schools, as well as to promote inclusion, equity, and social justice (Theoharis, 2007). Through the lens of social justice, school leaders see the various ways by which IETs are discriminated against and excluded from fully participating in the school community, and establish practices that will include them.

Emphasize Teacher Practices and Empowerment

Leadership should offer professional development and training programs that equip foreign teachers to adequately meet the needs of students and the expectations of educational heads. School leaders can regularly observe classrooms to provide constructive feedback that supports teachers in improving their practices. Schools and divisional leaders can emphasize equity and empower marginalized teachers by establishing policies that promote inter-, intra-, and trans-cultural practices through teaching and evaluation methods, and professional growth experiences.

Implementing these strategies is not going to be easy, as Ryan and Rottman (2009) noted, especially where there are teachers from diverse backgrounds with varying views of the world. However, the democratic nature of the social justice leader will find ways to communicate across differences and ensure that followers do the same (Ryan & Rottman). Indeed, *"It is not hard work; it is heart work"* (Farinde-Wu et al, 2017, p. #). Leaders need to develop emotional intelligence to understand the marginalized conditions and intersectionality of IETs and to take steps to address them, rather than focusing on the challenges of a diverse teacher workforce.

Conclusion

Education today is increasingly focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion to promote representation of different groups and meet the needs of a diverse student population. Stakeholders are doing their best to execute the Government of Canada's (2021) policy that focuses on recruiting professionals, including internationally educated teachers. However, gaps remain in the attempt to fully embrace diversity and ensure equal treatment of all individuals within the education system. The persistence of racism, microaggressions, discrimination, and all forms of marginalization continue to trouble internationally educated teachers.

While different groups of educators are marginalized and may suffer equal forms of marginalization, intersectionality and individual experiences sometimes compound themselves to create exceptional circumstances of vulnerability for IETs, especially females. Overlapping identities of gender, race, and foreign background make them susceptible not only to gender-based discrimination but also to inaccurate and unfair perceptions about their backgrounds and capabilities. Conditions surrounding their work arrangements and power dynamics in the educational hierarchy place them in marginalized positions that impact their work experience and affect the way colleagues and students relate with them.

Social justice leadership provides strategies to recognize the challenges faced by marginalized teachers and rectify systemic inequalities and biases that lead to marginalization. It aims to create fair and inclusive environments within educational institutions, ensuring that all teachers and students, regardless of their background or identity, are treated equally and have equal opportunities for success and recognition. This leadership approach acknowledges the complexities of marginalization and intersectionality, and advocates for policies and practices that promote diversity, equality, and inclusivity in the education system.

It is not enough to acknowledge diversity and the need for representation of diverse groups. It is not enough to identify and understand how individuals are marginalized and excluded within the education system. Educational leaders must take socially just steps, moving beyond simply recognizing to actively creating inclusive atmospheres that value and promote respect for educators from all backgrounds. Leaders must be strongly committed to diversity, challenge the status quo, hold others accountable, and make social justice and inclusion a personal priority in their daily practices.

References

Agosto, V., & Roland, E. (2018). Intersectionality and educational leadership: A critical review. *Review of Research in Education*, *42*(1), 255-285. https://doi.org/10.3102/0091732X18762433

Blackmore, J. (2002). Leadership for socially just schooling: More substance and less style in high-risk, low-trust times? *Journal of School Leadership*, *12*(2), 198-222. https://doi.org/10.1177/105268460201200206

Blackmore, J. (2006). Social justice and the study and practice of leadership in education: A feminist history. *Journal of Educational Administration and History*, *38*(2), 185-200. https://doi.org/10.1080/00220620600554876

Blackmore, J. (2009). Leadership for social justice: A transformational dialogue. *Journal of Research on Leadership Education, 4(1),* Article 5. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/234727543_Leadership_for_Social_Justice_A_Transnational_Dialogue

Carr, P. R. (2008). The "equity waltz" in Canada: Whiteness and the informal realities of racism in education. *Journal of contemporary issues in education*, *3*(2). http://journals.library.ualberta.ca/jcie/index.php/JCIE/article/download/4575/3735

Cherkowski, S., & Ragoonaden, K. (2016). Leadership for diversity: Intercultural communication competence as professional development. *Teacher Learning and Professional Development*, *1*(1). https://journals.sfu.ca/tlpd/index.php/tlpd/article/download/5/6

Dei, G., & Rummens, J. A. (2010). Including the excluded: De-marginalizing immigrant/refugee and racialized students. *Education Canada*, *50*(5). https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ918857

Duggleby, P., & Badali, S. (2007). Expectations and experiences of substitute teachers. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, *53*(1). https://cjc-rcc.ucalgary.ca/index.php/ajer/article/download/55196/42243

El Bouhali, C. (2019). Internationally educated teachers in Canada: Caught between Scylla and Charybdis. *Interrogating models of diversity within a multicultural environment*, 157-173. https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-030-03913-4_9

Farinde-Wu, A., Glover, C. P., & Williams, N. N. (2017). It's not hard work; it's heart work: Strategies of effective, award-winning culturally responsive teachers. *The Urban Review*, *49*, 279-299. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-017-0401-5

Garcia, V. J., Forneas, V. T. M., Romo, V. C. N., Concordia, T. M., Villa, C. R., & Rafanan, R. D. L. (2022). Gender stereotypes of the classroom: The teacher's contradicting perceptions of gender-neutrality and practices on gender-inclusiveness. *ResearchGate,* 34(6), 17-21. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/372751988

Global Campaign for Education. (n.d). Girl's education – Discrimination. https://campaignforeducation.org

Goldfarb, K. P., & Grinberg, J. (2002). Leadership for social justice: Authentic participation in the case of a community centre in Caracas, Venezuela. *Journal of School Leadership*, *12*(2), 157-173. https://doi.org/10.1177/105268460201200204

Government of Canada. (2021, January 1). Employment Equity Act S.C. 1995, c. 44. https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/e-5.401/page-1.html

Johnson, J. M., Holcombe, M., & Vance, K. (1988). Apprehensions of substitute teachers. *The Clearing House*, *62*(2), 89-91. https://doi.org/10.1080/00098655.1988.10114018

Jungcurt, S. (2022, May 13). Who is being left behind in Canada? *International Institute for Sustainable Development.* https://www.facebook.com/sharer/sharer.php?u=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.iisd.org%2Farticles%2Finsight%2Fwho-being-left-behind-canada

Kowalchuk, D. (2019). Voices for change: Social justice leadership practices. *Journal of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies*, *3*(1), n1. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1226940.pdf

Kraft, D. W. (1980). New approaches to the substitute teacher problem. *NASSP Bulletin*, *64*(437), 79-86. https://doi.org/10.1177/019263658006443713

Lindsay, C., & Almey, M. (2006). Immigrant women. In Statistics Canada, *Women in Canada: A gender-based statistical report* (5th ed., pp. 211-238). https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-503-x/2015001/article/14217-eng.htm

McMahon, S. D., Martinez, A., Espelage, D., Rose, C., Reddy, L. A., Lane, K., Anderman, E. M., Reynolds, C. R., Jones, A., & Brown, V. (2014). Violence directed against teachers: Results from a national survey. *Psychology in the Schools*, *51*(7), 753-766. https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.21777

Pollock, K. E. (2010). Marginalization and the occasional teacher workforce in Ontario: The case of internationally educated teachers (IETs). *Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy*, *100*. https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1131&context=edupub

Pollock, K. (2012). Occasional teachers' job-related learning. *Teacher learning and power in the knowledge society* (pp. 109-125). https://www.edu.uwo.ca/about/faculty-profiles/katina-pollock/_docs/2012-chapter-occasional-teachers-job-relatedl.pdf

Roland, E. (2018). Understanding intersectionality to promote social justice in educational leadership: Review of JCEL cases. *Intersections: Critical Issues in Education*, *2*(1), 3. https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/cgi/intersections

Ryan, J. (2006). Inclusive leadership and social justice for schools. *Leadership and Policy in schools*, *5*(1), 3-17. https://doi.org/10.1080/15700760500483995

Ryan, J., & Rottmann, C. (2009). Struggling for democracy: Administrative communication in a diverse school context. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, *37*(4), 473-496. https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143209334579

Statistics Canada. (September 22, 2021). *Gender-related differences in the career advancement of women in Canada by Zechuan Deng*. https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/36-28-0001/2021009/article/00002-eng.htm

Theoharis, G. (2008). Woven in deeply: Identity and leadership of urban social justice principals. *Education and Urban Society*, *41*(1), 3-25. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013124508321372

UNESCO. (April 20, 2023). Smashing gender stereotypes and bias in and through education. https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/smashing-gender-stereotypes-and-bias-and-through-education

Van Hek, M., Kraaykamp, G., & Wolbers, M. H. (2016). Comparing the gender gap in educational attainment: the impact of emancipatory contexts in 33 cohorts across 33 countries. *Educational Research and Evaluation*, *22*(5-6), 260-282. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/13803611.2016.1256222

Vangool, H. (2020, September 3). Schools need BIPOC educators now more than ever. CBC SK Opinion Post. Schools need BIPOC educators now more than ever | CBC News - Search (bing.com)

Walsh, S. C., & Brigham, S. M. (2007). Internationally Educated Female Teachers who have Immigrated to Nova Scotia: A Research/Performance Text. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *6*(3), 1-28. https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690700600301

Walsh, S. C., Brigham, S. M., & Wang, Y. (2011). Internationally educated female teachers in the neoliberal context: Their labour market and teacher certification experiences in Canada. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *27*(3), 657-665. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2010.11.004

Whitney, D., Trosten-Bloom, A., & Rader, K. (2010). Leading positive performance: A conversation about appreciative leadership. *Performance Improvement*, *49*(3), 5-10. https://doi.org/10.1002/pfi.20131

About the Author

Mabel Dzigbordzi is an international student in the M.Ed. educational administration stream at Brandon University. She has experience as a substitute teacher and educational assistant. She is passionate about rural school leadership and social justice. She loves hiking, travelling, discovering new places, and photography.

School Ghost Towns:
Combating the Increasing Number of Absences in Schools

Adam Dobriansky

Abstract

Student absenteeism is a prevailing issue for schools, impacting academic performance and social-emotional development. This article explores the definitions, rates, and causes of absenteeism. Through analysis of existing literature, it proposes a comprehensive approach to address the problem. Drawing on concepts of trauma-informed education and Response to Intervention (RtI), the author endorses a framework with a tiered structure of supports to create safe and supportive environments, alongside a more targeted approach to address individual root causes. By combining trauma-informed practices with the tiered approach of RtI, schools can address absenteeism and promote well-being.

Attendance and student absenteeism is a serious issue facing schools today. The purpose of this paper is to define absenteeism, deepen understanding of the scope of the problem, discover possible causes of this problem, and explore the impact of absenteeism on student learning. The goal is ultimately to explore existing literature centered around attendance and student absenteeism to identify potential solutions that can be implemented within the context of my rural Manitoba school. To address student absenteeism, I advocate a school wide trauma-based approach embedded within existing support structures such as Response to Intervention (RtI).

Absenteeism in the Literature

Student absences are categized into (a) explained absences of which parents/guardians are aware, such as illness, quarantine (particularly important in recent years due to pandemic restrictions), injuries, or medical appointments; and (b) unexplained absences of which parents/guardians are unaware, which includes any reason where absences have not received approval (Aucejo] & Romano, 2016). The term *truancy* is sometimes used when relating to students with unexplained absences. Truancy describes multiple unexplained absences that last full school days, as willful behaviour of either the student or their parents choosing to be noncompliant with the school system (Shute & Cooper, 2015). In this article, school absenteeism is quantified as a percentage that reflects the relationship between the total number of school days missed, encompassing both explained and unexplained absences (truancy), and the total number of school days possible in a given year.

Prevalence

A sharp increase in school absenteeism has been experienced in recent years. Dee (2023) gathered extensive data on school absences, encompassing 40 states and 92% of all K-12 public school students in the U.S. from 2022. Examining this data, Dee suggested that on an average day in the 2022-2023 school year almost 10% of kindergarten to grade 12 students were absent. This issue is also reflected by local data in Manitoba, from the Louis Riel School Division (LRSD) where during the first 3 months of the 2022-2023 school year there was an overall absenteeism rate of 11.8%, almost double the 6.3% pre-pandemic rate seen in 2016-2017 (Louis Riel School Division [LRSD], 2022).

These rates are further developed using the term chronically absent, which is defined as a student missing more than 10% of the total school year. When drilling down into the data

regarding chronically absent students, there was an increase in the 2021-2022 school year to 28.3% from the pre-pandemic 2018-2019 school year of 14.8% (Dee, 2023). LRSD (2022) reported an even higher percentage, with almost 40% of students in LRSD qualifying for chronic absenteeism. These international and local absence percentages are strikingly similar when analyzing school-based data within one of the schools in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Data gathered through student information systems where teachers were required to report daily attendance show a 30% daily absenteeism rate for the 2022-2023 school year in that particular school. Putting these numbers into context, almost 100 of the 300 students in this school were missing on any given day and 33 students inside those daily absences were likely from the same grouping of chronically absent students.

Causes

Discussing possible causes of absenteeism assumes that there is a reason for students missing school. The functional model of unexcused absences "poses that youths miss school to avoid school-based stimuli that provoke negative affectivity, escape from aversive school-based social and/or evaluative situations, pursue attention from significant others, and/or pursue tangible rewards outside of school" (Kearney & Graczyk, 2013, p. 4). Finding one exact cause for the sharp increase in absenteeism is difficult. The changes in the data from recent pre-pandemic years to pandemic years indicate that a shift occurred during this period. Taylor (2021) extensively explored the classification of COVID-19 as a disaster due to its profound psychological impacts and implications for schools. Taylor explained,

> Worldwide, education has been disrupted in 188 countries for approximately 1.5 billion children and youth … as the pandemic was in the early days, school employees reported anecdotal evidence that some students were struggling with the changes to their normal routines, exhibiting behaviours such as remaining inside their own rooms, refusing to shower, eat or even get out of bed. (p. 125)

During the pandemic the social aspects of schools were greatly disrupted through public health measures designed to slow the spread of the COVID-19 virus, through physical distancing, remote learning, and cohorting which physically kept students apart. Even with the return to in person learning, masking disrupted the ability to read social cues affecting approachability and trust, important for social interactions (Carbon, 2020; Bylianto & Chan, 2022).

Taylor (2021) outlined three key criteria that influence a child's response to disasters: the extent of their exposure to the event, the amount of support during and after the event, and the degree of personal loss and social disruption experienced. The pandemic produced a general level of disruptions and increased stress for all, but given the wide range of experience amongst the three indicators outlined by Taylor and given the different level of resources of each family, it would be difficult to determine a causational effect on attendance. Interestingly, Dee (2023) found no statistical differences between states with stricter distancing mandates, mandatory masking regulations, and higher rates of COVID-19 – which suggests that the pandemic itself is not a predicting factor of school absenteeism. Instead, Dee pointed to declining youth mental health and disengagement as biproducts of the pandemic as contributing factors for student absenteeism remaining high with the return to regular in-person learning.

Kipp (2022) indicated that current research into absenteeism does not adequately account for students' personal decisions. To explore the daily decisions students make about their school attendance, Kipp employed an ecological agency theoretical framework to capture the intricate relationship between the environment, the individual, and the decision-making process, analyzing how school dynamics impact these decisions. In gathering data for this model, Kipp conducted exhaustive case studies of two students, using a mix of interviews, relational maps, drawings, and extended observations. From this research, Kipp concluded that experiences within the schools themselves amplified anxiety, and that social factors such as peer relationships and bullying have the greatest impacts on attendance.

Effects

School absenteeism affects students' social-emotional and academic learning. Using data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study 2010-2011, Gottfried (2014) explored the effect of absenteeism on academic and social emotional outcomes for 10,000 kindergarten students in the U.S. He compared attendance rates with academic success on two achievement tests for Math and English, four teacher-rated social scales, and two behavioural scales. Students with chronic absenteeism tended to exhibit lower academic scores, reduced educational engagement, and increased social disengagement.

These learning loss trends were demonstrated at later grades in a study by Santibañez and Guarino (2021) using data from over 600,000 kindergarten to grade 12 students in California. Comparing absence rates with test scores from the Smarter Balanced Assessment in ELA and Math survey data measuring self-management, growth mind-set, self-efficacy, and social awareness, Santibañez and Guarino found that absenteeism negatively affects student outcomes and harms social-emotional learning especially in social awareness, self-efficacy, and self-management. Interestingly, this study shows that absenteeism has a statistically greater impact on both academic and social-emotional learning in later grades than in early ones.

Trauma-Rooted Response to Intervention as a Solution for Absenteeism in an Urban Manitoba School

The following considerations had to be accounted for when looking for solutions that could be implemented within my urban Manitoba school: the limitations within an already overburdened school system, minimal financial cost involved, and the use and adaption of existing structures of support. Solutions had to address root causes identified (i.e., trauma caused by COVID-19, anxiety of students, and relationships), and they had to be broad enough to cover all students yet flexible enough to target specific high-problem areas. With these limitations in mind, I recommend using a trauma-informed approach embedded within existing support structures of our Student Intensity Scale framework called Response to Intervention (RtI) to support, monitor, and assess attendance interventions in my school.

RtI "refers to a systematic and hierarchical decision-making process to assign evidence-based strategies based on student need and in accordance with regular progress monitoring" (Kearney & Graczyk, 2013, p. 3). In RtI, the interventions progress from Tier 1 universal support targeting 80-90% of learners requiring monitoring attendance data twice a month, to Tier 2 targeted interventions for a smaller group of 5-10% of students requiring weekly monitoring of attendance data, to Tier 3 requiring intensive strategies for individuals making up the final 1-5% of students with daily monitoring (Kearney & Graczyk, 2013). This framework offers easy and specific monitoring intervals to assess student growth with specific interventions that can be scaled up or down depending on student need. Given the widespread prevalence of varying degrees of attendance problems amongst the student population, there is need to deploy a comprehensive strategy that can reach all students while still having RtI's flexibility for targeted interventions (Taylor, 2021). The framework is also commonly used within the school and division that I work in and therefore all school-based stakeholders are familiar with the format and language, requiring no additional professional development for teachers or support staff.

Trauma-informed education takes into consideration the effects that stress and trauma have on the brain and the extraordinary impacts they have on learning. Bath (2008) explained that traumatic experiences rewire the pathways in the brain to be hypersensitive, protecting the individual from future distress. This heightened reactivity triggers the body's stress response system, even in non-threatening situations, leading to challenging and unexpected behaviors. It is crucial to recognize that for students to engage in effective learning, efforts must be made to deactivate this response system. At the root of trauma, students grapple with a sense of

powerlessness and seek out ways to evaluate the safety of their surroundings and relationships (Dombo & Sabatino, 2019). To address trauma, Bath (2008) offered three pillars: safety, connection, and managing emotions. In alignment with these pillars, Dombo and Sabatino (2019) highlighted the importance of healing through relationships built on the principles of empathy, support, and curiosity, thus aiding in the identification of trauma triggers for students. Taylor (2021) offered a series of steps for schools to integrate trauma informed care: taking inventory of current practices in schools, ensuring all stakeholders know the effects of trauma on the brain and how they impact student learning and behavior, reviewing existing policy, and building connections for families to mental health supports.

Specific strategies within a trauma informed RtI response to absenteeism would include a flexible but escalating response dictated by student need and absence rates. A whole-school level response, incorporating the lens of RtI Tier 1 supports and the lens of trauma informed education, would involve building connections with adults and teachers, increasing connections between peers, increasing teacher knowledge of how trauma effects the brain, and increasing safety within the classroom. Dombo and Sabatino (2019) advised that clear expectations, well-defined routines, time for transitions, choices whenever possible, and attuned teachers contribute to safe classrooms. At Tier 1, Kearney and Graczyk (2013) suggested increasing access to health services within the school system, including mental health supports, prioritizing social emotional learning in classrooms, and increasing parental involvement.

Layering in trauma informed education at Tier 2 would involve considerations of individual students' specific triggers to trauma within the school/classroom and increased coregulation with an adult to help students calm (Dombo & Sabatino). Dombo and Sabatino suggested coregulating through labeling emotions, focusing on emotions behind challenging behaviours, and teaching calming and mindfulness exercises. At Tier 2, Kearney and Graczyk suggested using problem solving with students and families to identify the barriers to attendance, increasing academic support or tutoring for this group of students to target gaps in learning, working with clinical teams to pursue testing for learning disabilities, working with medical doctors to diagnose and treat psychological reasons for absenteeism like anxiety, and increasing engagement.

Finally, at Tier 3, Kearney and Graczyk suggested incorporating clinician staff on the school team, changing attendance plans by offering reduced time in school, use of alternative spaces, smaller class sizes, and increasing engagement through offering vocational programming – which are also supported by trauma informed practices. At this level of support, it becomes increasingly crucial to have students build trust with an adult, thus having a safe relationship to serve as a secure base. To foster this relationship building it is important to designate a point person within the school team, who will be responsible for the increased monitoring required for Tier 3 support along with working towards building the required relationship so that students can begin to feel comfortable identifying the barriers that are stopping them from attending school.

Conclusion

Exploring the literature around attendance and student absenteeism clarifies the scope of this problem and the urgency with which school systems must respond in order to support their students and families. I advocate addressing the problem by using a trauma-informed approach within the framework of RtI, which offers a flexible way to react with a structured monitoring and assessment schedule. As a school, the suggestions offered through both of these lenses are practical and easily implemented. Future research into the effectiveness of this approach would involve a pretest posttest method, comparing attendance numbers by using student information systems (such as Power Bi), before the targeted intervention years and after implementation.

References

Aucejo, E. M., & Romano, T. F. (2016). Assessing the effect of school days and absences on test score performance. *Economics of Education Review, 55*, 70-87. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econedurev.2016.08.007

Bath, H. (2008). The three pillars of trauma-informed care. *Reclaiming Children and Youth, 17*(3), 17-21.

Bylianto, L. O., & Chan, K. Q. (2022). Face masks inhibit facial cues for approachability and trustworthiness: An eyetracking study. *Current Psychology*, *42*(31), 26996-27007. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-022-03705-8

Dee, T. S. (2023). *Higher chronic absenteeism threatens academic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.* OSF Preprints. https://doi.org/10.31219/osf.io/bfg3p

Dombo, E. A., & Sabatino, C. A. (2019). Creating safe environments for traumatized children in schools: The three pillars of trauma care in schools. In *Creating trauma-informed schools: A guide for school social workers and educators* (pp. 40-57). Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190873806.003.0004.

Gottfried, M. A. (2014). Chronic absenteeism and its effects on students' academic and socioemotional outcomes. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk (JESPAR), 19*(2), 53-75. https://doi.org/10.1080/10824669.2014.962696

Kearney, C. A., & Graczyk, P. (2013). A response to intervention model to promote school attendance and decrease school absenteeism. *Child & Youth Care Forum*, *43*(1), 1-25. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10566-013-9222-1

Kipp, A. L. (2022). "No one really likes crying in school": The influences of classroom and institutional dynamics upon student absenteeism during COVID-19. *Continuity in Education, 3*(1), 75-91. https://doi.org/10.5334/cie.43

Louis Riel School Division. (2022). *Fall student absence rates: An analysis of absences in the context of a pandemic*. https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoiMzg5NGYzMzEtODRmMC00ZjQxLTlmMzAtZGI3MDU2MjYwZDQwIiwidCI6IjQ5NTFiMjk4LTEyNDItNDk5Yy04YTNjLWEyMWY4NTkxZmI4OSJ9

Santibañez, L., & Guarino, C. M. (2021). The effects of absenteeism on academic and social-emotional outcomes: Lessons for COVID-19. *Educational Researcher*, *50*(6), 392-400. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189x21994488

Shute, J. W., & Cooper, B. S. (2015). Understanding in-school truancy. *Phi Delta Kappan*, *96*(6), 65-68. https://doi.org/10.1177/0031721715575303

Taylor, S. S. (2021). Trauma-informed care in schools: A necessity in the time of COVID-19. *Beyond Behavior*, *30*(3), 124-134. https://doi.org/10.1177/10742956211020841

About the Author

Adam Dobriansky is a Master of Education student at Brandon University, with a focus in educational administration. He is a vice principal, husband, and father of four children. Adam is passionate about alternative education and finding practical solutions to improve the school experience, well-being, and academic success of students.

PROFESSIONAL REFLECTION

Growing Into the Role of Counsellor

Matthew Buck

Continuing to refine my approach to counselling has been a journey for me. As I develop my framework, I am reflecting on my core values and beliefs, and my learning in the M.Ed. program in addition to my lived experience, and how they are interrelated. I am considering what led me to want to be a school counsellor, what is important to me, how I view people, and how I believe I can help them. I am reflecting on what resonated with me in my previous courses and how that learning has shaped me in developing my approach. I am also reflecting on how my experiences influence how I can support people, and how I developed my initial framework. Using these components as a foundation, I believe I can incorporate what I have learned from more approaches to better support people who come for help.

Who I Am As a School Counsellor

This year I am fortunate to be in the role of school counsellor and to practice my skills and techniques with the students I support. I frequently reflect on why I initially chose to become a school counsellor to my current "why." I initially decided to pursue counselling in part due to COVID-19 and its effects on the school community: school closures, social isolation, adjusting to a "new normal," and fear of the unknown, to name a few factors. I believed these factors would need attention for years after restrictions were lifted, and that there were not enough school counsellors to meet the demands of the students we work with. I also believed that my beliefs and core values aligned with becoming a helper.

During the early onset of COVID-19, I noticed my core values and beliefs emerging because of my own experience and learning of others' experiences. I saw the inequities in how many people were profoundly impacted by COVID-19 through job loss and reduced or restricted access to food, shelter, and health care. I was fortunate to have my needs met, but I felt a responsibility to society to help others less fortunate than me, so I began donating to Harvest Manitoba and became involved in my local New Democratic Party (NDP) Constituency Association. This was also around the time the former provincial government tried to pass the Education Modernization Act (The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, 2020-2021), which was viewed as harmful to public education (The Manitoba Teachers' Society, n.d.). Through these experiences, social justice became an important core value to me. With this core value, I believed it was important to serve the community.

I began serving the community through donations and volunteering, and I also perceived it important to help people in their personal journeys. As a counsellor, I help people become who they want to be, to live a good life and share their gifts with the world, as well as help people navigate challenges and problems that arise. Challenges and problems result when people's lives are "out of sync" (Sharry, 2004, p. 38) because of unhelpful thoughts, distorted beliefs (internal barriers), external barriers, or all these factors. External barriers emerge in social and physical environments, some because of racism, oppression, and colonialism. When I took Intercultural Counselling, I learned that effective intercultural counsellors are advocates of social justice, and that effective intercultural counselling requires strong relationships, developing competencies, cultural humility, and recognizing the importance of intercultural counselling. Intercultural counsellors also empower clients to have influence in improving their lives (Monk et al., 2019), in addition to "seeking commonalities and the bonds that connect us as human beings" (Martin et al., 2015, p. 281).

How I Developed My Approach to Counselling

A year ago, I had the opportunity to learn about different theoretical frameworks to counselling and to develop my own. I reflected on my beliefs and values and stated that everyone is unique, bringing their strengths, challenges, and identities, and that we have a collective responsibility to help each other become our best selves by reaching goals and sharing our gifts with the world. My approach and beliefs align with the Rogerian conditions of unconditional positive regard, congruence, and empathy (Rogers, 1992). When I developed my framework, I returned to the "why" of my desire to become a counsellor, and perceived that my beliefs and core values aligned with Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and the Social Ecological approach.

Applying my beliefs and core values to counselling with CBT and the Social Ecological approach was the "how" of my framework. Helping people become their best selves and sharing their gifts with the world when their lives were "out of sync" or when they faced external or internal barriers (or both), or all these factors required building their resilience, self-efficacy, self-advocacy, and some cognitive strategies.

Ungar (2015) believed resilience was developed through "complex patterns of environmental influence, along with cognitive factors" (p. e124). People are influenced by social and physical environments, which can be positive or negative: positive environments are protective factors and negative environments are risk factors. Furthermore, a collective responsibility to help each other reach goals and share gifts with the world shows "communalism that reflects the importance of social bonds and social duties, a fundamental sense of interdependence and a focus on collective well-being" (Ungar, 2010, p. 422). Building capacity and self-efficacy can counter unhelpful thoughts and beliefs; the degree of belief in building one's capacity to be successful influences the degree of success in applying a new skill (Bandura, 1977). As a school counsellor, I believe in the importance of advocating for the students I support and teaching them how to self-advocate (Ungar, 2021). It is also beneficial to help students increase positive thoughts, feelings, and beliefs about themselves and others with CBT techniques, which can reduce negative thoughts, feelings, and beliefs. Adding more approaches to this framework will help me to better support the students who come to see me.

Integration of More Approaches

In the M.Ed. program I have learned the value of Solution Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT), Acceptance and Committment Therapy (ACT), mindful self-compassion, and Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT). Effectively integrating these approaches into my counselling framework will help people to become their best selves and share their gifts. These approaches can also help me work with people to build their resilience, capacity, self-efficacy, and cognitive strategies for coping with unhelpful thoughts, feelings, and beliefs.

SFBT addresses building resilience, self-advocacy, social justice, self-efficacy, and capacity building. This is achieved through focusing on what works for the clients and positive changes (Kim et al., 2017). SFBT empowers clients to have influence in working towards a desired future – the clients can create their own solutions and use their existing strengths in those solutions. In an approach where the clients are the expert in their own lives, SFBT is conducive to practitioners' gaining cultural competence. In my experience, I have found SFBT appropriate in working with many students I support, and it aligns with my belief in helping students become their best selves.

Every student who comes to see me is unique and is more than the challenges they face. Kim et al. (2017) described SFBT as very effective when there is a safe, trusting, and supportive relationship between the counsellor and the student. Furthermore, they deem it important to take a strength-based, positive approach with clients, rather than a deficit and pathologizing approach. Sometimes, students who come to see me need acknowledgement, validation, and

hope. Using SFBT can address these needs through building resilience and capacity. Resilience is developed through identifying and enhancing protective factors while reducing risk factors. Building capacity is achieved through "focusing on the clients' strengths, coping skills, exceptions, and past successes" (Kim et al., p. 131). When students come to see me, they often cannot immediately see their positive attributes, but by establishing a safe, trusting, and supportive relationship they are able to see possibilities for success.

Having the opportunity to practice ACT has been helpful in applying it with the students I support. When listening to students tell their stories and challenges, I consider how their thoughts and feelings interfere with them becoming who they want to be, or they expend much of their energy on trying to "get rid of" uncomfortable or unwanted thoughts and feelings. I have found adapting ACT to age-appropriate concepts effective in gently challenging an unhelpful thought or behaviour pattern. Some of the students I work with are beginning to grasp the essential concepts of ACT (which are not their thoughts), and to focus on what helps them become who they want to be.

I currently use ACT with three students who are at different stages in the change process. I found many different access points with each of the students, and each is moving at their own pace. Two see the importance of change and are open to working through ACT, and one is ready for Creative Hopelessness (Harris, 2019). I have used Harris's (2019) Choice Point Theory with each of them, and it is interesting how each can articulate goals, values, and toward or away moves, but needs guidance in putting together the whole puzzle.

I am appreciative of the relationships I have with students because they are trusting me to walk with them on their path, just as I am walking my own path. I have had the discussion of how suffering is part of life, at an age-appropriate level. The analogy I used was identifying an object as unhelpful thoughts and feelings: when I put the object in front of my eyes it keeps me from doing the things I like doing, and trying to push the object away also keeps me from doing the things I like doing. Putting the object on my lap shows it is still there; I have made a place for it so I can do the things I like doing. This is how I explained cognitive fusion, experiential avoidance, and acceptance. I also used the YouTube video of driving the bus and have repeated the message that thoughts will always be there for the ride, but they are the driver (Oliver, 2013). Once they understand the process and are open to working further, we go deeper into mindfulness, which involves noticing, grounding in the moment, being open, paying attention, and developing self-kindness (Harris, 2019). I emphasize that mindfulness takes time and practice, and that each day is different.

After learning about mindful self-compassion and how it has helped me in my journey, I believe it is another component I can integrate into my counselling framework. Many times in my life I have struggled with negative self-beliefs and negative self-talk: I was not good enough; I was a failure if I did not do my best; I was too emotional. Some of the concepts in Neff and Germer's (2018) book resonated with me and helped me shift my perspective. In the first chapter, Neff and Germer stated that we often do not treat ourselves like we would treat a friend who is suffering, and that helped me shift my perspective to treating myself how I would treat my friends. Furthermore, understanding the foundation of self-compassion as self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness has helped me in moments when I have struggled, specifically saying words of comfort to myself, such as "I am sorry you are having a hard time right now," recognizing that others have been in my situation, and answering the question of what I might need in that moment of struggle. It was also important to learn the difference between self-compassion and self-esteem, and to practice mindful self-compassion because of moments of feeling hurt, rather than beat myself up for whatever caused the feeling of hurt. These concepts are what I share with students when they come to see me, and align with my values of building resilience, self-efficacy, capacity, and self-advocacy.

Throughout Neff and Germer's (2018) book, there are explanations and examples that complement resilience, self-efficacy, capacity, and self-advocacy. The authors stated that self-compassion builds resilience because it is a source of inner strength and courage that helps us

when we face challenges. Self-efficacy and capacity building are addressed through the exercises, particularly the compassionate friend activity, with their words of wisdom and support coming from within. Answering the question of "What do I need?" is an example of self-advocacy. Extending compassion to others and the concept of common humanity are important for social justice as well. I believe these skills and practices are effective for all the students I support, but I have noticed that mindful self-compassion is difficult to implement when students come to see me in a dysregulated state.

Some of the students I regularly support struggle with regulation, and I have found DBT an effective framework to help them to regulate and work on becoming the person they want to be. The four domains of Mindfulness, Tolerance, Emotions, and Interpersonal can be effective in supporting students when they are struggling. The purpose of mindfulness is to "reduce suffering and increase happiness," "increase control of your mind," and "experience reality as it is" (Linehan, 2015, Mindfulness Handout 1). Interpersonal effectiveness promotes building positive relationships, working effectively with others, and working towards balance in relationships (Linehan, 2015, Interpersonal Effectiveness Handout 1). Emotional regulation works towards understanding and naming emotions, decreasing the frequency of unwanted emotions, emotional vulnerability, and emotional suffering (Linehan, 2015, Emotional Regulation Handout 1). Distress tolerance aims to manage crisis, accept reality, and release from needing to satisfy demanding desires, urges and intense emotions (Linehan, 2015, Distress Tolerance Handout 1). DBT is effective in building capacity for emotional regulation. This approach is effective in recognizing where the student is at in their journey and working towards meeting their needs in living a fulfilling life.

Conclusion

In my first year as a school counsellor, I have had the opportunity to implement my theoretical framework to counselling. I have found that CBT and the Social Ecological approach resonate with my core values and beliefs. I have also found SFBT, ACT, mindful self-compassion, and DBT valuable approaches to incorporate into my framework, in addition to my own personal growth. Social justice, resilience, self-efficacy, building capacity, and self-advocacy are important to me, based on what I have learned in my M.Ed. program, in addition to my lived experience, and these values and beliefs are evident in my framework. These beliefs, values, and lived experiences are what led me to be a school counsellor and help me support the students who come to see me. I want to help students become the people they want to be and share their gifts with the world, and I will continue to incorporate new approaches, techniques, and skills into my counselling framework.

References

Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological Review*, *84*(2), 191-215.

Harris, R. (2019). *ACT made simple: An easy-to-read primer on acceptance and commitment therapy* (2nd ed.). New Harbinger.

Kim, J., Kelly, M., & Franklin, C. (2017). *Solution-focused brief therapy in schools* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press Academic US.

The Legislative Assembly of Manitoba. (2020-2021). *The educational modernization act*. https://web2.gov.mb.ca/bills/42-3/b064e.php

Linehan, M. M. (2015). *DBT skills training handouts and worksheets* (2nd ed.). Guilford Press.

The Manitoba Teachers' Society. (n. d.). *FAQ: Bill 64: The Educational Modernizations Act*. http://www.mbteach.org/pdfs/news/MTS_Bill64_ToolKit_FAQ.pdf

Martin, L., Shepard, B., & Lehr, R. (Eds.). (2015). *Canadian counselling and psychotherapy experience: Ethics-based issues and cases*. Canadian Counselling and Psychotherapy Association.
Monk, G., Winslade, J., Sinclair, S., & Polanco, M. (2019). *Intercultural counselling: Bridging the us and them divide*. Cognella.
Neff, K., & Germer, C. (2018). *The mindful self-compassion workbook: A proven way to accept yourself, build inner strength, and thrive*. Guilford Press.
Oliver, J. (2013, February 12). *Passengers on a bus – An acceptance & commitment therapy (ACT) metaphor*. [Video]. YouTube. https://youtu.be/Z29ptSuoWRc?si=2s86D9BYy9IpTx7i
Rogers, C. R. (1992). The necessary and sufficient conditions of therapeutic personality change. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, *60*(6), 827-832.
Sharry, J. (2004). *Counselling: Children, adolescents, and families.* SAGE.
Ungar, M. (2010). Families and navigators and negotiators: Facilitating culturally and contextually specific expressions of resilience. *Family Process*, *49*(3), 421-435, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1545-5300.2010.01331x
Ungar, M. (2015). Social ecological complexity and resilience processes. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences, 38*, e124. https://doi:10.1017/S0140525X14001721
Ungar, M. (2021). *Working with children and youth with complex needs: 20 skills to build resilience.* Routledge.

About the Author

Matthew Buck completed his Master of Education in guidance and counselling through Brandon University in June 2024. He is a guidance counsellor at a K-5 school in Winnipeg. Prior to becoming a guidance counsellor, Matt was a resource teacher for nine years, and he taught in Thailand for five years.

CELEBRATION OF SCHOLARSHIP

We are honoured to recognize the following students who defended M.Ed. theses in 2023.

Alexandra Paiva April 24, 2023 Thesis Supervisor: Dr. Breanna Lawrence

Ordinary in the Unordinary Lessons on Resilience and Hope – A Qualitative Study Exploring the Experiences of Youth Well-Being and Learning During COVID-19

Emergency remote instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic had an array of implications for youth and their families. This qualitative case study explored youth experiences and their parent's perceptions about youth mental health and learning during imposed emergency remote instruction throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Using a multi-informant and semi longitudinal case study research design, the purpose of the study was to describe the resilience processes related to navigating remote learning at two different points in time (May 2020 and May 2021). Participants included four youth aged 12-16 years old and their four parents that totaled 16 separate semi-structured interviews.

The findings include rich descriptions about the in-depth experiences of youth and their families navigating the uncharted territory during the pandemic with social restrictions and online learning living in rural Manitoba. Participants described themes related to learning, mental health, family dynamics, interpersonal competencies, and adaptive processes. These findings highlight the many systems and adaptive capacities within the youth, in relationships with caregivers, families, educators, helpers or friends, and in resources and capacities in order to support resilience in a post pandemic world. Many of these center around the powerful adaptive systems variously referred to as agency or mastery motivation, active coping, hope or optimism, and connection. The results have important implications for research and practice regarding resilience, education, and counselling.

Robert Dinsdale August 16, 2023 Thesis Supervisor: Dr. Jackie Kirk

The Bison Way: Organizational Unifiers and Values as a Driver of Sustained Success

Sustained success is a significant challenge in a rapidly changing world. Changes in leadership present a notable obstacle to sustained success. The North Dakota State Bison football program is the most successful Football Championship Subdivision football program in history. Over the last twelve years, the team has won nine out of a possible twelve national championships. This was achieved with the leadership of three separate head coaches.

Factors that contributed to the unprecedented success of North Dakota State were the focus of this study. A case study was used to examine the football program through the lens of complexity leadership theory. Interviews with the athletics director and head coach were combined with focus groups involving assistant coaches and players to discern key factors of the Bison's success. Identity, values, and the community of Fargo, North Dakota, guided the Bison in establishing a unified culture. Expectations placed on the program, combined with the recruiting philosophy, created the opportunity for movement and growth in a complex environment. Finally, empowered player leadership and the establishment of clear processes within the program created conditions to support sustained success.

Angela Klassen August 31, 2023 Thesis Supervisor: Dr. Breanna Lawrence

Isolation, Loneliness and Hope Among Older Adults Living Alone in Rural Southern Manitoba

Isolation was commonplace throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, but loneliness was not well understood with researchers finding mixed results. Social isolation significantly impacts physical and mental health outcomes, including mortality rates. While social isolation does not equate to loneliness, many people who are isolated are also lonely. People who are isolated also tend to live alone. Even before the pandemic, older adults experienced more loneliness and social isolation than those who were younger. Considered especially vulnerable to severe health outcomes, older adults faced extraordinary daily experiences during the height of the pandemic. Yet, many older adults reported coping well throughout the pandemic. Understanding the unique ways in which older adults navigated these conditions despite adversity was needed.

Using a resilience framework, in my thesis I explored how six older adults who lived alone in rural Manitoba experienced the COVID-19 pandemic. A semi-longitudinal multiple case study was conducted to elicit in-depth descriptions about loneliness, isolation, hope, and mental health experiences. Rating scale and qualitative interview data was collected at three different points in time over a one-year period. My results revealed the challenges to maintain hope and well-being despite mounting concerns. Many participants explained unmet needs as they experienced voluntary and involuntary isolation within the context of mandated public health restrictions. Even so, participants reported that loneliness remained unchanged from pre-pandemic levels. Adaptability and negotiating social conditions were described. Amplifying the voices of older adults, this study allowed participants to speak candidly about their experiences during the pandemic while also revealing resilience.

Joanna Ford November 16, 2023 Thesis Supervisors: Dr. Candy Jones and Dr. Burcu Yaman Ntelioglou

Making Community Connections a Priority in Curricular Planning for Young Adult Newcomers

This Master of Education thesis explores how bridging programs and strategies can enhance academic success of young adult newcomers and students with refugee backgrounds in small Manitoba cities and rural areas. Employing a qualitative approach with a constructivist epistemology, the research utilizes interpretive constructivist methods, including practitioner inquiry research. It features the experiences of participants who graduated from the bridging program under study, along with the author's own observations and reflections.

The study identifies factors affecting this student group, including language and literacy needs, the learning environment, barriers to academic success, educational gaps from limited prior education, and personal/family dynamics. Key findings stress the importance of fostering community connections to provide tailored support. The study also highlights the importance of flexible school environments that accommodate students' diverse needs, enabling focused skill development in academic learning, literacy, and numeracy.

The research calls for schools to review their practices and policies, promote equity, collaborate with community organizations, provide flexible scheduling, and to seek genuine student input. The research also provides evidence and justification for prioritizing and funding bridging programs. Suggestions for further research include expanding the sample size, collaborating with immigrant-serving organizations, avoiding deficit mindsets in research, and exploring program models, funding, policymaker attitudes, and advocating for support to ensure academic success.