Education for ‘peace’ in urban Canadian schools: Gender, culture, conflict, and opportunities to learn

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Abstract: This chapter probes the mis-match between the rhetoric of public schooling—which affirms democracy and peaceful, equitable social relations—and the actually-implemented anti-violence and conflict management initiatives in typical public schools. A qualitative study in urban Canadian schools shows (with a few shining exceptions) an emphasis on gender- and racially-biased, exclusionary peacekeeping surveillance and control, far more than on sustainably democratic peacebuilding. This pattern has been exacerbated by recent systemic budget cuts and curriculum standardization. The chapter probes the implications of such ‘peace’ education for the reinforcement (or challenge) of gendered, racialized social inequalities and patterns of violence.

School-based education for peace has a paradoxical relationship with the realities of conflict and violence: it does not necessarily disrupt patterns of overt violence, much less the structural violence of injustice and social exclusion (Curle, Freire, & Galtung, 1974). Several school practices actually may legitimate and reinforce structural and/or overt violence, at the same time that other school practices may contribute to positive peacebuilding (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000; Davies, 2004; Weinstein, Freedman, & Hughson, 2007; Williams, 2004). Prevailing approaches to explicit peace education tend to reflect the cultural norms of their authors: until recently, usually relatively privileged populations in relatively peaceful social contexts (e.g. Bekerman & McGlynn, 2007; Lederach, 1995; Salomon & Nevo, 2002). School practices generally disproportionately emphasize ‘negative peace’—cessation or temporary prevention of overt violence—thereby facilitating social stability, which advantages those currently in power (Galtung, 1969). School ‘peacekeeping,’ the use of coercion to achieve negative peace, typically relies on monitoring and punitive discipline. Even ‘peacemaking’ (conflict resolution) processes, when they emphasize quick or premature settlement rather than messier democratic dialogue to build justice, may contribute more to negative peace than to transformative peacebuilding.

Curriculum is privileged discourse that legitimates certain ways of thinking and de-legitimizes others (Apple, 1990). While schools teach about conflict explicitly, through lessons and communication of rules, probably the most powerful curriculum is implicit—affirmation of particular identities and behaviors through patterns of practice, language and silences. To create a ‘Positive’ peace refers to the presence of processes, norms and structures to continually build and protect just, nonviolent personal and social relationships (Galtung, 1996). Thus ‘peacebuilding’ means comprehensively changing the *status quo*, de-legitimizing ‘structural violence’—the currently-dominant discourses, beliefs and practices that normalize violence, marginalization and oppression. Values, wrapped up in structures of social relationships and language about social

difference, shape (and are shaped by) the knowledge, communication and interpretations that define any conflict in its cultural context (Ross, 2007). In schools, peacebuilding —addressing social conflicts openly as learning opportunities, building an equitable, inclusive sense of community, and facilitating repair of the harms people cause one another— can build motivation, skills, and social capital (relationship resources) for constructive engagement and democratic citizenship (Gladden, 2002; I. Harris & Morrison, 2003; Morrison, 2007).

People's learning and performance of (non)violent behavior is especially bound up in their gender and other cultural identities (Brock-Utne, 1989; Davies, 2004; Reardon, 1996). In varied ways across cultures and contexts, performance of 'female' identity in dominant discourses is associated with nurturing, passive, or collaborative responses to conflict. Masculinity is predominantly associated with aggression and competition. Children learn about how they are expected to manage conflicts, and about their roles and value as citizens, amidst their development as historically and geographically located female, male, sexual and cultural beings (Epstein & Johnson, 1998; Gordon, Holland, & Lahelma, 2000). While both explicit and implicit curriculum often reinforce overt violence (such as war-making and gender-based harassment) and structural violence (such as entrenched enmity and injustice), they simultaneously create some spaces for challenging and alleviating such violence.

While the rhetoric of public schooling affirms democracy and peaceful, equitable social relations, the study described below shows that actually-implemented anti-violence and conflict resolution initiatives in certain urban Canadian schools have emphasized peacekeeping and negative peace far more than democratic peacebuilding transformation. This chapter probes the implications of such 'peace' education for the reinforcement of gendered, racialized social inequalities.

Implicit and explicit curriculum, conflict and difference in schools

Discipline and 'violence prevention' are implicit curriculum —teaching through unspoken, unremarked patterns of modeling and practice— that often disproportionately monitors and blames visible minority and economically marginalized males for violence and vandalism (Noguera, 1995). Girls who are non-disruptive are often ignored, while girls who resist aggressively may be sanctioned even more harshly than boys who act similarly (Slee, 1995). At the same time, less-visible kinds of violence that disproportionately limit girls' and gender-bending boys' access to safe and complete education, such as peer exclusion and sexual harassment, are often relatively ignored by school personnel (Bergsgaard, 1997; Stein, 1995). Influenced by intersecting social identity hierarchies, each young person interacts differently, practices different roles, and draws on different personal/cultural resources and knowledge: thus even when educated together with the 'same' curriculum, diverse students are not getting the same education about conflict.

Interpersonal violence intersects with, and is exacerbated by, structural violence. Too often there is a double standard in the ways teachers' and students' acts of disrespect are normalized or punished:

“When we respond to violence in schools, if we respond at all, it is to the children who are violent. ... When a student embarrasses, ridicules or scorns another student it is harassment, bullying or teasing. When a teacher does it, it is [seen as] sound pedagogical practice” (Epp, in Epp & Watkinson, 1996, p.20).

However, disrespect, bias and harassment flourish in some environments far more than in others: localized understandings and practices can make a difference. For example, school climate surveys in the USA and in Nova Scotia show Black students to be more likely than students from white or other groups to believe that teachers don't respect students, that racism is a problem in their schools, and that they personally are not treated equitably (Conrad, 2006; Gewertz, 2006). Power-imbalanced social aggression (by adults or peers) is not effectively controlled by typical approaches to school discipline, which tend to focus on individual student behavior without addressing social hierarchies or structural patterns.

Effective anti-violence programs —unlike the prevailing punishment-heavy approaches— have been shown to be multifaceted, inclusive, anti-discriminatory, to offer learning support for teachers and students, and to be sustained in frequency and duration (Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, & Hawkins, 2002; Erickson & McGuire, 2004; Hazler & Carney, 2002; Scheckner, Rollin, Kaiser-Ulrey, & Wagner, 2002). Comprehensive, long-range programming that includes both explicit instruction and regular practice in conflict resolution, equity, and restorative peacebuilding —both in co-curricular conflict management and infused in classroom curriculum— have been shown to reduce aggressive behaviour (and associated suspensions) and to develop participants' understanding, reasoning and social skills, and openness to handle conflict nonviolently (Bickmore, 2002; Burrell, Zirbel, & Allen, 2003; Garrard & Lipsey, 2007; R. Harris, 2005; Heydenberk & Heydenberk, 2005; Jones, 2004; Skiba, 2000; Stevahn, 2004). It is naïve and dangerous to apply simple negotiation-based peacemaking approaches to complex social conflict and aggression: power imbalances can be reinforced, and harm compounded. However, some more complex approaches to dialogic problem-solving —such as class meetings and circle processes conducted by skilled, equity-conscious facilitators— hold substantial promise as part of a comprehensive response to complex social aggression (Morrison, 2007). Unfortunately, these characteristics do *not* describe the programming typically implemented in North America (e.g. Crosse, Burr, Cantor, Hagen, & Hantman, 2002; Jull, 2000).

Explicit, implemented North American public school curriculum generally avoids open, respectful dialogue about specific cases of conflict, dissent or controversy (Avery, Johnson, & Johnson, 1999; Houser, 1996; Sears, Clark, & Hughes, 1999; Simon, 2001). Schools' culture and context often obstruct the constructive introduction of educative conflict or criticism, for example through pressurized mandates for content coverage, restricted autonomy for teachers, and inflexible schedules (e.g. Bickmore, 2008; Little, 1993; Popkewitz, 1991). Officially, peacebuilding-related learning expectations (such as concepts of conflict, power, justice and change, skills for discussing and deliberating controversial issues) are increasingly embedded in mandated curriculum requirements across Canada in a variety of subject areas (Bickmore, 2005a). However, public schools have very few resources to support actual implementation of such democratic, learning-centered peacebuilding education, instead spending resources on security control and on punishment after incidents of violence (Bickmore, 2005b). At the same time, a glance at news media or popular culture demonstrates that people find social, political, and interpersonal conflict to be fascinating and important.

Classroom knowledge is suspect in the minds/hearts of learners (not to mention boring) when it ignores the conflicts that students see and live, inside and outside school (McNeil, 1986). Conflict-avoidant curriculum shuts out the contrasting viewpoints embodied in the life experiences of young people, especially those from dominated groups (e.g. Anzaldúa, 1987; Harber, 2002). A student's repertoire of skills for handling conflict, and her confidence in applying those skills, can be expected to improve with application, elaboration, and practice. A curriculum for *equitable* peacebuilding, therefore, would give all youngsters opportunities to practice handling taboo topics and unsettling viewpoints, especially in relation to the complex social/ political/ transnational issues that are less easily learned in homes and neighborhoods.

A liberatory pedagogy ... needs to render explicit topics that are most often relegated to realms of null curricula in many mainstream classrooms. Thus silences, omissions, controversy, and taboo subjects ... can become spaces of possibility and self-understanding (Henry, 1994, pp. 312-313).

These uncommon pedagogies, when implemented, do significantly improve young people's capacities and intentions to engage in political life, including struggles for equity and peace (Torney-Purta, Lehmann, Oswald, & Schultz, 2001).

It's not just controversial and sensitive issues that are avoided, but also attention to the inherent locatedness and subjectivity of knowledge (Britzman, 1998; Deng & Luke, 2008). How would students learn to critique value-laden assumptions about peace and conflict, in relation to

specific identities including their own, if the value-embeddedness of knowledge is never acknowledged? It's not quite fair to call the prevailing master narrative a 'male' perspective, since it represents only a small proportion of even the male population -- white, heteronormative, dominant-class leaders of government and military actions. Textbooks still typically relegate to their margins the experiences and perspectives of women and people of color. For example, female 'firsts' in formerly male pursuits are often included, because they fit the dominant image of 'male' activity as what matters. Less-tokenizable roles of women, reflecting viewpoints conflicting with those of dominant men—for instance in labor and human rights movements or working for peace—are noticeably absent from North American curriculum texts, even in explicit citizenship education or social studies (Baldwin & Baldwin, 1992; Hahn, 1996; McIntosh, 2005; Noddings, 1992; Woyshner, 2002).

Feminist and critical post-colonial pedagogies can open spaces for meaningful exploration of conflicts and peacebuilding options. However, given the context of social hierarchies, this depends on the creation of safer learning climates — widening the margins of accepted viewpoints, and interrogating the exclusions and discontinuities in 'democratic' life. Heteronormative boys typically have several advantages in the lived curriculum of school behavior — such as disproportionate teacher attention, influential voice in discussions, and relative safety from harassment (Gordon, Holland, & Lahelma, 2000; Griffin & Ouellett, 2003; Sadker, 1999; Weikel, 1995). Feminist teaching brings conflicts into open dialogue, and takes responsibility to confront bigotry and harmful behavior when it occurs (hooks, 1994; Robinson, 2005). However, this is not without risks: conflictual pedagogy can silence or exclude at the same time that it generates interest (Ellsworth, 1989). When even a skilled teacher engages 'the class' in analysis or discussion of divergent and challenging viewpoints, usually only some of the highest-status students are practicing some semblance of democratic conflict dialogue, while other students remain implicitly excluded, withdrawn into the temporary safety of silence. Considering the vulnerability of young people to insecurity and peer censure, one could argue that it is unfair to expect all students to participate in conflictual pedagogy. Yet, how else would diverse students get a chance to *develop* confidence in voicing and substantiating their own opinions? When a timid or formerly-ignored person does speak up in a group, she may help to reshape both her self-expectations and the expectations of her peers (Cohen, 1994).

In a long-term observational study of four teachers' high school social studies classes that I conducted 20 years ago, diverse students responded in widely-varying ways to conflictual teaching, even in free flowing discussions (Bickmore, 1993). While more students were generally engaged when conflicting perspectives were on the table, compared to more traditional pedagogies, more girls than boys still remained silent. When the conflictual topic was framed as a competitive debate, the disparity between the 'stars' and the 'silent majority' was even bigger. Girls and low-status students are somehow taught, implicitly if not explicitly, that to be outspoken is not academically relevant, not polite, even trouble-making.

Jarred by related research findings about gender socialization in their own school, some teachers were provoked to re-consider their own unconscious modeling and perpetuation of 'good girl' manners:

Unless we stopped hiding in expectations of goodness and control, our behavior would silence any words to girls about speaking in their own voice. Finally, we dared to believe that one could be intelligently disruptive without destroying anything except the myths about the high level of female cooperativeness (Gilligan & Brown, 1992, p. 221).

Thus, given support and opportunities for their own critical dialogue, it is possible for teachers to unlearn their perpetuation of docility and conflict avoidance in classrooms (also Bickmore, 2005b).

Even when all are involved in well-facilitated, sincere efforts to listen across difference, unconscious assumptions (as well as the demands of academic 'knowledge acquisition') can

inadvertently silence unpopular voices, reinforcing participants' prior locations in the social hierarchy (Bickford, 1996). In contrast, Ellsworth proposes a "different ethic:"

It's an ethic committed to conflict without, paradoxically, needing the idea of an enemy. It is an ethic that operates not within the logic of oppositions and mutual exclusions, but within the logic of paradoxes and spectrums. ... [This pedagogy] manipulates us into a fluid positioning that sees back and forth across boundaries, and as a result, requires us to take on responsibility for the meanings we will construct.... (Ellsworth, 1989, p. 319). (*CHECK pg*)

Such feminist poststructural perspectives point to ways teachers might facilitate learning opportunities that would embrace and encourage paradoxical coexistences and multiple viewpoints (also Kumashiro, 2000; , 2004).

In this globalized society, however, interpersonal openness and participation are clearly not sufficient for peacebuilding. The precious and fragile core of democratic peacebuilding is citizen action to influence collective decision-making and governance, in the context of continuing social conflict (Franklin, 2006). Peace is indivisible: it can only persist if it is available to all. The people excluded from formal democratic procedures for generations, including women, have frequently engaged in political action—exerting influence on their own and others' behalf—even when their participation was explicitly disallowed within formal structures (Dietz, 1989). Participating in such democratic action, even within the coercive environment of the school, could open up new understandings about the anatomy of conflict and fragile peace, and carve out opportunities for agency to influence the social institutions that create our collective future. Thus the remainder of this paper examines the primarily-implicit curriculum of actual practices in selected public schools, to discern the potential opportunities for diverse students to participate in conflict learning on a daily basis.

Anti-violence and pro-peace educational activities in practice

To illustrate the character and implications of peace/ conflict learning initiatives actually implemented in public schools, in the context of social inequality, the remainder of this chapter draws upon a recent four-year qualitative study. Its goal was to understand the intersections among various anti-violence, conflict resolution, and peacebuilding education policies and learning activities, at diverse schools, in urban Canadian schools with diverse student populations. Here, I draw primarily on open-ended interviews with diverse staff in one large school district, with occasional reference to two comparison districts, informed by analysis of relevant school and government documents. Interviewees were key participants in a continuum of conflict-related (implicit or explicit curriculum) activities. In board A, there were a total 52 interviewees. 34 of these were in five focus schools (2 high schools and 3 elementary) all with relatively transient populations of ethnically diverse students, low household incomes, and high proportions of recent immigrants, English language learners. These particular schools were selected because their divergent suspension and expulsion rates indicated different experiences with managing student conflict and violence. 13 interviewees in board A were centrally-assigned, and 5 led exemplary peacemaking-related programs in non-focus schools. The board B and C comparison studies include 21 and 18 interviews respectively, with similar proportions of school-based, centrally-assigned, and provincial staff, but no focus schools. Participants were invited to describe programs, procedures, and activities they considered relevant to peacekeeping (security measures, interventions for problem behaviors); peacemaking (conflict resolution); and/or peacebuilding (conflict resolution and equity education for students and staff, dialogue about contentious issues, structures to strengthen participation and relationships).

Most interviewees expressed uncertainty, dissensus, and concern about existing approaches to handling aggression and conflict. To different degrees in different schools and boards, interviewees reported that certain populations of students, already living under challenging life circumstances, were disproportionately punished and excluded from school by implemented discipline policies.

Males, especially non-affluent visible minorities (African-heritage, immigrants from west Asia, and aboriginal), were the students most often punished with suspension and expulsion.

Virtually all the 91 educators interviewed for this study expressed the belief that school staffs have a responsibility to communicate and explicitly the nonviolent behaviour norms they want students to exhibit. Many elementary schools approached this goal through so-called character education programs, in which adult staff were to 'catch students being good,' and then gave individual students public recognition and other extrinsic rewards (such as tickets toward a treat) for 'good' behavior. Such programs may indoctrinate culturally-dominant values and compliant behaviors in an uncritical manner (Otten, 2000). Sometimes girls and boys of various ethnic origins seemed to be rewarded in ways that reinforced stereotypes, for example affirming East Asian girls for being cooperative and African-heritage boys for sports leadership. These programs could affirm students' anti-violence actions, such as supporting peers rather than being passive bystanders, but they were unlikely to recognize or address subtle (gendered) relational aggression. Co-curricular extrinsic reward programs such as these are often initiated, not because they are known to be effective, but because they are easy to implement without resources for professional development.

Given scarce funding to release teachers for in-service professional development and planning, a common strategy for addressing social skill development was to bring in packaged kits and/or outside presenters. Several staff (especially at the most conflict-stressed schools) articulated remarkable faith and hope that they might find a particular program that would help to fix their school's problems. Others, like this principal, reflected that developing peaceful classroom and school climates was not "so much [particular program] resources as a mindset, and strategies that can be shared ... by teachers sitting down together in dialogue. But the *time* is really scarce for that." A few social skills package programs, primarily produced by American companies for elementary classrooms, were well-known across each school board. Schools often switched packages, seeking a program that various staff would find workable and really implement in multiple grades. Most of these programs offered little or no staff support for program development, nor follow-up, thus programs were neither fully implemented nor sustained. Kits that did not include teacher training were a moderate expense, but this limited the extent to which teachers actually learned new pedagogies, much less adapted materials to suit the cultures and conflict dynamics of their particular students. Even comprehensively-implemented social skills or conflict resolution programs would not be sufficient to handle patterns of bias or social aggression. Their emphasis on compliance with authority and dominant cultural norms can be seen as a gentle form of peacekeeping.

Many interviewees, especially in boards A and B, reported a change in priorities over the previous decade: toward relatively controlling approaches focused on 'anti-bullying' and discipline, away from peer peacemaking education, community-building, and opportunities for student agency. Yet the most visible difference between the focus schools that were handling conflict relatively peacefully and those with high violence and suspension rates was that the peaceful schools had a much higher quantity and variety of options for active student participation and student leadership. One high school had a remarkable range of autonomous student affinity and activity groups, facilitated by an active student council. Students there held various helper roles such as mentoring immigrant newcomers or assisting with first aid and safety. The principal met with rotating groups of about ten diverse students per month, which resulted in tangible initiatives such as staff volunteers opening the gym for students to play lunchtime basketball in exchange for improved class attendance. Also in two of the elementary schools, diverse students were recruited for various leadership roles, such as helping at a track and field day. In contrast, in the focus elementary and high school with higher suspension rates, student leadership activity was minimal and restricted to compliant students.

Cuts in board A's staffing over the last dozen years had caused the demise of many student peacemaking leadership programs. Participants described peer peacemaking leadership programs that, if they still existed, did not as successfully engage diverse students as they had in the past, because they were no longer supported by dedicated human resources such as release periods or assistance

from centrally-assigned staff. This illustrates (in the breach) the findings of research cited above, on what makes such conflict resolution education programs effective, equitable and sustainable.

One focus elementary school had maintained for years a peer monitoring program that the principal described as “something like peacemakers.” These were high-status students from the school’s oldest grade, selected by teachers and administrators who viewed them as cooperative, ‘positive’ leaders. The teacher advisor for the program explained that prefects were “looked up to as role models and safety monitors for the other students.” Once trained, they served in pairs during recesses, before and after school — reminding students to take turns, take hats off when entering the building, and so forth. Clearly these student leaders were not representative of the school’s diverse population. They did far more enforcing of rules (peacekeeping) than facilitating of autonomous peer problem-solving negotiations (peacemaking). At the same time, they were clearly admired by peers —many wanted to become prefects— and they performed a service that was supported enthusiastically by all the CES staff interviewed. Aronson (2000) cautions that empowerment of a few students by adults in a school could have unintended negative consequences for marginalized students, since the elevation of some in a hierarchy (with limited space at the top) consequently demotes others.

In a small number of board A high schools, selected students were allowed to receive guidance credit, and therefore dedicated meeting time and staffing, for a one semester peacemaking-related peer leadership course called GPP. In AHS, about 20-24 students, nominated by staff, were taught by a designated teacher, who had no specific training but was assisted by an outside agency. The teacher advisor explained:

We train them (in the first four weeks of the term) – team building, communication, and so on. Then they learn to do peer mediation, anti-bullying and conflict resolution and [they] begin to do that peer leadership in the school... A great deal of the time is spent discussing what’s going on in the school. The students are very open and candid about [things like] bullying and who the loners are – stuff I wouldn’t know about otherwise.

Nearly all the students selected were girls, few or none of whom had poor marks or histories of non-compliant behavior. The designated teacher had found it difficult to sustain the program, so only a few mediations and about three class presentations actually had occurred.

A similar course at another board A high school (CRE HS1), in contrast, engaged a more diverse set of student leaders in more active leadership. A few sections of this course were offered there each year, including students self-nominated or nominated by teachers based on both ‘negative’ and ‘positive’ leadership qualities. The guidance teacher described their focus on oral and written communication skills and discussion:

We do active listening and roadblocks and I messages, assertiveness training, conflict resolution and leadership skills training – all of these components include a literacy piece. ...The focus of the course is to talk about personal issues and how to be helpful with their peers. ... The filling of the groups is not difficult, although it’s the girls that want it much more than the guys. I have to talk some of the guys into it. The groups average about a quarter males.

Out of the concurrent GPP classes in this comparison high school, about 12 students per year, reflecting the gender and ethnic diversity of the student body, were invited to become peer mediators. An additional full day of training built on the conflict resolution education already delivered in the course. This program had been sustained for at least ten years, offering conflict mediation upon referral by administrators, teachers, and directly from peers. While serious social aggression conflicts were not mediated by these students, the larger GPP classes from which the mediators were drawn offered a consistent, facilitated space for such matters to be discussed.

Opportunities for leadership by diverse students required solid, well-prepared, sustained adult support for programs and especially for marginalized students' development. The prefect monitor program at CES and the peer mediation program at CRE HS1 were built into each school's timetable, professional development, and staffing, so that qualified adults were available to mentor diverse student leaders to carry out well-defined tasks. At AHS, in contrast, a miscellany of unsustained resources had been applied to start the mediation program, and current staff did not understand the role of the student helpers. Without development of capacity within existing staff, they had been unable to develop or sustain a coherent program.

A different kind of initiative emphasizing student peacebuilding agency was support and advocacy groups, engaging particular populations of minority or marginalized students. These groups provided a space, and support from peers and adult advisors, for students (who otherwise had been excluded and/or harassed) to develop skills, confidence, a secure sense of identity, and social relationships they could rely on to make their school experience more positively peaceful. From this base of support, some of these groups also initiated broader awareness and justice advocacy activities. The more peaceful focus school, BHS, had several such groups, many focusing on ethnic or religious affinities. At AHS, a social worker from a community agency facilitated a 'be yourself' support group — originally proposed as a Gay Straight Alliance, but the school's administration had not allowed the group name or mandate to mention homosexuality.

Anti-violence peer leadership programs, especially in Board A, tended to be small, involving few students and often marginal to the core activities of schools such as classroom curriculum. This co-curricular marginality made these opportunities inaccessible to many students who could have benefited, and could have consequently contributed more to building peaceful school communities. At the same time, the focused, co-curricular nature of these programs allowed some such initiatives to have, according to interviewees, remarkably positive effects on their few participants.

Study participants understood, of course, that much more comprehensive support for on-going, integrated school programming was needed, but felt that existing resource priorities did not allow them to make that commitment. A centrally-assigned safe schools administrator explained:

There's no time for the more relationship-based program development. ...I don't think we have any system plan for doing proactive and long-term [peacemaking education or violence prevention]. ... Safety in itself won't make a school effective. ... It's not as simple as putting Tribes into school A: That's not the fix, though it might be a support. We don't have the staff to make that happen.

A wide range of interviewees in all three districts argued that peacemaking education with sufficient depth, breadth, meaning, and sustainability would require more equitable and effective system-wide dissemination of resource information, and dedicated staff support for school-level change.

To adequately and sustainably deal with the complex social challenges at the roots of social conflict requires (re)building healthy, reliable, inclusive and equitable relationships, embedded in the regularized business of living together. In schools, this means changes in core activities —curriculum and pedagogy (academic and explicit as well as lived and implicit) and human relationships, especially between teachers and students. Of course, no change this major can happen all at once: The programs and practices described above each represent places where schools might begin the transformation process. When the difficult long-term goals of building inclusive, just, healthy relationships become obscured by the minutia and control imperatives of daily school life, schools retain self-sustaining patterns of coping with surface conflagrations and never getting to their sources.

Some teachers did carry out conflict resolution, bullying awareness, cross-cultural and anti-discriminatory learning activities in their classrooms, although most teachers interviewed seemed unaware that these kinds of peace-related education were, in fact, built into official curriculum requirements. Even without addressing contested issues, communication, handling multiple viewpoints, and problem-solving are basic to essentially every area of learning. For example, some elementary teachers held class meetings or circles regularly, to model and facilitate constructive

communication and collective problem solving. English teachers taught conflict communication and dialogue skills, and practiced them through discussion of controversial issues, debate, and role playing. A social sciences teacher addressed issues of political conflict and cultural difference, including an oral history assignment in which students interviewed peers who were recent immigrants from origins different from their own. A health teacher spent substantial time on conflict resolution and bullying awareness. A few centrally-assigned curriculum leaders sometimes infused conflicting perspectives, justice issues, and conflict communication skills into their academic support resources for teachers. At the same time, there were minimal provincial or board resources available for pro-active curriculum leadership or teacher support.

In-depth diversity and equity education was rare in the regularized curriculum or co-curriculum in the study schools. Where issues of violence and bullying were addressed, the problems of bias that so often motivate or exacerbate aggression were barely mentioned. One high school teacher advocated equity education as a key element of peacebuilding:

I think that a good 50-60% of the conflicts [in this school] have an equity element – either race, religion, sexuality, or sexism. There is tension that a student holds in after hearing an oppressive comment, and then eventually they explode. ...Anytime you can facilitate equity in a school, you are facilitating peace in general, because you are facilitating acceptance and appreciation.

Clearly, such peacebuilding education requires resources, in order to eventually change schools sufficiently to reallocate resources from peacekeeping control and post-incident coping toward more proactive, humane and effective facilitation of conflict-related learning and development of healthy relationships. In educators' enthusiasm to try to reduce aggressive behavior, the balance, especially at board A, had tipped toward labor-intensive, painful post-incident reaction and attempts at control, away from on-going developmental education that would have provided opportunities for diverse students to learn and to contribute. The interviewees in this study pointed to many spaces of possibility, but none of them close to fruition.

Conclusion

Life revolves around conflicts and identities — disagreements, problems, decisions, injustices, clashing perspectives or interests — in any cultural context. Violence can be a *symptom* of underlying conflicts, and a way of *handling* conflicts, but it is not inevitable. The *nonviolent* confrontation of such conflicts is what sustains both democratic civil society and human relationships. Like oxygen, conflict can be explosive -- but it is inescapable and essential to life. Unfortunately, typical urban public schools in Canada today do not embrace such conflicts as opportunities for learning and collectively creating dynamic peace. On the contrary, despite some important, marginal exceptions, these schools seemed much more often to ignore or actively repress expressions of difference in both implicit and explicit curriculum, focusing their efforts on achieving negative peace through control and conformity. It is a huge challenge that any peace education effort in public schools must operate in the context of this hegemonic patriarchal structure, while possibly trying to transform it from within.

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