Elementary Teachers’ Perspectives on Fostering Global Awareness in a Rights Respecting School

By

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Abstract

In this research paper, four elementary teachers share their understanding of how they foster global awareness through their teaching in schools that participate in the Rights Respecting Schools model initiated by UNICEF Canada. The main research question that was investigated was: what does fostering global awareness mean in theory and instructional practice to a sample of elementary teachers working in a Rights Respecting School? Teachers were interviewed using a semi-structured interview protocol. The research findings align with existing research conducted in the area of global education, in that teachers report their understandings and practices through four main foci: Relationships, Engagement, Voice, and Power Dynamics.

KEY TERMS: Global Awareness, Rights Respecting Schools, Elementary Education
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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Research

1.0 Research Context and Problem

While few would disagree with the popular statement that we need to leave a better world for our children, it is also important that we equally consider the importance of leaving better children for our world (Knost, 2012). As educators, we have a duty and obligation to leave ‘better children’ who are socially and globally conscious about human rights and equity. We can do that through the way in which we teach and the opportunities we create for learning. The world has become increasingly diverse, yet there is evidence that the traditional Canadian education system is not adequately prioritizing or integrating global education (Mundy, Manion, Masemann, and Haggerty, 2007). While uncommon, there are some educational institutions in Canada that privilege a global education approach through the model of UNICEF Canada’s Rights Respecting Schools (RRS). RRS are schools that prioritize and respect student voice and that uphold the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). These schools aim to foster global awareness for their students and their families and communities (Covell, 2010; Howe & Covell, 2011; UNICEF Canada, 2011).

While global education is increasingly a stated commitment in Canadian education (Evans, Ingram, MacDonald, and Weber, 2009), less explicit attention has been paid to how Canadian teachers enact global education through a framework that specifically privileges children’s rights. The purpose of my research was to learn from teachers working in UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools, and to hear from them how they understand and practice education that fosters global awareness, citizenship and children’s rights. I am hopeful that these findings can inform education for global citizenship in Canada more broadly speaking, both within and outside of the RRS model.
1.1 Research Questions

The main research question guiding this study was: What does fostering global awareness mean in theory and instructional practice to a sample of elementary teachers working in Rights Respecting Schools?

Subsidiary questions included:

- How do these teachers define global awareness and what role, if any, do rights occupy in their definitions?
- What range of instructional approaches and strategies do teachers use to foster global awareness?
- What indicators of learning global awareness do these teachers observe from students?
- What range of factors support and challenge these teachers in doing this work?

1.2 Background of the Researcher

As a woman who strongly believes in girls’ rights and who actively engages in girl empowerment activities, my commitment is rooted in my own experience of childhood. As a child, the Children’s Aid Society was a consistent presence in my life, and I interacted with a children’s lawyer during my parents’ divorce, and this experience ignited my strong passion for the rights of children. This led me to pursue post-secondary education related to this passion. In 2010, I graduated York University with an Honours degree in Child Studies, during which time I studies children’s rights in Canada through a focus on the UNCRC. Further I pursued a Bachelor of Applied Arts at Seneca College in Child Development. It is there that I found my passion for the inclusion of children’s voices in education and for global education. I began doing research on global education, which led me to Free the Children, a Canadian non-for-profit organization committed to empowering children to become informed and actively engaged with issues affecting children and education around the world. This experience contributed to forming my
understanding of global awareness as fostering an understanding of issues that affect people all over the world: both within and beyond one’s own country. This experience also prompted me to conduct further research into UNICEF programming, which led me to learn about Rights Respecting Schools.

I began understanding the purpose and philosophy behind the initiative, which was to use the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child as building blocks to build an inclusive and respecting school culture through the implementation of rights respecting education. As UNICEF (2011) describes: “as a framework for educational improvement, the initiative helps schools address the whole learning environment with a consistent, rights-based approach…the initiative is premised on the understanding that for children to want to achieve they have to feel included, that they belong and that they matter…it brings children into early contact with the universal ideals of respect for oneself and for others, in the school community and in an interdependent world” (p.1). I wanted to go further. I had completed a thorough analysis of the research in regard to Rights Respecting Schools and applied it to a local school as well as the organization Free the Children through their Me to We campaign. I then presented my work at an International Education Conference in Dubai in 2013. I come to this research with an awareness of how this topic is perceived by a variety of people from around the world; however, I understand that these perspectives do not represent the views of all people. At the conference in Dubai, I had the opportunity to engage questions about this topic from the perspective of other undergraduate, graduate, professors and Nobel laureates. These experiences led me to do more reading about the political dimensions of this work, and how the philosophy of Rights Respecting Schools is complex and can be looked at in many different ways and with different lenses. Together, these experiences have formed the lens through which I now approach this research.
Within my own life thus far, I have been privileged to experience many rights that not all children are fortunate enough to have; I was able to attend education, which is even more rare because I am a girl; I have always had clean drinking water that comes from my taps to drink and to bathe; and I have had access to food and plenty of it. The right to a safe home may not have always been in my life but I did have the ability to get help in the situation and for someone [children’s lawyer] to seek on my behalf to make sure I was in a safe environment. This is something that I continually reflect upon in my understanding of my own position within the world, as a child and now as an adult.

1.3 Preview of Whole

Next, in chapter 2 I review the research in the areas of policy, theory, and practice. In chapter 3, I describe the research methodology that I used to carry out my research. In chapter 4, I report my findings and overarching themes, and in chapter 5, I discuss the implications for future research and how this will impact my own teaching practices. I end by articulating areas for future research, and restating the significance of this work.
Chapter 2: The Literature Review

2.0 Introduction to Literature

In this chapter I review the research conducted to date in the areas of connections between Rights Respecting Schools and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, fostering global awareness through Rights Respecting Schools, increase of student’s leadership abilities, incorporating rights & responsibilities in the lives of students through RRS, opening doors through global citizenship, relationships with students, and importance of roles within the framework.

2.1 Connections between Rights Respecting Schools and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Rights Respecting Schools (RRS) are a newer part of the education system here in Canada, as they have been around for less than a decade. Originally they started as a research project by the Children’s Rights Centre in Cape Breton (Howe & Covell, 2009; UNICEF Canada, 2011). RRS is a very specific model of education with resources provided from UNICEF. These schools must undergo an accreditation and certification process in order to be able to call themselves a Rights Respecting School (Clair, Miske & Patel, 2012; Howe & Covell, 2009; Rutgers, 2011; UNICEF Canada, 2011).

The UNCRC, the most widely ratified international document in the world, initially it was unanimously adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1989 and was first signed by the UK in 1990 and further ratified in 1991. With the exception of the United States, all countries around the world have signed or are in the process of signing this document (Covell, Howe & McNeil, 2010; Howe & Covell, 2009). The 20th of November now signifies the International Day of the Child. The UNCRC outlines 52 articles about the rights of a child and defines a child as anyone under the age of 18 years. It further states that all children around the world are entitled to these rights as long as their country has signed this document. RRS have mandated that the UNCRC be upheld within their
schools and that adequate attention be paid to all 52 articles in order to empower students with knowledge about their rights and the rights of all children. Rights Respecting Schools recognize that the UNCRC is not being upheld by many countries and therefore they are also committed to fostering awareness of children’s rights as a means of giving voice to the voiceless and in order to advocate for those who are not heard. Through fostering awareness of the UNCRC, RRS are aim to cultivate global awareness and connection across children around the world (UNICEF Canada, 2011).

2.2 Fostering Global Awareness through Rights Respecting Schools

The world in which we live has a variety of different people and cultures; however each person living in this world is not always aware of or educated about the lives of others (Krappmann, 2006; Schweisfurth, 2006). The RRS curriculum creates opportunity for students, teachers, families and other community members to gain awareness about other people within the world (Davies, 2010; Gallo & Strang, 2012). This is accomplished through preparing teachers to adopt a more nuanced approach to interpreting the already established curriculum. Supplementary curriculum resources developed by UNICEF are also utilized to enhance the existing curriculum (UNICEF Canada, 2011). In this way, creating opportunities to foster global awareness is a collaboration between the organization UNICEF, education institution, faculty, students, families and the community (Covell, et al., 2010; Gallo & Strang, 2012; Maiyo, Owiye & Nandi, 2010; UNICEF Canada, 2011). UNICEF conceptualizes global awareness as encompassing citizenship, equality, democracy, diversity, ‘living together’ or ‘community life’ and inclusion. (Unicef Canada, 2013) There is a vast amount of literature on the theme of developing global awareness. (Hammarberg, 1998; Sebba & Robinson, 2010) Some emphasize the importance of democracy (British Columbia, undated; Hebert, 2009; Lansdown 2001), diversity (Alderson, 1999; Hebert, 2009) and others stress the importance of educator passion (Covell & Howe, 2009; Covell & Howe, 2011). Questions
this raises include specific ways of fostering democracy within the classroom, can this be taught or is it something that is fostered? As well as the level of educator passion; does this start the process? How does it work without the whole teaching faculty on board?

2.2.1 The Relationship between Students and Global Awareness. Individual students play an important role in this dynamic relationship between themselves and their understanding of global awareness, as they are coming into the classroom with perceptions from their previous years in education, family life and other community activities (Covell, et al., 2010; Davies, 2010; Maiyo, et al., 2010). RRS emphasize fostering student’s awareness about their own rights and responsibilities as well as those of others, and research has found that student engagement, academic involvement and overall attendance increases drastically (Covell, et al., 2010). The awareness of rights also increases even more the longer students are involved with a RRS program, and when their families and community are engaged as well (Covell, et al., 2010). Students themselves increase their own knowledge about rights and responsibilities through the RRS initiative by engaging each other in activities to increase their knowledge of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and how this document is being utilized or not throughout the world (UNICEF Canada, 2011). The initiative not only creates awareness and engages students in awareness, but it also does so for the teachers (Covell, et al., 2010; Davies, 2010; Maiyo, et al., 2010). My research explored the fostering of student’s global awareness and the exploration of how this can be fostered. The students ability to explore global awareness and increase their critical thinking will be explored through the way in which teacher’s foster global awareness and the importance of RRS.

2.2.2 Teachers Relationship with Fostering Global Awareness. The resources provided from UNICEF also include training and professional development so that teachers have a greater awareness of what a RRS purpose is and how to facilitate discussion about topics (UNICEF Canada, 2011). The resources also show teachers how to engage students,
fellow teachers, families and community members in respecting the rights of children in education. Some research has found that teachers have a limited awareness of global education, children’s rights, the UNCRC, and how to implement a curriculum in which all students, teachers and members of the community are respected (Clair, et al., 2012; Davies, 2010; Gallo & Strang, 2012). My research explored teachers understanding of global awareness and the range of resources, experiences, and factors that have shaped these.

2.2.3 Fostering Global Awareness in Practice. Teaching for global awareness is somewhat new to the world of education in Canada; however according to the Mundy report (2006) there has been commitment from Canada to global education since the 1970’s. Part of the philosophy of rights respecting schools is an expanded horizons framework whereby students and teachers foster global awareness within their own school community and then move outwards to the community in which they live, to the province, country and then globally (UNICEF Canada, 2011). There exist a range of instructional approaches for fostering global awareness, and these include through the integration of literature, technology, guest speakers, and specific programs like the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, twitter accounts, UNICEF advocates such as child soldiers and communication through emails/pen pals (Covell & Howe, 2013; Schweisfurth, 2006; Hart, 1992). When global education is introduced into the Canadian education system research has found that these opportunities can impact students’ understandings of leadership, responsibility, citizenship, relationships and participation (Covell, et al., 2010; Davies, 2010; Mitchell & McCusker, 2008; Maiyo, et al., 2010). Research has shown that student’s participation plays an integral role in creating a sense of autonomy for students as well as independence, heightened social competence and resilience (Lansdown, 2005). It has also found that when students are provided the
opportunity to connect the UNCRC to their everyday lives, this can develop their sense of empowerment and agency (Krappmann, 2006).

Creating global awareness means many things to different people and the way in which it is fostered is also done differently, which can be noted through a variety of literature. According to MacDonald, Pluim & Pashby (2012) global education is referred to as, “…emphasizing that all children, regardless of race, gender, class, culture or location have inalienable social, cultural, economic, and political rights” (p.27). Schweisfurth (2006) states global education, “involves a serious intellectual and moral examination of the most crucial issues facing our world…” (p.41). For Mundy (2006), global educators have traditionally included “those agents that have been more concerned with social equality and skeptical about the emergence of a global market…” (p.44).

2.3 Increase of Student’s Leadership Abilities

Some research has demonstrated that students’ ability to take on leadership roles increases after taking part in a RRS (Clair, et al., 2012). The students also increase their overall leadership aptitude through the use of engagement and opportunity to have their voice heard (Clair, et al., 2012). In a rights respecting school, teachers and facilitators are intended to create an atmosphere where the students are given opportunities in which problem solving, teamwork and co-operation are all a key part of the curriculum and daily activities. The increase of leadership is not only relevant to that in the classroom, but also within the family and the community (Covell, 2010; UNICEF Canada, 2011). While such studies begin to provide some data as to the potential impact of rights respecting schools for students, some scholars stress the need for more longitudinal research (Covell, et al., 2010). To date, little research has been conducted on teachers’ instructional strategies for fostering global awareness. This research study was interested in learning more about this specific foci from teachers working in a RRS.
2.3.1 Empowering Voice in the Students. In the RRS model, the voices of the students are prioritized, respected, and taken seriously (Bush, 2012; Clair, et al., 2012). The research shows that when students have their voice heard and respected they are more engaged in the activities and learning (Haynes & Murr, 2013; Covell, 2010; Lundy, McEvoy & Byrne, 2011). The students are not only given a voice within their classroom through choice and creating the rules but in all RRS a student government exists that respects the voice of the students at a higher level than the individual classrooms. This then reflects upon the students’ level of participation (Bush, 2012; Clair, et al., 2012; Haynes & Murr, 2013; Howe & Covell, 2011; Lake, 2011; Lundy, et al., 2011; Wallberg & Kahn, 2011).

2.3.1.1 Participation and Engagement. Students who are engaged in their learning have a higher level of participation, which researchers have linked to a sense of ownership (Clair, et al., 2012; Covell, 2010; Covell, et al., 2010; Howe & Covell, 2010). The way in which teachers have accomplished this, according to sources is through activities that give students the ability to have a voice in the content and explanation of the information (Gallo & Strang, 2012; Quennerstedt, 2011; UNICEF Canada, 2011). It has also been noted that when students are able to have choice they are more likely to be engaged. Higher engagement levels have a direct correlation to higher participation levels (Lundy, et al., 2011). Researchers have noted that when students are more participatory in RRS they are more likely to be advocates for others rights and social justice causes (Bush, 2012; Chudnovsky, 2010; Clair, et al., 2012; Covell, 2010; Covell, et al., 2010; Howe & Covell, 2010; Howe & Covell, 2009; Gallo & Strang, 2012; Lake, 2011; Lundy, et al., 2011; Mitchell & McCusker, 2008; O’Neill & Zinga, 2008; Quennerstedt, 2011; Rampal, 2008; UNICEF Canada, 2011; Wallberg & Kahn, 2011).
2.4 Incorporating Rights & Responsibilities in the Lives of Students through RRS

The RRS model of schooling prioritizes the rights and responsibilities of children (Covell, et al., 2010; Lake, 2011). This involves engaging students and having students take ownership for their education and the way in which they respond and engage with others (Covell, et al., 2010; Davies, 2010; Howe & Covell, 2011; Lake, 2011; UNICEF Canada, 2011). Rights and responsibilities are the foundation of RRS and are upholding the UNCRC. By teaching and learning about rights and responsibilities students, students have the opportunity to develop their global awareness and learn to understand that all children, regardless of where they live in the world, have rights.

2.4.1 The Relationship between Self and Rights and Responsibilities. The way in which a student understands their rights and responsibilities is dependent on whether their facilitator engages them in reflection and activities about themselves (Davies, 2010). The understanding of one’s self increases during RRS; however precisely how teachers achieve this has not been explored (Clair, et al., 2012; Covell, 2010).

2.4.2 Relationship between Social Rights and Responsibilities and RRS. The understanding of social rights and responsibilities is an important component of the initiative as it gives opportunity for the students, teachers and others engaged to become increasingly aware and engaged within the society. When increasing social responsibilities there is a link to the notion of global responsibilities as it has been linked to when students grasp the notion of social responsibilities they are more aware of what it means to have global responsibilities (Clair, et al., 2012; Howe & Covell, 2009; Mitchell & McCusker, 2008). Within the initiative students not only are aware of their own rights and responsibilities but the community is another key component of RRS. The community brings forward the social rights and responsibilities that students have, as well as their families and all others within the community that make up the whole (UNICEF Canada, 2011)
2.4.3 Global Rights and Responsibilities and RRS. The notion of what is a global responsibility is complex as it is not tangible and UNICEF spends a lot of time engaging teachers in learning about global responsibilities (Chudnovsky, 2010; UNICEF Canada, 2011). This notion has received increased attention in scholarly literature and educational communities as more people come to speak about the notion of global citizens (Busher, 2012; Chudnovsky, 2010; Clair, et al., 2012; Mitchell & McCusker, 2008). UNICEF strives to create global awareness in all their efforts and through the educational initiative there is opportunity to engage with many more people and at such an intense rate.

2.5 Opening Doors through Global Citizenship

Creating opportunities for students to learn about global citizenship through empowerment activities such as student government, sharing of stories that have made an impact and leadership opportunities such as working in conjunction with community organizations, after school activities and peer tutoring have led to research findings regarding a link between student’s drive and engagement in the school/community (Busher, 2012; Chudnovsky, 2010; Clair, et al., 2012; Covell, et al., 2010; Gallo & Strang, 2012; Grace, 1999; Haynes & Murris, 2013; Howe & Covell, 2011; Mundy, 2006; Quennerstefd, 2011; Rampal, 2008; UNICEF Canada, 2011). The concept that the RRS initiative aims to support is one of citizenship; however more openly global citizenship, which looks at, but is not exclusive to engaging students in their learning through empowerment of rights and understanding of participatory role (Clair, et al., 2012; Covell, et al., 2010; Howe & Covell, 2011; Rampal, 2008; UNICEF Canada, 2011). Hebert (2009) states that global citizenship is based “on an understanding of history, geography, economics, other social sciences and the humanities as they affect the Canadian community and the world” (p.6). The aim of empowering students with the knowledge and ability to question what citizenship is and how to change the way in which they interact with the world is part of the initiative; however this is not explored in detail in
terms of ways in which teachers apply this in their classroom. Creating global citizens gives opportunity for the students to not only understand the community in which they live in but the capacity to understand and create awareness about communities around the world. Once a student has become more globally aware and starts to engage in global citizenship it has been noted that they tend to encourage those around them to do the same and take another perspective to the world (Bush, 2012; Chudnovsky, 2010; Clair, et al., 2012; Covell, et al., 2010; Howe & Covell, 2011; Rampal, 2008; UNICEF Canada, 2011). When educators take on this they are in turn becoming a global citizen role model for their students, the families, and the communities in which they are present. There is a relationship between global citizenship education and the increase of support and engagement within one’s own community (Clair, et al., 2012; Covell, et al., 2010; Gallo & Strang, 2012; Haynes & Murris, 2013; Howe & Covell, 2011; UNICEF Canada, 2011).

2.5.1 Student Empowerment. The RRS initiative strives to foster empowerment of those who are socially and politically marginalized and economically disadvantaged. According to Lansdown (2001) the notion of empowerment speaks to the participation of students through their use of their voice, whereby students gain the confidence and opportunities to have their voice heard and the strategies to make a difference by creating awareness. It can sound like students’ voices in a democratic classroom where there are opportunities to take local and global action. It can look like students presenting their ideas in the school community and as part of the day-to-day curriculum. RRS give opportunities for students, teachers, families and communities to work together to empower each other and in turn create advocates for the empowerment of others (Alderson, 2008; Jones & Welch, 2010; UNICEF Canada, 2011). The research has shown that once a student is empowered they are more likely to empower someone else (Alderson, 2008; Jones & Welch, 2010; Covell, et al., 2010). The ways in which empowerment has been achieved through the daily activities in the classrooms include, creating a classroom charter, having a voice in
assignments and respecting the choices of all individuals involved (Alderson, 2008; Busher, 2012; Chudnovsky, 2010; Covell, et al., 2010; Gallo & Strang, 2012; Jones & Welch, 2010; Lake, 2011; Mitchell & McCusker, 2008; Quennerstedt, 2011; Rampal, 2008; UNICEF Canada, 2011).

2.6 Relationships with Students

The interdependency of teachers, peers, community members and all members engaged and involved in the RRS initiative creates a unique relationship. These relationships are typically ones that are grounded in mutual respect, active participation, inclusivity and diversity (Clair, et al., 2012; Howe & Covell, 2011). There are many different relationship dynamics that make up the overall topic of relationships: student to student, student to teacher, student to family and student to community. Each one of these relationships is dynamic and unique. The research has shown different results for each relationship, however all have a general increase in mutual respect (Clair, et al., 2012; Howe & Covell, 2011).

2.6.1 Student to student. Research has found that the students within RRS have shown greater respect for one another as they grow in understanding of the core concepts and values (Howe & Covell, 2011). There has also been research showing that students have a better awareness and tolerance for other cultures, religions and set of beliefs of their peers while engaged in RRS (Howe & Covell, 2011).

2.6.2 Student to teacher. The relationship between students and teachers can increase through the demonstration of mutual respect and a shift in power dynamic (Gallo & Strang, 2012; Howe & Covell, 2011). The research has shown that students feel more empowered from teachers in RRS when compared to those students who are in traditional classrooms (Gallo & Strang, 2012). Some of the research shows that because of the way in which teachers engage in conversation, teach lessons and create a positive classroom environment are some of the reasons why the relationship is stronger (Gallo & Strang,
2012; Howe & Covell, 2011). The linkage as to the importance of student-teacher relationships and the global awareness has come through the research; the understandings have been noted to not be as strong when the relationship was lacking.

2.6.2.1 Power Dynamics. RRS strive to attend to power dynamic within the classroom, whereby students and teachers share power (Alderson, 2008; Clair, et al., 2012; Lundy, et al., 2011). The classroom rules are created together through a class charter and the rules are upheld through consequences that the class comes up with. There are opportunities for students to have choice in the lessons and content while always being able to meet the curriculum expectations. There is importance put on the power dynamics and how this relates to the success of the RRS initiative (Alderson, 2008; Clair, et al., 2012; Gallo & Strang, 2012; Lundy, et al., 2011).

2.6.2.2 Mutual Respect. Mutual respect is a key component of the RRS initiative (Covell, 2008; Covell, et al., 2010). The idea of mutual respect extends from peers and teacher to family and community and then globally. The value of mutual respect has been discussed throughout many articles as it is a key concepts within the initiative and relates to creating global awareness (Covell, 2008). Mutual respect increases when students are engaged in the initiative as they are encouraged to see other perspectives and engage in discussion about issues; this also links to the global awareness that is facilitated through RRS. (Covell, 2008; Covell, et al., 2010).

2.6.3 Student to family. There is limited research completed in this area; however, the research that has been completed shows that students tend to have more positive experiences at home as they engage their families in the RRS initiative (Haynes & Murris, 2013). The UNCRC is upheld within most homes of the students attending RRS and their values tend to align. It has been noted that because of this the learning never stops for the school to home and within the community (Howe & Covell, 2010). This gives opportunities for the students to continually be engaged regarding global awareness and
of many social justice topics that take place around the world, within their schools, communities and homes (Howe & Covell, 2010; Haynes & Murris, 2013).

2.6.4 Student to community. The research has shown that students are more likely to be engaged within their community if they are attending a RRS which has been noted to have a direct correlation to the global awareness of students (Busher, 2012; Covell, 2010). The engagement within the community places a vital role in understanding the different dynamics, cultures and values of many people around the world. This gives opportunity for students to explore this and be engaged within their own communities to understand the larger picture of the world (Bush, 2012; Chudnovsky, 2010; Haynes & Murris, 2013).

2.7 Importance of Roles within the Framework

The roles of the different people and groups of people (students, teachers, families and community) engaged within the RRS initiative are all related and play a vital part of the entire RRS initiative (Covell, 2010; Howe & Covell, 2010). Without one of the components working together and creating an inclusive environment the initiative would not work to the best of its abilities. When all entities are working together in partnership this creates an ideal environment (Haynes & Murris, 2013; UNICEF Canada, 2011). It has been explored to see the differences and comparisons of when the initiative is fully versus partially implemented (Bush, 2012: Gallo & Strang, 2012). It has stated that there is a notable difference in the overall morale of the school and community when the initiative has been fully implemented; overall morale increases, whereas when partially implemented the overall morale has not increased to the same magnitude (Bush, 2012; Gallo & Strang, 2012; Haynes & Murris, 2013).

2.8 Conclusion

In this review of the literature I reported research in the areas of connections between Rights Respecting Schools and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child,
fostering global awareness through Rights Respecting Schools, increase of student’s leadership abilities, incorporating rights & responsibilities in the lives of students through RRS, opening doors through global citizenship, relationships with students, and importance of roles within the framework. I learned how the initiative is connected to the UNCRC and the importance of that to the foundation of the model; aspects in which start to foster global awareness within RRS; the importance of connecting school, home and the community for the initiative to become successful and the overall impact that this initiative makes in the lives of students, their families and the overall community.
Chapter 3: Methodology

3.0 Introduction to Methodology

My research has been carried out using a qualitative research approach and semi-structured interviews with 4 elementary school teachers. These interviews were transcribed and coded. I drew on characteristics from case study and narrative approaches to qualitative research. For example, I engaged the perspectives of participants working within similar environments and school cultures, and teachers’ lived experiences and the meaning that they make of these was a priority.

I completed a literature review in order to look at the previous research completed in this area and to explore what is missing in the area of fostering global awareness within RRS. A qualitative research approach enabled me to hear the authentic voice of participants and have room for detailed explanations, rather than utilizing data that would then be formatted into numerical value. Creswell (2013) discusses how qualitative research gives opportunities for more explanation and in-depth information regarding a specific topic or area of information, as there is an opportunity to ask open ended questions that give way to lengthier answers which may possibly give more information to engage with through the coding process.

3.1 Interviews

The interviews were semi-structured and guided by the use of the semi-structured interview protocol (appendix A). The open-ended format created the opportunity for me to delve deeper into participant responses and probe through additional questions and comments throughout the interview, and it created opportunity for participants to pose clarifying questions and to elaborate and re-direct questions when they felt necessary. This has given the opportunity for the interview to seem more like a conversation and for
me to note more authentic information (Creswell, 2013). The interviews were approximately an hour long and were recorded by audio recorder. After the interviews were completed, I transcribed the interviews separately and sent the corresponding transcription back to that participant in order to give the participant the opportunity to validate and check the information as well as to add information if need be. Once the interviews were verified I began the process of data analysis. The interviews were completed over Skype, over the phone and one completed in person.

3.2 Participants

Participant Recruitment

I had initially contacted UNICEF to find participants who are teaching in accredited Rights Respecting Schools, which led to two of the four participants. The other two participants were referred from the initial two interviews. See appendix C for the request for participants. I interviewed four teachers so that there is a richer array of perspectives by learning from four teachers’ experiences. These teachers were selected based on their teaching experiences (minimum of 2 years and knowledge or teaching time in a traditional education system) in a Rights Respecting School at the elementary level. The schools were selected based on the following criteria: recommendation from UNICEF directly, accredited as a Rights Respecting School and being an elementary school. In the end, I interviewed four interviewees: 2 from Ottawa and 2 from Richmond Hill, Ontario, who work in a Rights Respecting School teaching elementary (K-8).

Participant Biographies

Lexi had been teaching for 5 years in the private sector within the arts curriculum component of primary and junior education, in York Region and Toronto. She has worked with UNICEF regarding global classrooms and has brought the Rights Respecting initiative to her current school.
Destiny has been teaching for 15 years in the separate school board in Ottawa and is now working with the University developing teacher education programs. She has always incorporated social justice in her classrooms but is now facilitating a Rights Respecting model in the initial teacher education program.

Callie has been teaching for 2 years in York Region; however has worked as an Early Childhood Educator for 10 years at a private organization. She has only ever worked in a Rights Respecting School in the private sector.

Skylar has been teaching for 8 years in an alternative school within the Ottawa region school board. She has always taught for social justice and has only been in an accredited Rights Respecting School; however now she works in a school that is not technically RRS but still holds true to the values and beliefs.

3.3 Data Analysis

Data was collected based on the interviews completed with the four teachers from Rights Respecting Schools. The overall question was to look at the ways in which primary teachers facilitated global awareness within a RRS and therefore coding was based on answering this question. Creswell (2013) discusses the importance of utilizing a process that relates back to the initial question through using codes and then create categories and themes. The interviews were coded for themes related to the overall research question. This was completed to ensure that a comparison could be done between the information, which would give me the ability to enhance the importance of certain themes being stronger based on more information (Creswell, 2013) Therefore, the responses to interview questions that directly related to the overall research question were prioritized. The coding was then put into categories based on each question to find common themes which were then divided into subcategories and subthemes. Quotations from the
participants were put into each of the categories, themes, subcategories and subthemes, which was then related back to the literature.

3.4 Ethical Review

I followed the approved Ethical Review Protocol procedures for the Masters of Teaching program, which stipulates that two or three interviews must be done with educators within the field). The Ethical Review Protocol clearly asserts that the researcher is not allowed to involve classroom pupils or observations of the classroom. The review approval also stipulates that all interviewees will be given a pseudonym and that each participant has the write to withdrawal at any point in time with all of their information removed from the research. The data was stored on my password protected computer, and only I and my supervisor had access to it.

3.5 Limitations

There were several limitations to the research. First, the scope of the program requirements stipulate that interviews will be done with teachers only, which meant that I could not speak with students about their experiences in rights respecting schools. Their perspectives may have allowed the opportunity for more insight into if the strategies were useful. This may have also given insight into if the students believed they were more globally aware or not. I was also limited in the selection of RRS teachers based on the location of RRS schools due to the fact that RRS are not widely available and there were none in my own community. Another limitation I faced was that I could not speak with families and community members about their perceptions of how the students in RRS were or were not more global aware. The parental perception would have been beneficial because I would have been able to see how the parents felt regarding their children’s global awareness and if the certain activities or teachings were spoken about at home. This would also give opportunity to gain awareness as to if parents felt they were more
globally aware or felt part of the classroom. Within the research there are limitations based on the age group of primary, as this was and still is the age that I am personally more interested in working with and finding out more about.

3.6 Strengths

The research provided the opportunity to hear the authentic voices of participating teachers. It has given an opportunity to have their experiences heard and to give information to future teachers, teachers already in the field, and families about the fostering of global awareness and about RRS. This area of strength, I feel, is one of the more important parts of the research because of the increase of awareness and sharing of knowledge. I had a personal interest in discovering more information about RRS and how the fostering of global awareness through education occurs; RRS is a window to see how these processes are completed. This research also added to a body of information about RRS and global awareness, a body of information that is not yet immense. The existing body of research includes limited first hand experiences of the teachers and their teaching practices, in the narrative format; therefore, this research creates opportunity for that to occur. Conducting this research also creates opportunity for awareness to be brought forward about RRS, as this is a somewhat new implementation of education, which also breaks down some of the pre-existing barriers that have been read about in the literature. This also opens up other opportunities to conduct further research that may explore routes of the limitations.
Chapter 4: Research Findings

4.0 Introduction

In this chapter I report the research findings. Specifically, I report what the notion of “fostering global awareness” means to participating teachers in theory and in their instructional practice. I have organized these findings into the following 5 themes: 1) Fostering global awareness means teaching for citizenship through a holistic approach to learning 2) Fostering global awareness means prioritizing meaningful and reciprocal relationships within and across communities 3) Fostering global awareness means attending to power dynamics in schools and classrooms, 4) Teachers acknowledged that what it means to foster global awareness will be different from the perspective of individual teachers, but they emphasized the particular importance of engaging a range of stakeholders in their practice, and 5) When assessing students’ development of global awareness, teachers look for evidence of critical thinking, attention to power, reflexive use of language, and the expression of student voice. I report sub-themes within these where relevant. For each, I report the pertinent data and include participant voices to support my analysis.

4.1 Fostering global awareness means teaching for citizenship through a holistic approach to learning

Participating teachers emphasized that teaching for global awareness means teaching for citizenship and incorporating the UNCRC. It also means examining examples of ways in which people have enacted citizenship. These teachers believed that in order to examine citizenship, global awareness must be fostered through creating an understanding of the world. While fostering this understanding of the world, in the local community and the
global community, students have opportunities through investigation of popular issues to become engaged and active participants.

4.1.1 Holistic education in understanding student global awareness. Although each participant’s response varied in wording, all 4 participants underscored holistic education as a broader approach and/or framework informing their conceptualization of global awareness and their instructional practice. In addition to stressing the importance of not compartmentalizing leaning (e.g. integrated curriculum), participants also believed this meant-recognizing students as citizens capable of actively participating in decisions concerning their learning rather than as empty vessels waiting to be filled with knowledge. Educators noted that engaging the whole child, mentally, physically, emotional and spiritually, brought forward the importance of citizenship education; whereby students are active participants not only in the school but in their community, both locally and globally. Lexi, for example, elaborated that children are capable, competent, and knowledgeable beings that have a set of rights like other individuals. From her perspective, children are able to make decisions and consequently have an important role to play in the school environment:

For me, a Rights Respecting School uses the UNCRC for understanding children as global citizens currently understanding children as completely fully formed human beings with knowledge about being children that adults, though we have all had childhood experiences, they’re the experts at being children…[students] have an input in the hiring process of the teachers by giving feedback to the principal about the teacher. It is a time consuming process that many wonder if it is worth it, but the time constraints are minimal compared to the value of the student’s voice.

Destiny also believed that fostering global awareness in students meant adopting a holistic approach to education. As someone with experience working in special and inclusive
education, her practice also underscored the significance of “educating the whole child in all areas”.

As someone trained as an early childhood educator with experience with the Reggio Emilia approach to educational practice, Callie also stressed the importance of understanding children’s experiences and their learning more holistically.

When in class students want to bring their daily experiences into the sharing circle and I have found that with these opportunities [students] have been able to make deeper connections and have better understandings of the concepts in the curriculum. This takes extra time and there are times when I have to ‘limit’ what is shared. We have been discussing who has walked the land before us and students have been making connections to their own heritage in understanding where they have come from. They [students] also bring in connections from their trips, extracurricular activities and family celebrations.

In her practice, Skylar emphasized that it was important to her that students develop a more holistic understanding of the world beyond their own selves. This meant creating opportunities for her students to enact 21st century skills such as collaborative problem-solving:

In everything I do, I ensure that global awareness is built into the lessons I impart on my students in the classroom. I feel that global awareness is an essential 21st century skill. If students so not see beyond their own schools, communities or countries, we are in trouble. These are tomorrow’s leaders who need to understand, empathize and creatively problem solve collaboratively with people from all over the world.

Global awareness, as noted from these educators, can be fostered through a holistic approach to education s that the entire student is engaged and active in the learning process. The educators each have noted different ways of incorporating this; however all
have shared the importance of holistic and citizenship education in the fostering of global awareness. They have noted the importance of relationships, which is further explored in sub-section 4.2 and further explored in detail throughout the section; however the incorporation of holistic education brings forward the whole being of the child. Through citizenship education, students are engaged in having their voice heard and acted upon while they take on a leadership role within the community both locally and globally. The educators have shown the importance of this connection in fostering global awareness within their practice.

4.1.2 Active citizens through awareness of children’s rights. One way that Lexi fostered global awareness was by teaching students about children’s rights and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Toward that end, she created a classroom charter and worked with other teachers to create them for their classrooms as well. She stressed the importance of hearing children’s voices within the school, thus creating opportunities for them to become active citizens:

I’ve helped teachers create their own classroom charter. [It’s] basically…depending on what grade level you’re looking at, you take the UNCRC, which is in every classroom—mine’s framed – some people laminate them, some people put them on the magnetic board…so [that students] have that as a reference point…We each created a charter in and you do it however you want to do it, so however it works for your class, so for the PK [pre-school] class last year I think they all did handprints with their names.

Destiny also stressed the value of focusing on children’s rights, and for her that meant creating opportunities for them to enact active citizenship in their communities:

…but we wanted to provide our children with sort of an opportunity to look at, to develop their own sort of global awareness and social responsibility… it was one of our goals to become involved in organizations but one in particular that promoted that idea of
global awareness through international travel and through international experience. The students explored the similarities and differences between communities and raised awareness within their own communities through fundraising events and school community presentations.

Like Lexi, Callie also posted a charter of children’s rights in every classroom, and she also had students develop their own classroom charter that was personally meaningful and relevant to them:

In every classroom we have the convention of the rights of the child and we started off the year with bringing something that is personal for us and so that’s why that is there… And we talked about the four agreements and we just felt that those as a staff were something we wanted to take on but then at the beginning of the year as we started to talk about the rights of the child we noticed that they connect well to the rights of the child and they’re simple.

Skylar explained that although all people have the same needs, the notion of rights are defined differently by everyone who enters a Rights Respecting School:

Very simply, an understanding of issues and needs in other parts of the world. All human beings require the same things – food, water, shelter and acceptance. All human beings benefit from being in families, communities and being educated. Once basic needs are met, we can continue to develop and become more autonomous. Students who understand the needs of all people and acknowledge the tools that help lead us to self-actualization are globally aware.

The educators have noted the importance of making connections globally in fostering global awareness through holistic education. Educators stated how engaging mentally through understanding the information is not the only aspect; holistic education also shows the importance of engaging physically and spiritually, which the educators have shared their active citizenship opportunities to foster global awareness. Making the
learning opportunities visible through creating awareness campaigns, engaging within the community for a cause, or visiting another country to experience learning first hand are all opportunities that the educators share as fostering global awareness through holistic and citizenship education.

4.2 Fostering global awareness means prioritizing meaningful and reciprocal relationships within and across communities

Participants spoke in great detail about the importance of relationships when fostering global awareness. Destiny shared this quote that truly summarizes the importance of relationships:

There are many relationships that take place within the education system however it is the interrelationships between many people that plays core foundation to fostering global awareness. Interrelationships give opportunity for students to learn in holistic education.

Participants broke down the notion of strong reciprocal relationships across a range of categories: student-student, student-teacher, teacher-teacher, student-families, teacher-families, families – families, and community-community.

4.2.1 Student – Student Relationships. Participants stressed the significance of developing respectful peer relationships within the classroom between students as a component of fostering global awareness. Lexi spoke about the importance of teamwork in her classes and having a voice on student council. She [Lexi] said the importance of working together and making decisions for the entire school have given these students the opportunities to enhance their collaboration skills, which she has noted are then used in other areas of the students’ lives. This student council is based on all grades of the school, which discusses the importance of respect and citizenship with the youngest learners all the way to the oldest:
Destiny expresses the importance of interactions between students at a local level, but also globally and being aware of other cultures through writing and discussing with the use of technology. Students have the opportunities to engage with other students not only within their own school but through others locally and internationally, which [Destiny] believed fosters global awareness within her classroom. For Callie, an important skill for students to learn and demonstrate was to show one another respect, including through active listening:

We did a lot of work with [peer] conflict resolution and supporting that, and so we had a core group of students that became the facilitators for that…

Callie and Lexi both shared the importance of fostering relationships within the class and school community to foster global awareness, which heightens the relationship between the students. Destiny’s information then incorporated the importance of technology in fostering global awareness; however she still communicated about the student relationships not only at the local level but internationally. These educators shared the skills that are gained from student to student relationships, which Skylar also incorporates in understanding the importance of international student to student relationships.

Skylar also prioritized the significance of developing reciprocal peer relationships, and for her this could be facilitated through technology. She encouraged the development of student-student relationships on a global level through the use of technology to communicate:

I love using technology in my classes help students connect to other students outside our school, community, city and country. We use Mystery Skype sessions with other schools around the world; we collaboratively work on projects with other students internationally using Google Drive and we communicate with other schools via our Twitter accounts.
Student to student relationships are one of the foundation pieces to global awareness as the educators noted, learning about other students within their own community starts conversations and some educators build these relationships not only locally but internationally through the use of technology. These relationships foster team building, collaboration, communication and respectful relationships, which also links to the active citizenship education through making connections.

4.2.2 Teacher – Teacher Relationships. Three of the four teachers spoke about the significance of reciprocal relationship building across teachers as an element of what it meant to them to foster global awareness—specifically in a Rights Respecting School. Lexi was adamant that these relationships set the tone for the Rights Respecting Schools model because the teachers are role models for their students. She believed that the dynamic between the teachers set a tone for the school, which could either positively or negatively influence the school’s efforts at fostering global awareness:

We had our PD sessions and a few teachers were disagreeing about part of the active citizenship we foster …we have the right to our opinion, okay okay so I was, that was a challenge for me because I think it’s when you’re really passionate about being an educator from a certain perspective and then you hear people be soooo different than you, that’s a challenge and they have the right, just like we say the kids have the right to say their opinion and their perspective, they have that right too.

Callie similarly stressed the importance of building strong relationships with teacher colleagues as a component of fostering global awareness:

Well in our, even in our drop box she [lead RRS educator] as a wonderful little calendar just so we can go in and there are resources linked to that at the beginning of the year. She really supported us in making sure that all of our agreements were up and what we are doing with them and that it doesn’t have to
be the same in every classroom but it is something that we expected. She herself is
just innately, is just a global leader.

Building stronger respectful relationships with colleagues as role models, Destiny shared,
was an opportunity for the students to foster their relationships with peers and feel how
that impacts their overall global perspective:

Their [educators] own experience might be core to who they are as a person but
their willingness and openness to be adaptable and flexible and open to new
perspectives is sort of really through the activities and role model these teamwork
behaviours for the students.

Educators are the role models for students to understand how relationships are formed
within the education system, so observing educators with highly respectful and reciprocal
relationships benefits the students’ relationships with their peers. The educators have
spoken about the importance of the role modeling of educator relationships as this has
impacted the student-student relationships due to students modeling what they see. The
educator relationships also play a vital role in the school community overall atmosphere,
which impacts the fostering of global awareness.

4.2.3 Family – Family Relationships. Two of the four participants spoke about family
relationships through school events and parent council. Lexi, for example, shared the
importance of families coming together to share the successes of their students within the
school:

    We host a holiday celebration concert every year and this upcoming year we will
have all the families here to celebrate the diversity called ‘We Are the World: An
Evening and Celebration of Global Children’s Rights’ where each class will be
singing a song that they have chosen; Man in the Mirror, We Are the World…
Then Callie spoke about the relationships between families, it was in the context of parents working together on parent council to create opportunities for the students, teachers, families and community to come together for the greater good:

There were parents that were keen on supporting us as a Rights Respecting School so they kind of are the leads for the parents to support the kids as well because I think a lot of parents weren’t quite sure when we came forth and there are some big issues that are discussed.

Not all of the educators shared about family to family relationships, which is up for interpretation regarding the impact of this practice on fostering global awareness. With the 2 educators that did share about families relationships in fostering global awareness they have shared information regarding the importance of having the families be part of the school community. The educators have different levels of incorporating families into the school community; however both have shared the importance of having families engaged in the school community.

4.2.4 Student – Teacher Relationships. All participants shared information regarding the importance of strong reciprocal relationship dynamics between students and teachers. For Lexi, this relationship matters to the extent that teachers’ commitment to global awareness will directly impact students’ learning experiences and interest. She also stressed the importance of teachers’ demonstrating respect for their students via acknowledging students’ capacity to not only receive, but also construct knowledge:

Our goal has been to teach the two philosophies together…so it’s been my job as the Reggio lead to take the Reggio language and the language of children’s rights and blend them together. In Reggio we would say ‘the image of the child’ whereas Rights Respecting Schools, [they are more likely to refer to] global citizens, [or] children as researchers, [or] children as getting a say…For me, it’s a lot about democratic pedagogy and global education.
Bringing together two philosophies in which children are viewed as capable, competent beings to acting upon the voices the children and engaging in opportunities to harness their global citizenship; Lexi has shown that when she blends the two philosophies together she is able to confidently facilitate relationships between herself and the students that foster global awareness.

When Callie discussed relationships she spoke about her own relationship dynamic with her students and how she created opportunities for their voices to be heard:

So we’re constantly going back to those [four agreements] as we talk about them and almost have a little area in the room where we can always go back and have our class meetings and talk about what’s happening…students sharing their own stories.

Callie created opportunities for the students to open their worlds between home and school by sharing their stories. She creates a trusting relationship with the students, as she noted that this is the beginning of them trusting her with their input and creating a ‘safe’ place in the classroom.

Skylar shared the relationship between students and teachers as one of a team, who creates an atmosphere within the school based on trust, respect and a passion for learning:

I believe that respecting the rights of all members of a learning community is the only way for students to take risks, try new things and learn effectively. By creating and maintaining relationships, students feel safe to learn and to push themselves. … Beginning steps of fostering global awareness is creating a strong relationship between myself and the students. The foundation [relationship between student and educator] is what global awareness can be built upon.

Skylar shared that before students can begin the school year with her, she finds that this is an important component in beginning the relationship, which then turns into a relationship of trust to work towards the fostering of global awareness.
Educators have shared the importance of the student–teacher relationship as a foundational component of fostering global awareness through creating an initial relationship of trust and respect. Honouring the voice of the student and engaging with their ideas so that the voice is put into action is what the educators brought to the forefront. They spoke of the relationship between educator and student as the initial phase of the fostering of global awareness, without this relationship the classroom will not ‘successfully’ foster global awareness.

**4.2.5 Family – Teacher Relationships.** Each of the teachers prioritized the home-school relationship and the holistic role that it plays in fostering global awareness. A few participants shared concern about family impact on what is being taught and what stays out of the curriculum as there is a push from families. There is a concern about not being able to fully teach what is happening within society today as families carry a lot of say in what gets brought into the classroom, especially in private schools. Both Lexi and Callie believed that despite some struggles with parents related to contentious subject matter, the relationships they had with students’ families mattered greatly:

> Working at a private school, there are some limitations with what I teach as students go home and share that information with parents, who sometimes do not agree with topics and they complain; however I have an open door policy where families can come in. Families may be unaware of the issues in terms of connections to curriculum and it is my job to work with them to share resources and hear their side as well.

Specifically speaking Lexi shared the families’ fear regarding the LGBTQ topics being brought up within their child’s education and it took a family information night to sit and explain the concept of RRS and global awareness to gain some trust from the families and share with them what will be discussed. Families, in the private system, have a lot of say
in what gets brought into the school and teaching practice as they pay directly; educators’
jobs [in a private system] depend on pleasing the families.
Destiny spoke from her perspective as both a teacher and a mother and expressed her
belief that the relationship between home and school sets the tone of what the entire year
will be like and impacts the likelihood of assistance from home:

[I] became involved in an organization that sort of, in a number of organizations,
but one in particular that promoted the idea of sort of global awareness through
international travel and through international experience and learning that you
know whether I live in Ottawa or I live in Senegal or I live in Croatia I still have
the same rights. It [global connections] impacted my relationships with my kids
because they knew I was supporting their ideas.

Skylar expresses the notion of seamless transition from school to home and how families
and teachers need to work together in creating and foster global awareness for the
children. She discussed that the students are given more voice within the school and that
families have noted that this transitions to their home lives as well, where the students are
able to articulate their thoughts and feelings.
Families are the first educators in a child’s life and these educators have noted the
importance of forming a relationship with these individuals. As noted some relationships
are integral in keeping jobs within a private system and the dynamics of that relationship
are sometimes that of informative; however always being respectful and honouring the
voices of the family. The fostering of global awareness cannot solely occur at school,
there needs to be a relationship with home as it is a component of global awareness and
holistically engaging the students.

4.2.6 Community Relationships. Participants also emphasized the importance of
community relationships in local global spheres. Each participant’s response varied but all
were encouraging the strong relationship between the community and teachers. Skylar
shared stories of taking her class to the UN Summit and other community global awareness initiatives:

Because of the positive, collaborative, democratic environment we have worked to establish, my students respond positively to many different learning opportunities. They relish opportunities to learn and share their learning in authentic ways to authentic audiences. Last year, we held a “World Water Summit” for my class. Each pair of students represented a stakeholder and we discussed the advantages and drawbacks of the strategies each stakeholder was using to solve the global water crisis. We live-streamed our Summit on YouTube, and parents, family members and other classes watched and commented. We were invited to a UN Think Tank on Water reception and students confidently shared their learning and asked thoughtful questions to global leaders.

Lexi, too, saw the value in partnerships and she worked with other teachers to create local connections within their greater community:

I had a conversation with another teacher, the grade 4 teacher is amazing and she and I decided that we are going to create a joint [choir]…I’m kind of getting them out into the [broader] community, it’s not their local community.

Working with communities in the local aspect is something that Callie implemented in her classroom. She worked regularly with several community organizations throughout the year:

So, they decided that they wanted to turn it into a sweater drive and they looked at donating to their local community church. They have also worked with the church to help with making sandwiches for the homeless. Students also have partnered with a retirement home choir.

The building of relationships within the community heightens the awareness of students regarding their local community, which in turn gives a foundation for students to compare
global aspects to. Callie, as well as Destiny have noted the importance of the formation of these relationships in students understanding global awareness and fostering this [global awareness] within and outside of the classroom.

Destiny also elaborated on her relationships with NGO organizations and how this impacted global awareness within the classroom and local community:

Developing this program was to look at NGOs that were involved in wide ranges of I guess community outreach but also education, public education, particularly children’s education if you want to put it that way.

Community partnerships are a component of RRS; however the educators have highlighted the reasons why these partnerships foster global awareness, working with other members of the community, giving back to others, understanding their surroundings, making connections to other communities. Destiny has shared her value on building relationships with NGOs as it also highlights the component of giving back to the community and for students to gain awareness about needs within their own communities, which also gives opportunities for students to compare and contrast them to global communities. Fostering global awareness incorporates critical thinking about aspects of the world and through making connections with local community partners students are able to apply this critical thinking process locally and then globally.

4.2.7 Student – Family Relationships. All participants but one expressed the impact of student – family relationships on fostering global awareness. Callie shared examples of families’ supporting students’ ideas regarding raising funds for local charities and how this impacted students’ perceptions of themselves through the support they received from their families:

I have to say we have a wonderful group of parents, we’re doing a get out of the cold for Salvation Army and they’re constantly coming together supporting that
lots of different fundraisers for different groups, one year students I think it was after the tsunami wanted to raise money through a yard sale.

The families and students worked together, bringing all the product to the school and setting it up plus pricing it all and spending the time together to sell the yard sale materials. The families and students communicated, collaborated and then were able to donate the money to charities that were agreed upon by both families and students. This builds upon the relationship between families and students as they foster global awareness through understanding the needs of their community and understanding what they can do together to make an impact.

Different from Callie’s focus on fundraising, Lexi created opportunities for families to come together with their children to support the learning of the students through the arts:

We created a whole school wide charter last year, which started with the graffiti wall, so I just put this like this large mural size piece of paper up and I kind of graffiti like charter of rights on the top and every class was invited, students, parents, the whole community that is involved with our school were allowed to come in and write down pictures or ideas or write an article or take a photograph and paste it on the graffiti wall so that we could add those ideas to our school wide charter.

Destiny described how from the global awareness she has fostered with her children at a young age that she has taken those steps within her own classroom as well:

I wanted my kids to have global awareness so we have worked with organizations and gone to many different countries to explore… within my classroom I knew it was not feasible to take 25 students around the world literally so I had to find other ways [Skype, Google Drive, maps, emails, stories].

Fostering student-family relationships are a component of every education system; however within the RRS model when fostering global awareness students and their
families are integral pieces to the larger puzzle. Educators shared the importance of engaging families in the classroom and the impact that the relationships have in fostering global awareness [global awareness at home, awareness for families, strong relationship between students and their families working together]. The educators have shown the links between the student-family relationships and fostering global awareness through school and at home.

4.3 Fostering global awareness means attending to power dynamics in schools and classrooms

Each of the teachers spoke to the significance of power and power imbalances for fostering global awareness, although each raised this theme in distinct ways. They all felt it was important to explain how in a Rights Respecting School, the traditional power dynamic between teachers and students (adults and children) is flipped, whereby students are and teachers learn together, and from each other. Lexi uses the interests of her students to create arts opportunities for the students as a way of hearing their voices. Many times an adult is what is needed to bring the student’s voice to a platform to be heard and taken seriously:

If they can go out and be future leaders in society, if they are listened to and taken seriously [then should be able to have their voices heard now as] they understand what democracy is now. They take blind votes on things like choosing themes or giving input for ideas for things like school performances … their voices matter.

For Destiny, working with student teacher candidates give her the opportunity to train teachers prior to entering the field regarding creating a dynamic within the classroom where students do not feel powerless, rather empowered:

Many of the students, in the program, have come to the faculty with their own back stories and our classroom gives them an opportunity to share their stories and find ways to use their knowledge to change the opportunities for others. Partnering
with NGOs and creating opportunities for the students to share their ideas regarding changing the outcomes for others or their own personal stories. Callie was passionate about hearing the voices of the students and empowering that voice by bringing it to the school wide level. She created opportunities for students to lead and investigate their passions, interests and how these opportunities influenced their lives:

I think some of the strengths for sure is that it [RRS initiative] lets people look at themselves in the world in different perspectives. We only can see our own perspectives and go by our own experiences but when we open them up to what’s happening around the world I think children quickly realize that not everybody has what they have.

The concept of power is one looked at by many different institutions globally; however as educators there is a power dynamic within the system innately and the RRS initiative looks at that differently. As Callie has noted that many students have not looked at themselves outside of their own local world and it creates a powerless struggle from many students as she noted that many feel they have no voice in decisions. When engaged in RRS model students have the opportunity to engage in seeing with a different lens which has the opportunity to open doors into exploring the power of their own abilities. The fostering of global awareness through the investigating power dynamics creates a critical thinking and different lens to look at the world.

Utilizing brainstorming and discussion in every class is a technique that Skylar used in her practice and she elaborated on the importance of this minimizing uneven power dynamics in society:

Every rule, routine and procedure requires brainstorming, discussion and consensus gathering. This take a lot of time. I strongly believe that this investment pays off for all stakeholders and is well worth it.
Skylar created a power balance within the classroom by having opportunities for students to be an equal partner in creating rules and routine within the classroom. The ability to shift the power imbalance of the educator being in charge of the rules and routine created the dynamic where the students have a voice that is heard and made an impact on rules and routine.

The educators discussed power in the context of global awareness as a key component in students understanding what it means to be empowered and techniques that give those opportunities, such as sharing their own stories, making posters or campaigns to create awareness, or working with community members to show the importance of issues.

4.4 Teachers acknowledged that what it means to foster global awareness will be different from the perspective of individual teachers, but they emphasized the particular importance of engaging a range of stakeholders in their practice.

Each participant discussed the importance of unique practice and that key to fostering global awareness is the engagement of the students with all other stakeholders. Within all 4 interviews engagement was the most spoken about concept and all in the context of students becoming engaged within the school, community and world. Lexi spoke to the high levels of engagement that she found with her students and the impact this makes on their global awareness. The way she did this was by spending extra time to creating opportunities for students to have their voices heard and to engage in social justice and global awareness opportunities:

Because that [LGBTQ] is really important, so that’s has been challenge like as an educator we sort of have all these great ideas like let’s do pink shirt day…I run a jam band session for the kids to come and just jam out. They can practice a song, create a new one or work with others, but it’s all about them and having their music heard.
Students engaged in opportunities to discuss social justice issues that have arisen within their daily lives, their school environment and other areas of their worlds. Educators, such as Lexi, have created awareness days to bring voice to popular ‘issues’ that the students brought light to or that came up within conversations in class.

Destiny used hands-on approaches with her students to engage them within the classroom, and she noticed that when they were engaged in the school and community, they tended to be more globally aware as well:

That they and are developing skills of conflict resolution and understanding other peoples’ perspectives… all of those pro-social skills that you expect in terms of having engaged, interested learners in the classroom.

The engagement of not only her students, but also their families, teachers and communities is key to Callie’s practice of fostering global awareness. She noticed that student engagement increased when people from children’s everyday lives were included in opportunities for learning:

The big ideas are that you know innovation comes when we really think about working together as a team in collaboration and that power of collaboration so not only collaborating with ourselves in the classroom but as a school as a whole world.

Skylar, too, stressed the importance of student engagement for fostering global awareness:

I don’t think this [global awareness] is universally taught yet. I think this is because not all educators have seen the value in taking the time and effort to build collaborative learning environments. As I wrote before, establishing rights-respecting classrooms takes time and purposeful practice. So does educating students to become globally aware. If it is easier to do something else, sometimes
people will do so. Once politicians, educators and families see the value in global awareness, our system will begin to change and school will get more.

Finding the importance of a concept, global awareness in this case, takes time to be understood and for these individual educators they have worked within their practice to bring this to the fore front; however many stakeholders, including educators, have not yet seen the importance of global awareness within education. Skylar shared her insight on this and those feelings link together with the other educators in creating an opportunity for all stakeholders to understand and engage with the importance of global awareness. With time and constant awareness from those who are practicing both in theory and within educational practice global awareness, there is a hope that more stakeholders will see the importance. Stakeholders really incorporate all of the different people involved, politicians, educators, students, families, administrators, who really all need to be on board for Rights Respecting Schools to fully foster global awareness to the level that the initiative intended.

4.5 When assessing students’ development of global awareness, teachers look for evidence of critical thinking, attention to power, reflexive use of language, and the expression of student voice

When these participants are assessing learning for global awareness they looked for certain indicators. These included the development and application of a critical lens, reflexive use of language, attention to power, and the expression of student voice. Lexi hears this [critical lens, reflexive language, power, expression of voice] in her music classes with students when they are forming a new school song:

And so last year we made a whole school wide charter so that we have that up in the school now and then the Grade 6 class and I of that year, we wrote a new school song that talks about here we are in this place glowing spirits with dreams we chase, here were are with our friends forming bonds that will never end, hold
on, ready to be the change – they really like Ghandi quotes a lot – this world will rearrange…

The language that the students utilize in creating this song frames their understanding of global awareness for an assessment opportunity for Lexi. The student’s choice of words shows whether they understand components of global awareness at face value or whether it is a deeper level, which also touches upon the critical lens that the students are using to create these lyrics.

Callie also hears this [assessment indicators] in her class when students critically engage with current events:

Current events is also something we do as a whole school starting in Grade 1 and it’s pretty exciting for me to see now students in Grade 4 who when we talk about current events they get so excited. They can’t wait to share what they are doing. We had one student who found an article about 11 year olds around the world and what are 11 year olds looking for, what do they want from their education, out of their world? Around the world children are looking for the same thing – they want to feel safe. She wrote to the author of the article and shared the video with the class.

Looking specifically at hearing student’s voice, current events gives an opportunity to assess the lens in which students are using to look at global issues and when they share their story and analyze the issue, the language that they use also provides an opportunity to assess.

Skylar recognized the development of global awareness when students no longer focused on themselves, but learned to see others in the world and to think about how they could impact the lives of others:

The same success criteria I seek in other aspects of their learning; an ability to communicate clearly orally and/or in writing; critical thinking; reading
comprehension; questioning strategies; ability to make connections; creative ways to share their learning.

Assessment is created through many different avenues, for these educators assessment of global awareness looks at different indicators that overlap. The 4 indicators noted overlap when completed ‘successfully’, which is noted as completely understanding global awareness and engaging in taking a global aware lens to the world. These educators shared that a critical lens, attention to power, reflexive use of language and expression of student voice are the ways in which assessment is formulated. These can be seen through opportunities such as current events, leadership activities within the larger school community, within their writing samples and the way in which they engage with their peers, families and community members.

4.6 Null Data

Within the data collection there was not a deeper look at the support and challenges faced by the educators, as the educators kept referring back to practices within the classroom, which was beneficial for understanding approaches and strategies utilized but limits the information regarding support and challenges. Examples of explicit understanding of where individual rights held a place within the fostering of global awareness was not explored nor linked to the approaches and strategies that the educators implement within their practice.

4.7 Conclusion

In this chapter I reported the findings on fostering global awareness within Rights Respecting Schools from supporting quotes made by the 4 research participants. I have drawn out the key themes and presented the inner workings of each theme through the sub-themes. Fostering global awareness means opening the minds of all stakeholders from individual to communal. The educators have shared that through RRS initiative fostering global awareness means empowering students with an understanding of their rights with
the use of the UNCRC and creating opportunities for students to find their voices and share them. The relationships formed are also an integral component of fostering global awareness; there are many different relationships that are formed and all are an integral component of the overall. The term itself, global awareness, is defined differently by all the educators; however all have an overlapping general consensus that it has to do with the individuals being able to start to think critically about issues within the world and not only relate to their own self but to the larger body of individuals. The concept of rights came into play when addressing how to bring RRS into the schools; however did not occupy any explicit space in their definitions of global awareness.

The educators shared a variety of different instructional approaches and strategies that they use to foster global awareness such as, discussing current events, creating a classroom charter, student council, creating opportunities for community engagement, as well as family engagement. The indicators of learning global awareness that these educators look for consist of the use of a critical lens, reflexive use of language, examination of power and the use of their own voice to stand for an issue. The resources for these educators to work with are, but not limited to materials from UNICEF, fellow colleagues and technology; however the challenges as noted from the educators are, but are not limited to families not wanting certain concepts discussed in class and time. In Chapter 5, I discuss the significance of these findings in the context of the literature I reviewed in Chapter 2. I explain how the findings contribute to this existing body of research as well as the significance of the findings for me as a beginning teacher and novice researcher. I articulate recommendations for various stakeholders of the education system, and I identify areas for further research.
Chapter 5: Significance of Findings

5.0 Introduction

In this chapter I discuss the significance of the research findings in relation to the literature that was reviewed in Chapter 2. Specifically, I discuss the findings in the context of the literature centered on the importance of relationships, UNCRC connection to fostering global awareness, attention to active participation and student agency, connections to holistic and citizenship education, and attention to power dynamics. Next, I discuss the implications of the research findings for me in my identity as a beginning teacher and educational researcher. I articulate a range of recommendations following from the findings, and I conclude my identifying areas for future research, and speaking to the significance of the findings for preparing students to understand their rights and to enact agency in local and global spheres.

5.1 Discussion: Connections to Literature

In this section I am specifically discussing the findings in relation to the importance of relationships: foundational partnership with UNICEF, global and local relationships within the community, relationships with students, educators and families. I am also discussing the importance of the UNCRC in connection to fostering global awareness, as well as the attention to active participation and student agency, connections to holistic and citizenship education, and attention to power dynamics. Understanding this information in context to the literature strengthens the current body of research regarding each category due to the connections between literature and findings.

5.1.1 The Importance of Relationships. A key component of fostering global awareness is to teach students about relationships that occur on a variety of levels: from community relationships to relationships of interdependence between people and systems all over the world (Clair, et al., 2012; Howe & Covell, 2011). The participants in my study placed significant emphasis on creating opportunities for students to develop, and understand, the
relationships that transpire between students, educators, community members, families, and the larger global community. Based on this information from the literature and from my research, relationships play an integral role in RRS and fostering global awareness through the ability to create opportunities for students to become aware of their surroundings both locally and globally (Davies, 2010; Gallo & Strang, 2012).

5.1.1.1 Foundational Partnership with UNICEF. The literature review shares the data found with this research regarding working in partnership with organizations to create a strong initial foundation. UNICEF Canada (2011) offers many avenues for how educators can work in partnership with UNICEF: downloading the lesson plans, using the weekly newsletters [no longer sent out] to supplement within the classroom, connecting with other educators within RRS and using the UNCRC as the basis for learning opportunities. The educators who participated in the research shared positives and negatives with their partnership with UNICEF. Skylar and Destiny discussed the benefit of the weekly newsletters (that are no longer available) as an integral component of their practice and they explained that since these have been discontinued, their ability to foster global awareness without them has become more difficult. Lexi and Callie both discussed the strong foundation with UNICEF and how this has impacted their overall curriculum; they used the UNCRC in all aspects of curriculum and have done so with the assistance of the lesson plans provided from UNICEF that are then scaffold with the students. Each participant from this research indicated the importance of starting with the information from UNICEF regarding the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and moving forward from there.

While the research on global education and children’s rights underscores the significance of teachers working collaboratively with community and organizational partners, it also identifies this as a challenge that many teachers face. While teachers are commonly provided with curricular support documents and resources from non-governmental
organizations, the research shows that teachers struggle to implement these in practice as a result of a lack of opportunity to work closely with organizations in terms of what to do with these resources. The participants in my study, conversely, felt very comfortable using UNICEF resources, and more specifically, using the UNCRC as a primary resource underlying their teaching. This likely had to do with the contexts within which they were working – institutions with established relationships with UNICEF staff and with the organization more broadly.

5.1.1.2 Relationships with the Community on a Local & Global Level. Busher (2012) and Covell (2010) discuss the impact of formulating relationships within the local community, as these relationships indicate the future for community relationships. Their research indicated a stronger understanding of global awareness through the student’s connections within their community. This information has impacted the participants within my own research as each of the educators has brought forward the importance of communal relationships within their own practice. Lexi had formed relationships with a retirement home choir and with the local church because she believed in the importance of students understanding life outside of their own bubble. Destiny felt the impact of creating local connections and observed that the students made comparisons to what they were learning about global issues. They noted that students are able to have discussions about similarities and differences regarding their own communities and those of students across the world. This information highlights the importance of formulating relationships within the community that the students live, but also the deeper understanding of formulating relationships globally and engaging in the critical thinking process.

5.1.1.3 Relationships with Students. The students are the purpose for the entire RRS initiative (UNICEF Canada, 2011) and the relationships that are formed with and by the students are integral. The ability for students to foster relationships with their peers is not only a within each school opportunity, but also within other schools in the local
community and in further with other students in the global community. Howe & Covell (2009) discuss the importance of positive relationships between peers in a class, as it being the beginning of being able to understand another person’s perspective, which is needed to further understand and gain global awareness. The participants from my research study shared this mutual understanding as Howe & Covell. Skylar, for example, discussed how it is integral for her students to form relationships within the classroom during the first few months of school before they can move forward in fostering peer relationships in their local community [other schools in their neighbourhood] and then globally with other peers in other countries. Callie explained that she takes time each day to engage in a community circle, whereby students share important aspects of their lives with their peers. She has found that this practice gives opportunities for the students to better understand each other, which has led to them being able to create deeper relationships with others in the school and within their local community.

5.1.1.4 Relationships with Educators. Educators play a vital role in the RRS initiative (Covell, 2011; Chudnovsky, 2010) as they are the ones who are bringing the initiative to the forefront of the educational practice. The relationships that the educators form with students, families and within the community set an example for the students (Busher, 2012; Hart 1992). There is a level of respect that is formed between students and educators that is crucial in successfully fostering global awareness (Covell, 2011; Hebert, 2009; Hammarberg, 1998) which is part of the foundation that builds on the importance of relationships within the students’ lives. Callie ensured that her students understood that their ideas were just as important as hers and that if there was a component of the curriculum or lesson that could be facilitated differently then she would like the students to share their ideas. Callie explained that this [student input] impacted her relationship with the students, as it helped them feel that they were working together with their teacher, which has also impacted the way they discuss information with other adults in
their lives. Destiny also shared the importance of relationships with educators through many different avenues; she talked about the opportunities for role modeling when the students see the cooperative relationships between educators at the school, which has impacted her class in creating their own cooperative relationships with their own peers.

5.1.1.5 Relationships with Families. Families are students’ first educators and play a vital role in the collaboration between home and school in fostering global awareness (UNICEF Canada, 2013; Sebba & Robinson, 2010; Mundy, 2006). Research has shown that when families are participatory in the RRS initiative and supportive of their child’s learning about children’s rights and global awareness, the student is more likely to be successful in understanding and enacting global awareness (Quennerstedt, 2011; O’Neill & Zinga, 2008). The reasoning behind this importance has been linked to greater support of the families in continuing the beliefs of the RRS initiative to students being able to fully understand the concept of global awareness (Wallberg & Kahn, 2011; Maiyo, et al., 2010). Lexi shared this belief [stronger likelihood to understand global awareness with family support] as she stated in her interview that she was aware of families’ support and she observed a linkage to the student showing stronger assessment criteria [student voice, connection to children’s rights, thinking about others] and for fostering global awareness. Destiny discussed the opportunities for families to engage within the school to incorporate the families in the school life; however she also noted the stronger understanding and impact of those students whose families were supportive of the fostering global awareness openly. The research aligns with the findings of the research in terms of the links between relationships with families who are openly supportive of global awareness and the successful fostering of global awareness of the students.

5.1.2 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child connection to Fostering Global Awareness. Fostering global awareness, as indicated in the literature, is unique for each educator; however creating awareness of students’ own rights is a key
component to fostering global awareness (UNICEF Canada, 2011; Mitchell & McCusker, 2008; Krappmann, 2006; Alderson, 1999; Grace, 1999). Although the content of global education programming differs across contexts and classrooms, fostering awareness of children’s rights is considered a core priority for fostering global awareness in children (Howe & Covell, 2009; Lake, 2011; UNICEF Canada, 2011; MacDonald, A., et al., 2012). For Lexi and Skylar in particular, without using the UNCRC as a resource, they felt that the importance of children’s rights would not be as evident for fostering global awareness. Callie used a classroom charter that the students created together with the UNCRC, whereby the students decided with the classroom teacher what rights they wanted to highlight in the classroom.

5.1.3 Attention to Active Participation and Student Agency. A further priority underscored in the existing literature on fostering global awareness is attention to active participation and student agency (Gallo & Strang, 2012; Lake, 2011; Covell, 2010; Howe & Covell, 2009; Lansdown, 2011). Research has found that when students have the opportunity to actively participate in their education through having a say in assessment, topics of discussion and the way the classroom is set up and facilitated, they can develop attitudes of respect, understanding and positivity and skills for critical thinking, perspective and attentive listening (Busher, 2012; Lundy, et al., 2011; Covell, 2010; Howe & Covell, 2009; Lansdown, 2001; Grace, 1999; Hart, 1992).

The participants in my study described specific instructional strategies, resources, and approaches they used toward this end, and they described how their students’ responded to these. Lexi specifically incorporates student agency in the classroom through co-creating assessment rubrics, student’s choosing the lyrics to create a new school song and selecting songs for their global concert. She has found that when students have these opportunities they are more likely to attend school positively and participate in classes. This connects to the work done by Covell (2010) regarding student engagement and
feelings towards attending school and overall outlook regarding education; whereby when
students are actively engaged in the decisions in their classrooms they are more likely to
have a positive outlook and engagement regarding education. Callie also has put in place
strategies to engage students in the classroom such as, current events where the students
bring in an article that they find to be important and discuss with the class. It has gone as
far as students co-creating their classroom charters and facilitating class discussions
where their teacher, Callie, is much more the guide on the side than the sage on the stage.
Callie had the sense that her students truly feel that it is their classroom and they are
active participants in their own learning because of the value that is put on their ideas.
UNICEF Canada (2013) highlights the areas that Callie specifically outlined as actively
engaging her students in their education: when students feel that their voice is heard and
respected in the classroom they are more likely to actively participate and feel that they
have student agency.

5.1.4 Connections to Holistic and Citizenship Education. Literature showed the impact
of engaging students in holistic education (Lake, 2011; Covell, et al., 2010) and
citizenship education (Eidoo, et al., 2012; Evans, et al., 2009; Hart, 1992). Holistic
education fosters global awareness through engaging the students mind, body and spirit
(Lake, 2001; Covell, et al., 2010) which made an impact in the students abilities to gain a
whole understanding of global awareness through many different experiences and senses
(Clair, et al., 2012). Whereas citizenship education evokes the democratic practices of the
students, educators and families in the education system (Eidoo, et al., 2012; Evans, et al.,
[citizenship education], democratic practices such as, student run student council, co-
creating assessment tools, classroom charters, community engagement educators can be
used to foster global awareness (Eidoo, et al., 2010; Evans, et al., 2009; Howe & Covell,
2009; Schweisfurth, 2006; Hart, 1992). In my study, Skylar used citizenship education to
foster global awareness in the classroom through the engagement of co-creation of assessment tools that she finds the students take ownership in their work and have shared that they feel empowered to make decisions. Destiny referred to educating the whole child through engagement of mind, body and spirit. Destiny did this through using multiple intelligences to engage students in different formats and she believed that discovering ways students learn is integral to her practice. She related this back to fostering global awareness by gaining an understanding of the differences between individuals through their learning styles.

The literature in conjunction with new research heightens the importance of relationships within fostering global awareness in RRS. The four educators have given strategies as to how they have encapsulated global awareness in the classrooms such as, forming and feeding the relationships within the lives of the students, fostering active participation and student agency, utilizing holistic and citizenship education as avenues for fostering global awareness and utilizing resources such as the UNCRC within practice.

5.2 Implications of the Findings for Me as a Beginning Teacher and Educational Research Scholar

As a beginning teacher committed to fostering global awareness in my practice, this research has given me insight into how global awareness can be fostered. In my eyes, I can foster global awareness by engaging students holistically in the education process through multiple intelligences to reach every student and every need. I also can engage students in active participation through the ability to co-create assessment tools, create a classroom charter, and show the value of their voices through actually hearing and acting upon requests and actionable ideas. I have realized, even more deeply, the importance of relationships within fostering global awareness and have been looking towards opportunities to engage families and the larger community within my practice.
This research has also given me insight into what impacts it can have on students, families, educators, and communities more broadly. Through reviewing literature and conducting research with educators in RRS I have gained information regarding the strengthening of family dynamics when students and families are working towards global awareness. The participants have also given me insight into the unique relationships that are built with the students through mutual respect, elimination of hierarchical power dynamics and acting upon student’s voice. Within my own teaching practice I know have the tools and strategies from the interviewees to foster global awareness, as well as an understanding that each classroom will be different and strategies will have to differ for each group.

I believe that I now have a better understanding of the range of practices that engage students and the opportunities that educators can create to foster global awareness. The educators that were interviewed showed their passion when being interviewed through their explanations of activities, opportunities and anecdotes, which furthered my understanding of what it takes to be a successful global awareness educator. A successful global awareness educator connects with communities (school, local, and global) and creates opportunities for students to enact agency in real world contexts. This research has brought even more passion into my teaching practice and future practice as I have a deeper understanding of how to foster global awareness and the connection to traditional schooling as well as Rights Respecting Schools.

Completing this research, I have discovered that conducting research is a big component of my teaching practice. I have realized that staying current with educational information is something important to me as lifelong learning is an important component for me. Conducting that research puts me right into that current research, more importantly I believe that being able to conduct action research and self-study will give me opportunities to truly engage in research-informed practice and a reflective
practitioner. Although reading and attending professional development are an immense part of my teaching, I have come to understand that participation in education research is an additional avenue for continued learning and professional growth. This has heightened my awareness and attentiveness to opportunities to further conduct research as an educational scholar. Conducting this research while in practicum and continuing with classes has also helped me to understand that being an educational scholar is something that can be continued throughout my practice [self-study and action research]; continuing these opportunities will be beneficial for not only me, but also students and co-workers. Conducting this research was also a wonderful opportunity to form connections with fellow educators and the broader network of institutions and organizations committed to fostering global awareness.

5.3 Recommendations for Policy and Practice

Global awareness is a concept that is being highlighted more often in education today (Wallberg & Kahn, 2011; Sebba & Robinson, 2010; Robinson & Sebba, 2009). As the concept is becoming more recognized and incorporated into practice, developing meaningful professional development for educators will become ever more important. The literature suggests that global education can at times be taught superficially, staying only on the surface of very complex issues and questions. Andreotti (2007), for example, is concerned with soft approaches to global citizenship education, and advocated that more critical approaches be adopted. I agree that delving deeper into issues rather than staying only on the surface can be as harmful as it can uncomfortable. This is something that requires more attention in professional development and pre-service teacher training. I believe that as educators understanding the community in which we work, as well as the larger community and furthermore the larger global community is an integral component to relevant practices.
Moving forward from this research I would recommend that public education systems apply what has been learned from research on RRS about student engagement, the importance of relationships for fostering global awareness, the critical thinking process, and strategies for active participation and student agency.

5.4 Areas for Future Research

There are opportunities to further the research. The notion of assessment was something that came up in my research, and I believe it is important that scholarship look more purposefully at the role of assessment in global education. It is important that assessment strategies for co-creating assessment tools be explored, as well as strategies for engaging students about what they think about how to assess global awareness. Another area requiring attention is to learn how teachers conceptualize critical global citizenship education and how they realize it in their classrooms. It is also important to learn more about how RRS schools specifically, can foster critical global citizenship education while operating within particular governing structures.

5.4 Conclusion

Fostering global awareness within a RRS model is done in many different and unique manners; each educator has their own practice that is influenced by things such as their previous training, education, passion, exposure, and working environment (UNICEF Canada, 2011; Mitchell & McCusker, 2008; Krappmann, 2006; Alderson, 1999; Grace, 1999). The findings from the research that I conducted elucidate the significance of fostering global awareness as a reciprocal relationship between the school, community and home environments. The engagement of the students plays a large role in the fostering of global awareness through such things as hearing the voices of students and having opportunities for students to share their voices. Another component that arose in the research is the concept of power dynamics and creating spaces where equity is
supported, ownership of the classroom is at play, and there is a passion for the role of the educator.

As a researcher there have been many opportunities for self-growth as a future educator and as an educational scholar. This will continue through the future, as future research may be conducted in this field and the research will and has impacted my own practice. There have been opportunities to utilize some of the information from the participants within practicum situations and the opportunity to see the passion and excitement in the eyes of the students. It has been a unique learning experience that has taught me many things about myself on many levels such as, my ability to complete research while in practice which has given me encouragement to continue with opportunities like this. I have also learned that global awareness and children’s rights are truly where my heart lies; listening to the educators share their practices and strategies I am inspired to continue with my passion for children’s rights through education. It will forever impact my own teaching practices and future research.

The original problem that was identified for this research was regarding the diverse world with multiple dimensions to human, especially children’s, rights with limited amount of attention in society. I learned that even in schools committed to children’s rights and fostering global awareness that critical perspectives are not necessarily implemented; rather soft approaches to some very integral components to global awareness are common. I have learned the importance of relationships within the diverse world, as highlighted by the educators who indicated that without the relationships that were developed, developing the fostering of global awareness would not occur. This has increased my already passionate commitment to rights, children’s rights specifically, and equity. I feel that as an educator there is an opportunity to impact the lives of students and their families. My own passion is to be able to learn about the world, both locally and globally. As an individual who did not have her voice heard as a child,
this research along with my own past has really impacted my drive for students to self-advocate through student agency. My hopes for students who will cross my path is the ability to empower them with the ability to advocate for themselves and for others.
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Date:

Dear,

I am a graduate student at OISE, University of Toronto, and am currently enrolled as a Master of Teaching student. For my graduate research paper I am studying the perspectives of 3 primary school educators, teaching in a Rights Respecting School, on the topic of fostering global awareness in students. I think that your knowledge and experience will provide insights into this topic.

The purpose of this requirement is to allow us to become familiar with a variety of ways to do research. My data collection consists of a 45 minute – 1 hour interview that will be audio-recorded. I would be grateful if you would allow me to interview you at a place and time convenient to you, outside of school time.

The contents of this interview will be used for my research project, which will include a final paper, as well as informal presentations to my classmates and/or potentially at a research conference or publication. I will not use your name or anything else that might identify you in my written work, oral presentations, or publications. This information remains confidential. The only people who will have access to my assignment work will be my research supervisor and my course instructor. You are free to change your mind at any time, and to withdraw even after you have consented to participate. You may decline to answer any specific question. I will destroy the audio recording after the paper has been presented and/or published which may take up to five years after the data has been collected. There are no known risks or benefits to you for assisting in the project, and I will share with you a copy of my notes to ensure accuracy.

Please sign the attached form, if you agree to be interviewed. The second copy is for your records. Thank you very much for your help.

Yours sincerely,

Researcher Name: Katelyn Forgione
Phone Number, Email: (416)560-1353, katelyn.forgione@mail.utoronto.ca

Research Supervisor’s Name: Angela MacDonald-Vemic
Email Address: angela.macdonald@utoronto.ca

Consent Form

I acknowledge that the topic of this interview has been explained to me and that any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I can withdraw at any time without penalty.
I have read the letter provided to me by Katelyn Forgione and agree to participate in an interview for the purposes described.

Signature:

Name: (printed) ________________________________________________

Date: ______________________________
Appendix B

Research Question: What does fostering global awareness mean to a sample of elementary teachers working in a Rights Respecting School in theory and instructional practice?

1. How many years have you taught primary education in a traditional school?
2. How many years have you taught primary education in a Rights Respecting School?
3. How did you come to work in a rights respecting school? How did you learn about these schools?
4. How did you develop an interest in children’s rights?
5. What do children’s rights mean to you?
6. What are some key characteristics, in your view, of a rights respecting approach to education?
7. Have you found any differences between the two education systems? If so, can you please explain what some of those differences are.
8. How do you understand the relationship between children’s right and global education?
9. What does global education mean to you?
10. What learning goals do you associate with global education?
11. Can you explain what some strategies are that you use to bring global education into your classroom?
   a. In a traditional class
   b. In a Rights Respecting class
12. What is your definition of global awareness?
13. How do you teach for global awareness? What indicators of learning do you look for?
14. Do you believe that global awareness be incorporated in all areas of curriculum?
15. Can you give some examples of how you have taught for global awareness through curricular integration across subject areas?
16. Do you feel that there are limitations to RRS? Please explain them.
17. What do you feel are the strengths of RRS?
18. In what ways do you implement global awareness in daily activities outside of the classroom?
Appendix C

Initial Email with UNICEF:
Good Afternoon,

I am a Masters student at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education and am writing my thesis on Rights Respecting Schools. I am interested in interviewing 2-3 teachers who are teaching in these amazing schools and am looking into how global awareness is brought into the classroom. I am really hoping to interview teachers within Ontario (Toronto/GTA specifically). I was wondering if possible if I could get the names of the RRS that have registered within Ontario?

I would greatly appreciate your assistance in this and look forward to your response.

Katelyn Forgione

Email Contact with UNICEF:
My name is Katelyn Forgione and I am a Master's of Teaching student at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education / University of Toronto. Lisa Wolffe has passed along your email contact, thank you for taking the time to connect with me regarding my thesis. As part of my graduation requirements a thesis is to be completed and I have chosen to write and focus mine of the fostering of global awareness in Rights Respecting Schools from the perspective of elementary school teachers.

I am looking to interview approximately 3 teachers with interviews lasting between 30-45 minutes.

I look forward to hearing from you
Katelyn Forgione
BA Honours, R.ECE, BAA High Honours