Original Paper

Crossing Borders in Initial Teacher Education: Supporting Translations in the Inner-City Practicum

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Abstract

Research examining teacher candidates' preparation to teach in high-poverty, urban contexts marked by diversities and inequalities, throughout North America and internationally, is predominantly focused on examining and changing problematic attitudes based in white normativity and privilege. While this is extremely important, there has been a noted absence of research that supports translations of critical ideas from coursework into the practicum experience. In this article we share a case-study of eight teacher candidates supported by a practicum team approach designed to support these translations into the inner-city teaching practicum. The study is designed and analyzed through decolonial, settler-colonial, critical, and Indigenous theories and philosophies. The authors found common deficit perspectives in the practicum site, but that a relational focus across university and school contexts supported the translation of critical ideas into practice. This study recommends a more explicit engagement with settler colonialism and white privilege within both the practicum and coursework.

Keywords

initial teacher education, urban education, settler colonialism, inner-city, whiteness

1. Introduction

Our research is focused on matters of inequalities in inner-city educational contexts and how this might be understood and addressed within programs of Initial Teacher Education (ITE). Inner-city neighborhoods in Canada are predominantly composed of Indigenous and newcomer individuals and communities, and racialized students in these neighborhoods continue to experience significant negative educational outcomes (Statistic Canada, 2016; Winnipeg School Division, 2019). In the United States, low-income urban communities are similarly marked by long-standing racialized patterns, as well as negative educational outcomes (Noguera, 2017). Despite these patterns, the

teaching force and students in teacher education working in these communities across North America remains predominantly composed of white females embodying a culture of white normativity (Han et al., 2015; Janzen & Cranston, 2016; Marom, 2019). ITE programs note the priority of diversifying the teaching force but are also cognizant of the need to prepare the currently predominantly white, settler teacher candidates to engage meaningfully with diversities in multicultural educational contexts marked by inequalities (Griffin et al., 2016; Marom, 2018).

There is a significant amount of research that attends to the intersection of schooling in urban high-poverty contexts, racialized inequalities and ITE. A comprehensive two-part international literature review of research in teacher education by Cochran-Smith and Villegas (2015) and Cochran-Smith et al. (2015) positions the research on educational inequalities and diversities as one of three major research clusters in teacher education. While there has been concurrence within this research cluster on the significance and positive results of altering the predominantly white teacher educators' deficit views about diversity to more affirming views, there has been "little evidence of the profound shift in perspective than many researchers consider fundamental to becoming equity-minded/socially just teachers" (p. 116). A large research study by Solomon et al. (2005) detailed the attitudinal patterns and discourses of teacher candidates and concluded that disrupting meritocracy narratives and white privilege that support these patterns is essential in ITE programming. While addressing the belief systems of teacher candidates is an important focus, Cochran-Smith et al. (2015) conclude that research in teacher education is needed "that goes beyond assuming that changing teacher candidates' beliefs necessarily leads to different behaviors and actions in the classrooms" (p. 117). Since that review, a large study conducted by Kuriloff et al. (2019) on early-career teacher readiness to work in urban, high poverty school settings, concluded that 72% of beginning teachers felt unprepared by their ITE program for this complex context, suggesting that a focus on changing beliefs and attitudes within coursework does not translate to changed practices in urban teaching contexts. A study in a large teacher education program in Canada by Kerr and Andreotti (2019) sought to gain greater insight into the potential disconnect between dispositions of teacher candidates to diversities and inequalities, and their capacities to engage this in their teaching practices. This study found that there is a significant gap between teacher candidates' abstract commitments and dispositions to addressing diversities and inequalities, and actual educational practices that would affirm those commitments (Kerr & Andreotti, 2019). These conclusions affirm previous findings revealed in a comprehensive study of ITE in Canada by Gambhir et al. (2008) where they note, there "is a disparity in how [teacher candidates] are supported to apply the theories they learn to their future practice in meaningful, critical and explicit ways" (p. 17). Recognizing the insufficiency of relying solely on course-based approaches with a focus on changing attitudes to address educational inequalities in practice, this study is focused on understanding how to support teacher candidates in translating critical theories on diversities and inequalities into the practicum component of their ITE program in an inner-city educational context. In this article, we share details of a case-study addressing these educational priorities.

We highlight at the outset that the choice of terminology for the project as *inner-city* was a specific theoretical and political choice. The term inner-city is used pervasively within Canadian research literatures; Federal and local data collection categories; K-12 district initiatives across Canada; and within programs of ITE and university coursework more generally. This terminology is meant to denote a core spatial area of concentrated poverty within an urban geography. Although, the term inner-city is also entangled in problematic deficit discourses. Khoo (2017) argues that inner-city is a term that has complex, shared socio-cultural meanings that implicate race, and exceed its specific linguistic definition focused on place. Referencing Haslanger (2013), he emphasizes that social meanings convey stereotypical beliefs and call in schemas or narratives which we use to "focus attention, coordinate expectations, sift evidence and rationalize behavioral and emotional dispositions" (as cited in Khoo, 2017, p. 57). The term *urban* is often being used as a replacement for the term inner-city in educational contexts, yet the same problematics emerge where urban is used as a "euphemism for black and brown youth" (Tuck & Habtom, 2019). We believe that changing the term inner-city to something else will not change the problematic deficit attitudes that have become unfairly associated with the culturally and linguistically enriched communities in inner-city locations that defy significant economic and political marginalization. We therefore use the term inner-city to draw attention to the geo-spatial production of racialized poverty.

2. Method

Our research is a case-study of eight teacher candidates over the course of one year in a two-year Bachelor of Education program at a university in Winnipeg, Manitoba (University) that were placed in a K-6 inner-city school in Winnipeg supported by an enhanced practicum team approach in the 2017/2018 school year. The practicum hosted at the school consisted of one-day per week throughout the year and two five-week practicum blocks. A full course schedule was provided at the University in condensed format to accommodate practicum blocks. This enhanced approach drew together the teacher candidates, co-operating teachers, university instructors, and practicum advisor in regular dialogue with each other and the researchers. This approach was framed through relational and storied practices to support the complex learning of teacher candidates and to enhance the connections between the isolated contexts of the university and the practicum experiences (Ralph, Walker, & Wimmer, 2007).

2.1 Preliminary Justifications and Clarifications of the Approach

The location of Winnipeg for this study is particularly appropriate as statistical data continues to show that Winnipeg's inner-city residents are composed of significant numbers of urban Indigenous and diverse newcomer immigrant individuals and communities, and that they continue to experience disproportionate inequitable economic opportunities and educational outcomes in comparison to non-inner-city residents (Statistics Canada, 2016; Winnipeg School Division, 2018). Further, Winnipeg has the highest numbers of Indigenous peoples in an urban setting in Canada. Winnipeg is considered by urban geographers to be one of the most dynamic cities in North America in relation to Indigenous

resurgence, yet is often commonly spoken of as a fairly banal prairie city (Dorries et al., 2019)—previously labelled in McLean's as Canada's most racist city (MacDonald, 2015). While there are certainly limitations to characterizing the lived reality of a city, these more recent considerations by urban geographers point to the significance of undertaking research in prairie, urban locations—and notably Winnipeg. Winnipeg's patterns of racialized segregation that emerge from policy, systemic racism, and unequal participation (Dorries et al., 2019) are similar to racialized segregation in major cities in the United States (Nodjimbadem, 2017).

A case-study approach was chosen to enable greater understanding and more detailed insights into the lived-complexity of the relational dynamics under consideration in the support of teacher candidates in translations of knowledge across contexts. Flyvbjerg (2006) advocates that a case-study approach contributes to the creation of the systematic production of exemplars in an area of investigation through detailed observation and engagement, and argues that such work is generalizable to broader contexts. This case-study provides enhanced relational experiences, and then focuses into the dynamic relational processes that involve multiple people, with differing institutional responsibilities, that are collectively supporting the complex learning of teacher candidates. Phelan (2011) outlines an evolution in teacher education research and articulates a contemporary phase focused on achieving greater understanding of complexity. In this approach teacher education can be viewed as a cultural object that could be understood within and between fields of philosophy, history, sociology, and politics. Phelan characterizes this research as attending to subjectivities of people in contexts of responsibility in conditions that they have not made, and a related focus on the discursive productions of teaching identities, school practices and social values. From this perspective, the questions raised in this study do not lend themselves to answers and solutions within prescriptions for practice. Rather, we seek a greater understanding of complexity, uncertainty, and the significance of context and place, without a teleological view focused on universalized best practices.

2.2 Participants

The participants in the research were Teacher Candidates (TCs), the Practicum Advisor (PA), University-based Course Instructors (CIs), and Co-operating Teachers (CTs) at Heartfulness School (Note 1). There were eight TCs in total (6 females and 2 males), and all were enrolled in a two-year Bachelor of Education program at the University starting in September, 2017. All of these participants had previously completed undergraduate degrees and were assigned to Heartfulness as part of their program, and all had their courses scheduled together in a K-8 focused program. The PA assigned was also in the role as CI in a year-long foundations of education course. The PA has had a long-career in teaching and leadership, but was new to this practicum site. From the University, five CIs agreed to participate, and ultimately four were able to attend research activities. This represents about half of the credit hours of coursework in total. We engaged all of the course outlines within the data analysis. The CIs that participated all had experience teaching in contexts of racialized poverty or were from an inner-city community. From Heartfulness, eight CTs participated (all female), and both the Principal

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(male) and Vice-Principal (female) supported all research activities. All people involved in the research process were white people of settler origins and could be considered middle-class. The majority of TCs revealed minimal personal interaction with ethnic, linguistic, and socio-economic differences from their own positionality in their social, familial and educational experiences.

2.3 Methodological and Theoretical Framework

There are multiple dimensions to the research, but the subject of this particular article is the mentorship and translation of critical ideas on equality and diversity by teacher candidates into the inner-city practicum experience. The methodology for this research was centred on three talking circles over the course of one year that drew together the participants from the university and school contexts. The theories underlying this approach drew on the work of Indigenous scholars Jo-ann Archibald and Dwayne Donald. Both Dr. Archibald an Dr. Donald are mentors of Jeannie, and have provided feedback on the analysis of their methodologies in this study, which has been incorporated into this article. The theoretical commitments within these scholars' work centre on: the significance of stories to create deeper meaning; relationships as a key part of learning; and ethics as fundamental throughout all engagements. The research was enhanced by pre- and post-surveying to understand teacher candidates' lived experiences, as well as dispositions towards inequalities and diversities and how this might be engaged in teaching practice. The research was also enhanced through an analysis of course-outlines from their teacher education program; and a workshop specific to diversities and inequalities for teacher candidates.

The research started with the pre-survey for the TC participants and was followed by a workshop for TCs facilitated by Jeannie as part of regular programming. The workshop provided a meta-language to enable self-reflexive analysis of experiences in border crossing in educational contexts. Border crossing is theoretically framed as working with and through moments of personal awareness of feeling apart, and wherein we construct someone or something else as being *other* in ways that create or reinforce power inequalities (Giroux, 1991; Gorski, 2008). The workshop drew on Giroux's (1991) development of *border pedagogy* wherein masked privilege and subordination, that supports institutional and ideological boundary making, is revealed and made available for analysis. In this way, this study is encouraging what Mignolo (2012) theorizes as *border thinking*, wherein TCs are encouraged to consider an epistemic orientation that eschews universality of knowing and being. Borders themselves were conceived as being geographic, cultural, ideological, emotional, linguistic and/or psychological, and invoking habitual dispositions that emerge from individual affiliations, histories and experiences. The workshop and surveying drew on previous work from Kerr and Andreotti (2018; 2019) and extended into the specifics of inner-city educational contexts.

The workshop and pre-survey took place in the Fall of 2017 and was followed by three talking circles at Heartfulness School over the course of the school year. In the circles, the practicum team shared personal experience stories that were themed on concerns of the study: anticipating educational inequalities (Fall); in-process mentorship (Winter); and post-practicum practice oriented (Spring). The

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protocols for the talking circles were based on Jeannie's oral teachings received from Dr. Archibald and then Dr. Amy Parent, and her experiences learning in talking circles with them in post-secondary education in the field of Indigenous Education. These talking circles were geared towards academic and educational contexts, and while drawing on Indigenous knowledges, did not engage in ceremony or work that should be led by an Elder. Each circle in this research project started with a rock (Note 2) that had been gifted to Jeannie from one of her mentors and was considered by her to have spiritual significance due to the gift and the connection to Mother Earth. The rock remained at the school under the care of one of the CTs throughout the year. Jeannie initiated each circle with a reminder of the protocols of the talking circle as well as ethics in research practices, and then a personal experience story related to the theme of the circle. The basics of the protocol are that the circle starts with her introductions and reminders of protocols, and the rock is held at the beginning of the circle and a story is shared. The rock is then passed clockwise, and each participant takes turns sharing related personal stories uninterrupted as the rock is passed. Each participant can decline and pass the rock without explanation. Jeannie shared her own stories of practice in the inner-city which were intended to draw out the politics of inequalities, and the tensions embedded with identity and place. See Appendix A for these stories. Advance notice of themes was provided before each of the subsequent circles. Each circle was audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis.

In relation to facilitating and understanding potential insights from the talking circles, this study was framed on Dwayne Donald's concept of ethical relationality (2016), and drew on Jo-ann Archibald's (2008) *Indigenous Storywork* as theory and methodology, Gadamerian hermeneutic analysis (Gadamer, 2004), and a walking analysis developed by the researchers. Donald (2012) has shared that "[e]thical relationality is an ecological understanding of human relationality that does not deny difference, but rather seeks to understand more deeply how our different histories and experiences position us in relation to each other" (p. 103). He points out that we cannot be ethical unless we appreciate that we are related, and that our future as peoples with all living beings on Mother Earth are already tied together (Donald, 2016). His approach draws attention to the significance of attending to the ethical responsibilities of being in relation, and is the overarching frame to consider the divided realities and inequalities that are the context of the research.

To work towards the commitments within ethical relationality, this study engaged with Archibald's (2008) conceptualization of Indigenous Storywork as theory and methodology. This approach is suited to the complex nature of the research, through engaging participants wholistically (Note 3) through story's ability to engage the intellectual, emotional, physical and spiritual dimensions of experience. Archibald's approach is reliant on Indigenous principles of respect, responsibility, reciprocity, reverence, holism, interrelatedness, and synergy in making meaning from stories. Bringing stories together in shared ethical space enables greater insights through the synergy of the inter-related stories—offering emergent and generative conceptualizations. This methodology enables a focus on the complexity of orientations of the practicum team and insights from the synergy of sharing of ideas, inquiries, and experiences. This

approach moves away from purely rational explanations and instead facilitates an embodied, wholistic experience which draws upon emotional, physical, intellectual and spiritual aspects. As Principal Investigator, Jeannie was aware that the use of a methodology based in Indigenous teachings, by a non-Indigenous person, both in research design and analysis, adds another layer of potential for problematic colonial engagements. We agree with Tuck and Yang (2012) in that non-Indigenous academics can engage with work in support of revealing settler colonialism and learning from Indigenous thought, yet "this joining cannot be too easy, too open, too settled" (p. 3). We are mindful of Celia Haig-Brown's nuanced analysis that seeks to balance concerns of appropriation and "deep learning" in the engagement with Indigenous knowledges by non-Indigenous peoples (Haig-Brown, 2009, p. 225). We recognize we have been taught/learned within and from Dr. Archibald's Indigenous Storywork, but that we are not claiming expertise. Jeannie maintains her mentorship from both Dr. Archibald and Dr. Donald to inform her interpretations in research.

2.4 Analysis

The talking circle sessions were recorded and then analyzed through Indigenous Storywork principles (Archibald, 2008) and Gadamerian hermeneutic analysis to acknowledge the impositions of our fore-structures in interpretation within a settler-colonial context (Gadamer, 2004; Kerr, 2020). We did not record any participants by pseudonyms, but instead participants remained anonymous and recorded by their particular role in the project. Our approach is not meant to analyze any one person or to individualize patterns. Instead, we consider the ways people with different roles and backgrounds participate in public educational spaces in particular places, and the mentorship of TCs. Our theoretical lens for design and interpretation of the circles recognizes the immersion of the circles in inequalities that are sourced to ongoing colonial encounters which are largely invisible to privileged positionalities (Grosfoguel, 2007; Mignolo, 2012), and a settler colonial context in the North End of Winnipeg that constructs exclusionary and divided realties based on perceptions of Indigeneity and processes of racialization (Donald, 2012; Hugill & Toews, 2017; Mackey, 2002; Thobani, 2007; Toews, 2018).

We further developed our approach to analysis through undertaking walking discussions of our analyses in significant places. While there is some research literature on walking methodologies, this particular walking data analysis was inspired by the understanding that places have embodied impact and can be a teacher, and drew on the scholarship of Indigenous informed philosophies (Madden, 2016; Marker, 2018). Jeannie's long-term mentorship by Arapaho scholar Dr. Michael Marker informed this approach. We planned walks one month apart during the Spring of 2019. Prior to each walk, we took time to read and re-read the transcripts and make notes on our fore-structures, emergent themes, and findings as per Gadamerian methodological practices. We recorded our fore-structures (potential projections and expectations) based on our backgrounds as inner-city educators and our identities as white settlers who engage in ongoing learning from Indigenous mentors and Indigenous scholarship, and who explore issues of white normativity. We recorded repeated patterns we were seeing within the transcripts. We then met and walked and discussed our ideas orally in significant places, again drawing on the synergy of

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ideas. We made particular note of the similarities and differences between our analyses, and found that our perceptions of the patterns in the talking circles were in agreement with each other. Our walking analyses were undertaken in specific locations: Analysis of Circle 1—walking around the neighborhood of Heartfulness School; Analysis of Circle 2— walking in and through the University campus; and Analysis of Circle 3—walking in and through the historic Forks as the confluence of the Red River and the Assiniboine River on Indigenous Peoples' Day 2019.

Both researchers were concerned about our impositions as white women who had experienced significant shifts in our understanding of privilege, oppression and positionality through learning through Indigenous mentors in personal and formal settings. We were considering the propensity for both of us to engage in settler moves to innocence (Tuck & Yang, 2012), in placing the issues of colonialism as something we have surmounted. As former classroom teachers, we also are aware of the ways that teachers' work and knowledge become deprofessionalized, and teachers are unfairly held to account for both the problems of the school system and society (Ranson, 2010; Walker, 2013). We discussed this aspect in depth and worked to maintain ethical and respectful relations. We considered our own limitations as unsettled settlers in this work (Ferguson, 2017; Regan, 2010) as well as the immersion of the education system and our society in mostly invisibilized settler-colonial logics (Donald, 2012), white normativity, and denial of privilege (Marom, 2018; Mill, 2007). Through our process, three themes emerged that speak to the complications and barriers of translations of critical ideas from course work on systemic inequalities and diversities into the lived-experience of the teaching practicum. In this next section, we outline the themes and engage with the voices of the participants noted through their roles in the project. The selections were chosen as representatives of ideas/themes that we both recognized as being engaged repeatedly in our analyses.

2.4.1 Emergent Theme 1—Excess of Responsibility and the Emotional Toll of Inner-City Teaching in Mentorship

Firstly, in their role as mentors, the cooperating teachers (CTs) conveyed a sense of strong bonds and relationships with the students.

> *… because that's where those meaningful relationships come from, is those great, deep conversations that you have with the kids and that's honestly the best part of the job, is getting close to them and learning from them.*

The CTs as mentors constructed inner-city teaching as an experience marked by overwhelming responsibility. It is evident that the responsibility involved in caring for and educating young children living in extremely difficult circumstances takes an emotional toll.

> *I said "Yeah, and where were you yesterday?" and he said "Oh yeah, I went to the shelter … The rats were chewing through my bed." And it was just – he wasn't sad, he wasn't pitying himself, it wasn't like anything … you just have to learn how to react in the moment and not just stare at him dumbfounded.*

> *… I've always struggled with this year is not bringing home the sort of sorrow I feel for some of my students. When they come to me and tell me the stories of their home life and how awful it is … I have really struggled when I know that something terrible is happening at home and they're not getting saved …*
>
> *I was potentially going to take a leave…it was exhausting and mentally draining.*

The CTs spoke of the unexpected departures of students and the difficulty of dealing with their own sense of loss.

> *Like every day, a student could be gone and then the next day you get three more and you just have to go with the flow every single day.*
>
> *… we work so hard to like connect with our kids and try and fill those needs and then sometimes just out of the blue they're gone; they've moved, they've transferred, sometimes we know where, sometimes we don't …*

The following quotes by the Teacher Candidates (TCs) reflect the ways they are being mentored within this context. The TCs reveal their awareness of the complexity in making judgements within the process of becoming a teacher. The emotional lives of kids living in poverty is a central aspect of learning for TCs as they observe CTs prioritizing the emotional needs of students over the academic concerns which they assumed would be the key focus in their practicum. The quotes also reveal that the University coursework is not viewed as being as significant as the practicum.

> *… I don't think these CT's realise how much we see and how much it helps just to be able to see that and witness it.*
>
> *I feel that a lot of what we're learning in the university context is politically correct, some of it is maybe being idealistic but at the same time, we need that stuff…but when I get into the practicum setting, it's like okay, here's the real world now and that's why I really appreciate all of you classroom teachers and the fact that you're so honest with us.*
>
> *I have learned so much, I definitely realize now that you're not going to get through all the curriculum but those basic needs come first especially in the inner-city.*

The Course Instructors (CIs) supported the narratives of the emotionally-laden experience of teaching in the inner-city and used language that characterizes the experience as "surviving" on more than one occasion. These comments characterize the CIs engagement and mentorship in high-poverty contexts:

> *… we're just constantly being asked to carry the plate a little bit, make it a little bit bigger, a little bit bigger. And we don't have like rich billionaires who are donating money to buy new schools and everything, like other industries. So, we're loving, caring people who just—we do what we can.*
>
> *I'm facing like I have to go back [to teaching in a high-poverty context] and there's preparation to survive you know, you—and to keep your standards high for it's my 20th year next year and you do go in times where you're just getting through the day.*

Importantly, the course outlines for all courses did not take up these emotional aspects directly, nor was the inner-city mentioned as a consideration. This may relate to why the TCs saw less value in University coursework in helping them navigate their practicum. The exception would be the Practicum Advisor (PA), who was also a CI, and deeply involved in making connections in the school. His course outline considered the wholistic experience of the children and involved the significance of making relationships and knowing the children well *in* and *beyond* the school as members of communities. The TCs singled this out as very helpful.

2.4.2 Emergent Theme 2—Strained/Absent Relationships with Parents and Community & Deficit Discourses

The significance of engaging with parents and communities was a theme present in the stories that led the circles. In the CT's engagement with this aspect, the majority notably constructed the relationship with parents as strained and separate, and as a challenge that needed to be managed. Only one of the CTs mentioned their efforts to connect and build relationships with parents and learn from them as an important priority. Overall, the parents and community were seen as the source of problems for students, and not generative to their educational goals. These deficit perspectives of parents positioned the teacher in an integral role as assuming a parental role not being fulfilled. While the CTs are passionately committed to meeting the needs of students, their disconnection from parents and local community is a salient insight gathered from this study with far reaching implications.

> *… you don't even think about what's going on sometimes in a kid's home life, because they're so good or coached at hiding it, so you just go on with your day.*
>
> *So, I think this unfairness is also rooted in family and stability, my presumption is that those kids are not surrounded by trustworthy people, adults. I'm shocked, because there are so many parents in jail or they don't get enough food, sleep … but those kids, I don't know who supports them otherwise than the school and the social workers, the teacher.*

Their stories revealed that many of the CTs did not see the potential of parents and community as partners. Social workers, Child and Family Services (CFS), and the school are seen as the locus of positive support in meeting students' needs. The strong belief of CTs in CFS as a support to children provides insight into the appalling apprehension rates of Indigenous children in Manitoba, and has implications beyond this study.

> *One thing that I didn't do in my first year was call parents out … These conversations usually aren't fun, I actually really don't like being kind of harsh to parents, but it's not a good conversation and so very dodgy about these things because for some, well a lot of the parents don't trust me because I'm a teacher and they don't want me to call any you know, CFS or anything like that.*

The CTs also note that they remain supported through their work through connecting with each other in the school community, and reinforce themselves together in this difficult work:

> *… when you have that group of teachers here who you can trust you know, who are going through exactly what you're going through, you mentor each other and you're a better teacher because of it …*
>
> *… so there's getting familiar with the curriculum, is important, getting creative is important, but even more important is the ability to be collegial and professional and to work together because that's the only way you survive.*

The Course Instructors (CIs) did not specifically discuss parent engagement that reflected deficit perspectives or comment about community and parents which is interesting as an omission. In review of course outlines, parents and community are mentioned briefly in one course outline. Within the talking circles, the CIs aligned more closely with the CTs, sharing views that reflected a lack of community connection. The comments revealed a focus on keeping academic standards high, most likely in response to many of the ideas in the circles about the secondary role of academics to social-emotional concerns.

> *… but you really need to keep the depth and the quality of education there for these kids and not just because it's hard, don't just give into it and yes you will call social services 50 times and they won't call back …*
>
> *… in some of the places that I've seen as a parent or as a teacher leader kind of thing, there's so many people out there in our community that don't go that extra mile, don't take that extra step and it gets exhausting after a while …*

The absence of community members in the talking circles could be considered an oversight in the research. The fact that Jeannie included community as a focus in her stories, but did not invite community members as part of the mentorship of TCs in the circles, is also reflective of ingrained habits of people immersed in school cultures—even when doing so from critical perspectives as an educational researcher.

2.4.3 Emergent Theme 3—TCs Experiencing Positive Shifts in Addressing Inequalities Despite Deficit Framing in Practicum

The deficit perspectives of parents and communities experiencing inequalities that are shared within mentorship by CTs has the capacity to either reinforce or promote negative biases with TCs. Despite the prominent discourses of disconnection from parents and communities, and the absence of positive connections with community from most of the CIs and the enhanced practicum design, TCs in this study were able to engage more generatively with diversities. Whiteness was a key aspect of the surveys, and the workshop with TCs. While whiteness was never discussed as a source of privilege in the circles, the TCs did consider the implications of their economic privilege and were more tentative on the authoritative dominance of Euro-Western knowledge systems. One TC mentioned the workshop as influencing their attempts to engage students in affirming ways. They also reflected a thoughtful consideration about honouring students' belief systems from home, and maintaining complexity within their engagement with students.

… she said to me "Mr. [TC], where do people come from?" I wasn't sure how to answer this question, because I wanted to be sensitive to her belief systems and other belief systems. I know where I think they came from, but I wasn't sure what to tell her.

… my dad grew up kind of in this area, like in and out of foster care and that kind of thing, and as a kid that was never a concern of mine. So, I never really related to him when he would say things like that … Now I think I'm kind of putting a face to it with all these little kids in the class and just kind of seeing it. So, I think talking to him, hearing everybody's stories here, that's helping a lot.

I'm thinking how could I bring those [positive inner-city community] stories into the classroom, because I don't need to teach these kids that story. I don't need to teach them how to appreciate these sorts of people because these people are in their neighbourhoods, they're their neighbours, their families.

In response to the last comment, the PA encouraged the importance of positive community engagement, and also brought this idea forward in another circle:

… what a wonderful opportunity to bring that book into the classroom to allow the students to begin to take a look at their own lives and give voice to their lives, similar to how this author gave voice to their life in that community.

… within the school there are opportunities to develop programs either in the classroom or in the school where you can celebrate the cultures that exist.

It may be that the combination of consistent mentorship of the PA, and his practice of having regular small group meetings as part of his foundations course, was a mediating factor that interrupted the deficit discourses that were being shared with TCs. Also, the critical workshop at the start of their journey may have invited the TCs to think more about their own experiences in relation to poverty, ways to build relationships, and consider their own privileges and self-understanding.

Another part of this study are the pre- and post-surveys completed by the TCs. These surveys have been used in multiple studies and were developed by Vanessa Andreotti and engaged in collaborative research with Jeannie (Kerr & Andreotti, 2018, 2019). Discussion of the surveys will be part of another article, but we did note that TCs experienced a significant shift in both their understanding of economic inequalities as a systemic problem (50% pre-survey to 72% post-survey), as well as their ability to engage educational ideas in an inner-city context that addressed the historic and systemic issues of inequalities (25% pre-survey to 50% post-survey). Although, there was an increased tendency to ignore, deny, or avoid consideration of white privilege as an educator. TCs that showed a willingness to acknowledge and address white privilege stayed the same in pre- and post-surveys at about 30%. It is important for groups of predominantly white TCs immersed in educational contexts with all white mentors to have opportunities to critically address white privilege and develop awareness of white normativity as a source of educational inequalities.

3. Result

We discuss our findings in relation to the land and its history. We are in the heart of Turtle Island (see Simpson, 2011 for a Nishnaabeg version of the creation story) at the confluence of the Assiniboine and Red Rivers, now also known as the city of Winnipeg. This general area is commonly referred to as "The Forks" and is the historic meeting place of Indigenous peoples and traditional territories of the Anishinaabeg, Nêhiyawak, Dakota, Oji-Cree, and Dene peoples and homeland of the Métis Nation (Huck, 2003). Since 1822, this has been the site of Fort Garry as the precursor to the city of Winnipeg, and another incarnation of Fort Garry further down river as the historic spot of signing Treaty 1 (Manitoba Historical Society, n.d.). The remains of Fort Garry occupy a central spot in the city, particularly since the Fort site was reified in 2015 with a 440 ft long steel and public art/light installation, which we would argue positions itself through centrality, size and location as a place of public pedagogy (Ellsworth, 2005; Giroux, 2004) reinforcing the authority of contemporary settler colonialism (Kerr, 2019). The idea that Winnipeg is founded on a fort down the river is significant to our findings. To share our findings in ways aligned with Indigenous Storywork methodology, we have woven our understanding of specific storied metaphors of relations based on inequalities and colonial encounters to provide more wholistic understandings of the findings directly connecting the research with place (Simpson, 2014). We will be drawing on our interpretation and memory of the story Up the River, Down the River (Note 4) and the Pedagogy of the Fort (Donald, 2012) to articulate our findings within a socio-cultural, political and historical context through story and metaphor.

Up the River, Down the River

A man is walking down the river and sees a child that seems to be in peril splashing in the water. Without hesitation, the man jumps in the river and saves the child, but then sees another child in similar circumstances. The man jumps back in the river and saves the next child, but then notices more and more children. The man is committed and exhausted, he implores passers-by to help him save the children in this down the river location. As such, more people help, and the cycle continues—more children struggling in peril, more people saving them, more people exhausted. One woman walks away. Another woman who is pulling a child out from the water yells to the woman who is leaving: "Where are you going? We have to save these children!" The woman responds "I'm going up the river to find out who is throwing these children in the water".

3.1 Inner-City Education: Down the River in the Fort

In our place at the fork of the Assiniboine and Red Rivers, we are located down two rivers both figuratively and geographically. This river story was a constant teacher for us and framed how we understood the framing of inner-city education and mentorship of becoming teachers by participants in this study in relation to our unique and dynamic context. The intense commitment of the participants was felt. Through tears, stories were shared of children with whom teachers are emotionally and physically invested, who then would regularly disappear—often without a trace—from the school community.

Working with children who are living in poverty and without basic necessities, and having high and unpredictable mobility in and out of the school community, clearly takes an emotional toll. Janzen and Phelan (2019) highlight the attrition and disengagement from the teaching profession due to the ethical sense of obligation to students that can be overwhelming for teachers. This was evident in this study. The teachers describe students who live without basic food and housing security, and through their stories shared the overwhelming obligation they feel towards students in circumstances that seem both impossible and ceaseless. Katya and Jeannie, who have both lived and worked in inner-city communities as teachers and researchers, understand and can relate to this experience. We see the CTs engagement in inner-city education and mentorship as being immersed down the river in saving children, and disconnected from *up the river* sources that are required for understanding and addressing these circumstances. More supports are needed for educators to understand the strengths of parents and community as potential collaborators, and to explore the sources of suffering in turbulent currents of settler colonialism, dispossession of land, and processes of racialization in which they are privileged.

In this down the river context of exhaustion and saving, the CTs deny relations between themselves and the parents/community in a way that resonates deeply with Donald's (2012) articulation of the Pedagogy of the Fort. As Donald argues, there are deeply learned habits arising from the colonial experience in Canada that reinforce a notion "that Aboriginal peoples and Canadians inhabit separate realities" (Donald, 2012, p. 91). Donald analyzes the fort as a mythic symbol that is part of the Canadian frontier imaginary that signifies the teleological dream of 'civilization', and that positions Indigenous peoples and knowledges as "*outside* accepted versions of nation and nationality" (p. 100). These narratives about Canadian nation building and civilization are deeply held in Euro-Western imaginations, and devalue Indigenous peoples and knowledges. Within the CT stories in this case study, the school manifests for the teachers as a Fort within these similar logics—becoming the guarded place of civilization and safety, in the midst of a community of danger. CTs call on each other, and other systems of colonial governance such as Child and Family Services, to aid in their difficult work of saving children. The emotional labour of the teachers in this study should not be discounted, but needs to be considered more deeply. Also, their stories of unpredictable student mobility emerged as a central narrative that require further research and attention.

Our framing of inner-city mentorship by CTs as being down the river through Fort logics is also enacted by the CIs. From their collective viewpoint in the Fort, it is not possible to see up the river, and thus to engage and understand the systemic causes of the heart-wrenching experiences. Thus, these conditions are sourced as being located down the river and enacted by the parents and local communities outside the walls of the school. The context of settler colonialism, including the pivotal and intergenerational impact of education through the Indian Residential School System, is invisibilized within Fort logics. The role of other settler colonial mechanisms such as Child and Family Services in the ongoing apprehensions of Indigenous children, attempted erasure of culture and Indigenous governance,

and the dispossession of Indigenous lands in fostering economic poverty, are not within view from the fort (Kerr, 2019).

The enhanced practicum team approach as a form of relational mentorship was incomplete and complex, and similarly enacted fort logics. The talking circles themselves did seem to provide opportunity for more relational engagements between the school and university contexts, and provided a space to give voice to personal experience, but did not emerge as being as pivotal as the PA in supporting the work of translations across contexts. The disconnections between parents, community and mentorship of TCs that emerged in the talking circles were also replicated through the study design. The lack of engagement with community in the mentorship of TCs in the enhanced practicum experience served to replicate the divided dynamics. While the research design and workshops drew attention to the up the river sources of concern in inner-city education, the practicum team approach invisibilized the potential role of parents/community in practicum mentorship that might help TCs address these systemic problems.

3.2 TCs Engaging Up the River Perspectives and Practices

A significant finding in the research was that the TC's stories revealed more strengths-based orientations to parents and community reflecting up the river understandings, despite the disconnections in their practicum experience. We believe that the PA proved to be influential in facilitating critical translations in his role as both CI/PA and working in and between the University and Heartfulness School. His explicit valuing of parents and community as educational partners worked to deemphasize the perspectives of deficit. Furthermore, the set-up of regular small meetings with this group within the PA's course had a strong impact and built trusting relationships. Jeannie's partnering with the PA in parts of his course likely reinforced key themes. Heartfulness School itself has amazing connections to community that were largely enacted by school administration, and the TCs were encouraged to attend to these connections by the PA. The implications of this finding are that translations by TCs of critical ideas from University experience would be enhanced if CTs were more directly engaged with up the river ideas, and school administration could provide more opportunity to make connections between community and CTs. This study also suggests that PAs for inner-city practicum sites be very carefully chosen for their orientation towards translations of non-deficit perspectives into course work.

The early experience of the workshop and surveying with TCs also likely destabilized deficit discourses taking hold, but the impact of the talking circles was more complex. The workshop highlighted systemic causes of oppression related to settler colonialism and Eurocentricity—clearly providing an up the river view to the dramatic situations they later encountered down the river. Starting TCs with this critical view, and having that supported by the PA, likely provided the biggest impact in the study through providing a critical lens on narratives of deficit they would encounter. This study also suggests that the talking circles may have provided much needed collegial support, but did not have a significant impact on the TCs translation of critical ideas under the circumstances presented. The emphasis on the surveying, workshop, role of the PA, and professional learning meetings provided systemic appreciation and positive orientations to influence critical translations of ideas into practice, but it was likely the relational

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attention of the talking circles that supported the work. The talking circles surfaced problematic deficit discourses within the school concerning parents and communities, and thus could be seen as working counter to the purposes of translation of critical ideas. At the same time, the opportunities for connection and relation of the talking circles seemed to create a supportive atmosphere amongst the team where the TCs felt supported to engage in their critical understandings. Although, this would suggest that more should be done within the school community to address deficit discourses.

4. Discussion

This study was working from an assumption that coursework would be a key source of up the river considerations for TCs, but this was not entirely the case. Critical issues were not found to be prominent within the coursework, nor was there a specific focus on the inner-city as a complex context beyond one course. Our findings suggest that ITE Programs should sincerely consider the degree to which critical perspectives on systemic inequalities, and non-Eurocentric perspectives, occupy within their overall programming. There are a few major findings that emerge from the narratives in this study regarding the University experience to meet the priorities of inner-city mentorship in ITE: 1) Explicit attention should be given within courses to meeting the needs of children in differing contexts—emphasizing the particular needs in learning contexts that are under undue socio-economic pressures and processes of racialization—as well as the emotional toll of teaching in these contexts, and the significance of white privilege. Coursework that attends to accommodating difference through individualized processes serves to ignore the historic and socio-cultural factors that construct difference, oppression and privilege—thus invisibilizing up the river causes; 2) Relationships with inner-city community organizations that emphasize the strength, resilience and resurgence of communities should be fostered, and the organizations positioned as mentors for TCs. A recent study notes the intense and positive effect in professional learning of centring members of communities as teachers within University programming (Asadian, 2019). We believe that there should be attention by ITE Programs to partner with community members as teachers within University programming to break down pre-conceived notions of deficit, and connect with the expertise that could inform promising and generative practices. A weakness of this study was the research design did not include community members in the talking circles as mentors. Attention to dismantling the Fort walls should be a priority and would start by acknowledging and engaging the expertise of community and parents by educational researchers.

In conclusion, this research and the findings suggest the need for overt consideration and articulation of settler colonialism and white privilege within programs of ITE and educational research. The continual negative academic *outcomes* for Indigenous and racialized students in inner-city schools reflect the inequalities of the society in which the schools exist. Schools, school systems, and ITE programs, configured in relations of white normativity, become positioned to reconstitute inequalities when ignoring the settler colonial structures and hierarchies in which they exist. Our educational systems remain down the river when we ignore settler colonialism and put ourselves in the endless position of

trying to save students without acknowledging and addressing the sources of the problems. Following the work of Mignolo (2011), we see colonial encounters as global, contemporary and responsible for wide-spread oppression of both human and more-than-human beings. The particular context of urban settler-colonial encounter, that is being robustly studied in urban geography, should inform educational work in inner-city contexts.

The findings of this study reaffirm and extend the research in teacher education on diversities and inequalities in urban high-poverty contexts. The predominant focus in the research in ITE on addressing attitudes of teacher candidates and disrupting white normativity is reaffirmed through this study. Deficit perspectives and unquestioned white normativity were found to be very present within the teacher candidates' attitudes as well as the practicum site, and a significant barrier for teacher candidates in learning to address inequalities in inner-city teaching practice. The study found that relational support structures had a positive influence in disrupting these perspectives, and provides a contribution to the existing literature. This study also extends the research in this area through moving the analysis of teacher education programming from being solely in the university into the context of the schools. Research analysts have called for more explicit attention to supporting teacher candidates in translating critical coursework meant to disrupt deficit attitudes into the practicum. This study has engaged with the complications of these translations, and suggested that the difficulty of translations is exacerbated through white normativity, deficit perspectives, and disconnections from parents and community within the school settings. Thus, this research contributes to an emergent area of investigation in teacher education programming through more careful attention to dispositional factors within practicum sites, and ways to foster community connections. We hope this study contributes to the growing literature and possibility of interruption in the inequitable cycles that endure in our local inner-city educational context of Winnipeg, inner-city contexts throughout North America, and beyond. We also hope that our work contributes to teaching in ways that disrupt the problematic hierarchies of knowledge, ethnicity, and experiences that characterize the reproduction of inequalities through programs of ITE.

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Appendix A: Abridged Versions of Jeannie's Initiating Talking Circle Stories

Story-Talking Circle 1: Anticipating Educational Inequalities

I was sitting in front of my class as my students were coming in from lunch and assembling on the carpet, when one of my students asked me "Is it safe to drink the water yet?" I was just about to respond yes. There had been a highly unusual boil water advisory in Vancouver, but it had been resolved. I was just about to say "Yes – it's safe" but then I thought: I've never actually drank the water in this 100-year-old building. I knew nobody was monitoring this. I'd never had to think about this access to water, because I always brought my own drinks to school. I had never thought about that difference in lack of choice that the kids had and I had, and it was a watershed moment. The kids were all staring at me, because I was still staring at him, and his question was hanging in the air. I hadn't thought about my difference in experience from my students in our shared classroom, and really who I am as a teacher in the inner city. What are my responsibilities? How am I related to this inequality? So, I said "Actually, I think we all need to talk." This moment changed the way I was teaching. I began to really think about the life experience of the kids in terms of what I'm teaching. So, we spent the year on water, literally a whole year and did all of the subjects in relation to that, but I think it also changed me and how I related to the community as well.

Story-Talking Circle 2: In Process Mentorship in Complexity

I had been working in the inner-city as a resource teacher for a number of years, and had switched to classroom teaching. There was a lot of things that I wasn't sure about. I had a friend who was also teaching grade 7 across the city. She was a long-term classroom teacher, and had a lot more experience than I did in that classroom aspect of teaching. We became partner classes, and I looked to her as a mentor. We were having dinner one night and she said to me 'I don't like the way you talk about the kids' and I just about hit the floor because I love my students and I thought what could I possibly have done to make her think this?

I was also hurt because it was a friend. I felt very misunderstood, and she said 'maybe that didn't come out right, I just didn't know how to tell you'. She felt the way I was talking about my students was that they were always needy, and that I was always fixing everything. She thought I should think more about what the kids had to offer, than what I was doing. I argued back: 'that's my job, their job isn't to do that for me'. It was a very confusing moment for me and I felt that the way it was done, the mentorship part of it actually made me feel quite distanced from her for a while. It was about six months before I really started talking to her again in mentorship. I felt lacking in trust with her, and that she wasn't understanding me and my intentions towards the kids very well. I did think about it over time, and I have been thinking about that ever since. Particularly regarding balancing the ways I support students, but I'm learning from students and their community at the same time. In inner-city work, how I really need to focus on what the gifts are and what the benefits are from parents and community, and what I

can learn from that. So, I don't know if I've ever resolved that mentorship piece though—I looked at her differently after that, because I think we pick our mentors and mentorship is a very delicate thing.

Story-Talking Circle 3: Post-practicum Practice Oriented

I was teaching a grade four-five combined class, and Charlene [pseudonym] had been put into foster care and ended up in a housing project right near the school where I was teaching. She came into my class in February, and I was struggling with standardized assessments. Where I was working in BC, grades four and seven classrooms do these massive tests that take about a week to do. I was a little stressed already about how I was going to support the kids through this testing.

Charlene had been through trauma as she was not in her home community or with her family. She was a young Indigenous girl, and she wasn't sure of who we were as a classroom community. She was really bright and she wanted to do well, but I knew she had missed a lot of school, so I said: 'You don't have to take the test if you don't want to', but she said she wanted to take the tests. She wanted to show us how smart she is, because she really is. But the way the tests are framed, especially with math, you may not have covered the curriculum for some of the things that are being asked. So, she opened the test and she's working at that, and I could see her tears actually hitting the page. She couldn't do it, for whatever order being in and out of foster care, different schools, I couldn't prepare her in the same way. Here's this brilliant young girl just ready to show everybody, and this whole process reaffirmed all kinds of problematic things for her. I took her out of the classroom and told her that this test is not really fair, because it doesn't cover what you were doing in your other school, and she was half believing me. So, we went to the Principal and I said to her in front of Charlene, we have a problem with this test and I need you to write a letter to somebody, because the test isn't fair and I don't want her to take this unfair test. Charlene brushed it away and we organised other things. But it really made me think long-term about standardised assessment. Who are they performing for? How are my students affected?

Notes

Note 1. Heartfulness School is a pseudonym chosen by the researchers.

Note 2. Jeannie's mentorship from Dr. Archibald focused on the rock as a sacred object and relative. For a broader discussion see Tinker (2004).

Note 3. Spelling wholistic(ally) with a 'w' is intentional and reflects Archibald's understanding of Indigenous wholism (Archibald, 1997).

Note 4. Jeannie encountered the Up the River, Down the River story in Andreotti (2012) and this story has emerged in multiple conversations between Dr. Andreotti and Jeannie. This version is the way Jeannie constructed it, and shared it with Katya.