Anti-Oppressive Pedagogy:

Developing “Reciprocal Resilience” through Storytelling in the Classroom

By Georgina Hope

B.Ed., University of Victoria, 2008

BC College of Teachers, Professional Certificate of Teaching, 2008

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Georgina Hope, 2023

University of Victoria

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines how storytelling can develop resiliency, in both the student and the teacher:a reciprocal process rooted in the foundations of Indigenous, anti- oppressive, and feminist paradigms. The study captures data from educators active in innovative course deliveries, who utilise storytelling from diverse participants, themselves included. The qualitative research process utilised a mixed genre approach to review existing literature on narrative practices in group settings, to gather and describe the practices of said "misfit" storytelling teachers in secondary classrooms, and to interrogate the researcher's own life experience and teaching practice through autoethnographic writing. A very real damage and pain exists when a person who has experienced marginalisation and has interacted with systems of oppression finds themselves in a position, as an educator or leader, encountering and participating in dominant systems. This work names these teachers as "misfits"- they often found themselves on the margins as youth. This thesis argues it is this very misfitness that led them into a place of reciprocal resilience with the students who also do not "fit." By collecting the stories of such pedagogues, we may find avenues to create slower, more effectively inclusive, critical, and decolonising classrooms. A gap in the intersection of education, leadership, and activism is acknowledged. Ultimately, the thesis concludes with a discussion on inherent risks to educators practicing anti-oppressive methods while navigating past and continuing marginalisations of their own: a significant, emergent theme worthy of future research.

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I would not be here writing this if it were not for Gail Higginbottom, Secwepemc, who reached across the dishpit in so many ways, over and over and over again, “kukwstsétsemc.” I would like to thank my participants; it is an honour to work alongside you. I thank you for your leadership, your generosity, your curiosity, and of course, your resilience and story. Likewise, I had the amazing fortune of being taught by several misfit teachers along the way: when the student is ready, the teacher arrives, and you helped me more than you will ever fully know.

I wish to thank Catherine McGregor, who met me in a coffee shop as I navigated motherhood and academia, and took a chance on me. She saw what she calls, “leadership under the radar” and labeled it as feminist and artistic. Through Catherine, I met Darlene Clover who confirmed my art through my writing and inspired me to dream bigger. And of course, the beloved Bruno Jamie, a kindred spirit who stopped everything, mid-lecture, to acknowledge me “as a mother, an artist, a writer,” one who wears the very same outrageously flowered pants. And from here, Allyson Hadwin, who talked me off the ledge and passionately joined my committee. Ally, you are a gifted teacher, one who can walk the tightrope strung between innovation and standards. Likewise, Chandar Sundaram, who taught this “pigmentally challenged” gal a thing or two in many coffee shops around Victoria and helped me see my own value as an educator.

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She has been my unwavering flower in the concrete. My Dad - Love *is* the longest word in the universe. My brother, James Reuben Hope, who galvanised me to stand tall and brave for the vulnerable and who astounds me with his gentle giantness. Carolyn Ridley, here we are, “having our say.” And while my story surprises me, it has never surprised my husband, Brian Tucker, who has been a mountain the whole way through. And lastly, my children, Nathaniel Reuben Hope Tucker and Lilah Mae Violet Eleyna Hope Tucker, who listen, love, read, write, dance, argue, and act in gentle and ferocious ways, and are my daily reminder to seek a more just world.

Dedication

To Dad, who taught me to tell stories.

Frontpiece

Me, circa 1979.

Epigraph

"And those who were seen dancing

were thought to be insane by those who could not hear the music."

- Friedrich Nietzsche

"The truth about stories is that is all we are."

- Thomas King, Massey Lectures, 2003

Indigenous Engagement: Processes and Protocols

My research looks at the role and the experience of marginalisation and the impact of these experiences on teaching. Almost inevitably, this research would involve, at the very least, Indigenous context and history, but more specifically, Indigenous teachers. While my research is not directly contingent on Indigenous experience, several of my participants are Indigenous. I have enacted a highly relational process throughout my journey of becoming a teacher, in my work as a settler teacher teaching Indigenous students, and in my personal and professional contexts. The core teachings of time spent, relationship, and reciprocity are what guide my questions, my practice, and my process.

No formal Indigenous protocol was used when conducting this research, but I do wish to acknowledge here the teachings gifted from Indigenous leaders in my life, the work of whom has inextricably influenced and guided me. Their generosity in teaching and leading me has affected how I facilitate group settings and how I research, and a part of that is protocol surrounding decolonisation. In that spirit, I wish to name those individuals and their territories and/or Nations:

Gail Higginbottom, *Secwepemc*: Principal of Indigenous Education, Kootenays

Sarah Rhude, *Mi'kmaq/Algonquin*: former District #61 Indigenous Arts and Culture teacher

Frank Conibear, *Lyackson*: Indigenous teacher and support services, School District #61

Dr. Lorna Williams, *Lil'wat* of the *St'at" yem* First Nation

Nella Nelson, *Kwakwaka'wakw*, retired ANED District Coordinator

Jan Picard, *Metis*, writer, creative, teacher

Joanne Mitchell, *Nippissing/ Kabaowek* Nations, District Indigenous Counselor

And countless students, but namely Keanna Olsen, *Tla o qui it* and Aja Sy, *Anishinaabe*;

And Dillon.

And an unnamed student at SJ Willis who shared his story of his grandmother's teeth; and of course, where it started, Sandra, Gabriel, and George.

Two of my participants are Indigenous and have acted as mentors to me. These participants referred to themselves as Elders, but I am not aware at this stage of this being a formal title in their communities. I was asked by the academic institution whether I have documentation to support this statement, and I do not, nor do I view it as appropriate to ask for such documentation. Appreciatively, I was asked to "explain how Indigenous community members were meaningfully involved throughout the research process, from research design to knowledge sharing" and to "outline the plan, as developed with the community, for the outcomes of the research, including research data ownership, sharing, storage, and governance" and this short chapter aims to address this important consideration (Human Research Ethics Board, 2021).

In regards to time spent and to how I process and include Indigenous context, content, pedagogy, and voice into my work as an educator, I wish to comment on my journey as a settler/immigrant person of British ethnicity working within the Canadian public school system. I work every day to acknowledge my visitor status to this land, which involves a daily gratitude practice. I extend this practice into my teaching as well as into my work with colleagues. All of my courses begin with territory acknowledgements and I teach my students how to move through this process with integrity and humility. I take a leadership role in regards to communication and practice with non-Indigenous staff. I initiate and lead both classroom and school wide events surrounding events held in the community, such as Orange Shirt Day, the Moosehide campaign, Two Spirit educator visits, and trips to the Native Friendship Centre. As a result of my learning

journey, I have worked in relationship with Indigenous staff and I am immensely grateful for their trust and generosity. I have taken risks, made mistakes, upset and hurt people unintentionally, and have taken the time to step back, learn more, listen more, open up more, and step in again. And to lean into my own pain, and sing and share it in Circle.

This journey has had a direct impact on my research question and my participant recruitment. My research "hunch" is a concept I am calling "reciprocal resiliency" - inherent in this process is a cyclical, relationship-based process. As such, the Indigenous participants in my study have played a key role in my own resilience. Reciprocity with these members, with the Indigenous students, and with the Indigenous community as a whole is integral to my purpose. While I do not utilise formal Indigenous knowledge or protocol, inherent to the process of working as an activist teacher *is* Indigenous teaching and culture. I do not use Indigenous intellectual property in a formal way, but my participants have shared personal stories and in some cases, these may involve cultural stories shared during the interviews. In regards to the dissemination of the research findings, my intent is to share back my final thesis. The Indigenous participants have expressed a desire to learn from my research; it is of utmost importance to me that this research be of use and benefit to them. To quote one of my participants, "We want to know the answer" (Picard, personal communication, 2020).

Additionally, the academic institution I am working within has asked that I address whether "the research seek[s] input from participants regarding Indigenous cultural heritage, cultural practices, artifacts, Indigenous or traditional knowledges, or distinct characteristics of Indigenous experience or reality" (Human Research Ethics Board, 2021).

My research seeks personal stories of marginalisation and its impact on teaching, particularly with regards to storytelling. As such, Indigenous participants were invited to share

heritage, practice, knowledge, and other distinct experiences relating to their own reality and history, as they saw fit. Data collected included Indigenous content and approach, but it was not appropriate for me (to my knowledge) to request formal permission from Nations for engagement from my participants. Participants were speaking from personal experience and not formally representing their communities. I acknowledge, however, that through their answers, reference was made at times to Indigenous communities, homelands and/or waterways, peoples, languages, histories and cultures.

I have experienced some intense frustrations working within the academic system, and this has been largely due to the concepts and debates surrounding validity and through the roadblocks of the ethics review process. While I appreciate the utmost importance of this formal process, as I am researching marginalisation and its possible interaction with storytelling teachers and their pedagogy, the roadblocks have at times felt insurmountable.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

How I got to here

I go by many names: Georgina, Mama Bear, Gin, Mz. Hope, George, Gita; I am an artist, feminist, mother, immigrant, and grass roots activist teacher. As such, I place myself in the middle of change. It is a daily grappling. I am afforded the privilege of viewing the lives of youth and the contexts in which they live, a space in which I interrogate my influence. I did not take a predictable route to this place: over my fifteen years of teaching secondary Arts and Humanities courses, I have found myself often confounded as to how I got here. It was this confoundment that led me to study leadership "under the radar" (McGregor, 2017). I seek to understand a different type of leadership, one I am unaccustomed to naming *as* leadership. I believe, against all my better wishes, that I have been "followed" as a leader of sorts, by secondary students finding and enacting agency in my humanities and arts courses. Through the course of my Masters studies, I learned I have also been followed as a type of unconventional leader by my colleagues and peers. I have always resisted the label "leader," as I have associated it with "power over." I have always been a misfit, but I have come to see this "misfitness" as the very thing that questioning humans take as a type of lighthouse[1]. Early in my career, it became evident that something rather phenomenal was occurring in front of, and within, me. I find myself in the public school system as a teacher-leader against all odds.

My students' beliefs, actions, risks taken, and courages performed led me to query my role as an authority figure, reflect on my assumptions and self-labels, and in turn, my own

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[1] I borrow this term from a participant in Mona Ibrahim Ali's study in which participants in creative writing workshops utilised previous case studies and re-wrote them to highlight strengths and disrupt the power discourse (2014, p. 102).

experiences with marginalisation and resiliency. When I completed my first teaching contract, I knew something I was enacting pedagogically was meeting a need but I could not name the need: it was occurring as my practice evolved organically and intuitively. Initially, I believed very specific contexts were vital to the phenomena I perceived. However, that perception changed as I moved across contexts, shifting from working with at-risk students to adults, and from there to relatively privileged youth in a high socio-economic status (SES) environment, then to immigrants and refugee language programs. Eventually, I came to feel a responsibility to better understand theoretically what was happening in these rooms, across wide swaths of diversity, across disciplines and across geographical and socio-economic contexts. What brought a senior citizen, studying English 12, to tell his story of escaping the Cultural Revolution? What brought the Indigenous teenaged gang member to tell me the story of his grandmother's teeth, pulled out in residential school? Why did the daughters of generations of teen pregnancies stand up and say, "not me"? Or the artist, maligned and misunderstood to be a troublemaker, to come early to class to help me set up supplies? And, furthermore, why were my colleagues turning to me, sharing stories, and saying, "I haven't remembered that in years"?

As I view teaching as a calling, a service, I believe I need to work with what Tanaka captured T'Sou-ke artist Charlene George as naming, "good hands" - meaning, to move forward, "humbly, with skills it takes a lifetime to learn properly and an openness to the spirits of the place and the wonder of the unpredictable moment" (Chamberlain, 2003, p. 236 as cited in Tanaka, 2016, p. 8). My hunch is that an intersection exists which combines the domains of leadership, activism, and education. Excitedly, I now believe there are significant gaps in our literature around those marginalised students who grow up to enact brave, misfit leadership.

Witnessing the phenomena of marginalised youth assess, practice, and implement

resilient behaviours in classrooms led by critical educators, seeing themselves being seen as resilient and labelled as so, is fascinating to me. I wish to better understand the role marginalisation has played in the educators' lives, those who lead brave, anti-oppressive, resistant classrooms. This thesis is a meta-narrative, as I write it to learn not only how those critical educators "story" that experience, and how that process influences the perception of at-risk students in their classrooms, but how I have written my own story. By doing so, I hope to describe a model of teaching practice that infiltrates hegemonic pedagogical practices. My list of goals is long; it is poetic and practical, investigative and reflective, iterative and meta. "Let me tell you how it was for me…." (Wilson, 2018).

Statement of Purpose

As I aim to be what Lowman describes as an "insurgent educator" (2007, p. 3), I wish to interrogate the systems and the contexts within which I am integrated. My position as an activist teacher of various humanities courses, as well as my own practice involving decolonising and ally work, has given me insight into fellow teachers' practices. I have grown increasingly curious as to how my colleagues navigate the public school system: the decisions they make which ultimately re-establish or resist conventional, and thereby dominant, pedagogical practices.

Additionally, as I wish to see a world which brings those individuals who are pushed to the margins into positions of power and leadership, I want to better understand my colleagues' experiences with their own marginalisations, and the histories and resistances contained within.

Put concisely, I seek to examine how storytelling can develop resiliency, in both the student and the teacher: a reciprocal process rooted in the foundations of Indigenous, anti-oppressive, and feminist paradigms. Overall, I am driven to better understand what occurs in the

humanities classroom when storytelling practices are shared, across disciplines and geographical and socio-economic contexts.

Objectives

In designing this study, I aimed to enact the following, but reserved space for courage, revelations, and magic to occur:

1. To provide an addition to the knowledge base already established on resiliency with what I have named "reciprocal resilience."
2. To better understand the school climate as it relates to both vulnerable populations within it and to teacher practices around reconciliation work and critical pedagogy.
3. To determine the effectiveness of a pedagogical approach to facilitating a storytelling space.
4. To draw upon previous scholarly work on narrative practices within group settings involving marginalised and/or at-risk individuals.
5. To contribute to decolonising, anti-oppressive pedagogy by sharing and analysing my own resilience self-story.

Statement of the Problem

To state the observed problem succinctly: the public school classroom is one which very dangerously is set up to perpetuate the colonial and patriarchal systems which a critical educator resists. Students, particularly marginalised and/or at-risk students, are therefore set up to fail, as it is demanded of them to participate in the very systems which oppress them (Merriweather, Guy, and Manglitz, 2019). Students who resist, question, rebel, or in any way find agency that is not labelled as productive and willing, are further labelled: often as oppositional, defiant, even

at-risk.

The demand to manage intensely diverse populations within one classroom setting, with the ever increasing demand placed on teachers to euphemistically ‘bring students to success,’ maintain an increasing administrative load, and navigate at times physically and psychologically unsafe conditions, all within a fast paced schedule, is one which forces educators to question, reflect, redirect, and renegotiate their actions and priorities. Critical teachers face an intersection of tensions, personal and political.

A very real damage and pain exists when a person who has experienced marginalisation and has interacted with systems of oppression finds themselves in a position, as an educator or any type of leader, encountering and participating in dominant systems. In my work, I am naming these teachers as “misfits”- they often found themselves on the margins as youth, for a host of reasons, and it is this very misfitness that led them into a place of reciprocal resilience, I would argue, with the students who also do not “fit.” As Tanaka writes, “formal education settings have typically privileged intellectual knowledge to the exclusion of other ways of knowing” (2016, p. 6). While Tanaka is speaking specifically here of Indigenising our places of learning, this acknowledgement can extend to feminist, arts-based, and otherwise similarly disruptive, ways of knowing, learning, and being.

We (the institution and culture of public school) have moved in a welcome direction: recognizing the role, history, and importance of Indigenous content and perspective; acknowledging and adapting for multiple literacies; emphasizing process as well as product; and centering student ‘voice and choice’. This is commonly and hegemonically referred to as the “safe” classroom (Merriweather, Guy, and Manglitz, 2019). Our so-called “safe” learning environments tend to favour those students who know how to navigate them (Merriweather,

Guy, and Manglitz, 2019).

And yet the phenomenon I believe I have witnessed and which I endeavoured to name, capture, and to study, is how certain educators have remained resilient through their own marginalisations, how they recognise and label those so-called challenging students, and how they story-tell through this process as an act of resistance and criticality. These practices have the power to elicit the stories of those marginalised. The act of storytelling, then, could be seen as an act of mentoring. However, the contemporary classroom is *not* a therapeutic setting; teachers who enact pedagogy counter to the hegemonic practices prescribed can encounter significant challenges to their own resilience, including disciplinary actions. Some literature exists on this tension, which was further intensified by the global COVID pandemic; likely, further research will emerge in upcoming years. I believe a gap exists in this intersection of marginalised experience, teacher resilience, and anti-oppressive pedagogy.

Significance of the study

This study aims to capture data from educators active in innovative, provocative, critical course deliveries, utilising storytelling from diverse participants, including themselves. Those educators who create spaces of experiential learning and critical examination, engage with reconciliatory practices, and create questioning spaces of agency, draw on a well that I wish to better understand. Furthermore, they enact “brave not safe” (Merriweather, Guy, and Manglitz, 2019) classrooms and do so often at great personal risk, either to their own resilience or by getting into what John Lewis may have deemed, “good trouble” (2018). By collecting their stories of resiliency and pedagogy, we may find avenues to create slower, more effectively inclusive, critical, and decolonising classrooms.

Canada as a nation advertises its desire to reconcile with its colonial past, yet does so often without any real recognition of its *contemporary* colonial practices; in my opinion, this is particularly true of the public school system. The past is othered (Jensen, 2011) as this process then allows current practices to remain unexamined. In British Columbia, we are working with a new curriculum, one which aims to develop 21st century skills which include the critical thinking skills necessary to examine oneself (whether as a teacher or student) in relation to one's position socially, culturally, historically. These skills include the ability and the willingness to assess bias, to accept change, and to observe the role of perspective; these skills, when practiced in safe and "brave" classrooms, can motivate active participation in a truly democratic society (Merriweather, Guy, and Manglitz, 2019). This is an exciting time, ripe for collaboration and co-creation of knowledge. Further to the anti-oppressive work of reconciliation, Canadians seek recognition for an education system valued for its inclusivity work, across the diverse social locations such as race, class, gender, sexuality, in which our students, *and teachers*, find themselves situated. On a personal level, as I am honoured to share a calling with these affectionately named "misfit" teachers. My research design is three-fold and includes autoethnography. The significance to me, therefore, is immeasurable, as my own story of adversity, marginalisation, and resilience is intricately knitted in, twisting like a cable-knit sweater. Engaging in this research has become a meta-narrative of my own perseverance, as I recall my past and my present, seek light on my leadership, question the pathologies imposed upon me, and honour my own story of resilience. I will unearth the buried and write boldly as an act of survivance.

Pivot and gap

This section serves the purpose of explaining how and why the research in this study contains an amendment of sorts. Initially, I took the obvious route for those wishing to study anti-oppressive classrooms: I thought I was to study the students. However, throughout the course of my studies, I have come to understand that it is the teachers I wish to study: those, who like me, have experience with marginalisation and who utilise story as a pedagogical practice.

As some of my autoethnographic writing will demonstrate, particularly the chapter titled *The Invite Table*, the focus of my study, when begun, was on the experience of marginalised studentswho had engaged with a storytelling practice, whether through listening or telling, and who had interrogated their own marginalisation through the process. However, due to challenges encountered through the research proposal process, I shifted my gaze to the teachers, specifically those who engage in storytelling practices themselves, thereby enacting what I viewed as critical, anti-oppressive pedagogy. Broadly, I wanted to look at specific forms of disruption in the classroom: physical, process, and philosophical. Narrowing this scope down, I came to question what supports are necessary in these three realms to foster an educational setting of "reciprocal resilience," a hunch I am developing through the meeting of my literature review, life experience, and teaching career. I wished to test this concept of reciprocal resilience as a type of hypothesis.

Overarching research question

The research question evolved from a focus on at-risk, vulnerable, or marginalised students, to look at the potential relationship between adversities experienced by teachers and their ensuing enactment of anti-oppressive pedagogy through storytelling. I endeavoured to name, capture, and study how certain educators have remained resilient through their own

marginalisations, how they recognise and label those so-called challenging students, and how they story-tell through this process as an act of resistance and criticality. Teachers who enact pedagogy counter to prescribed, hegemonic practices can encounter significant challenges to their own resilience, including disciplinary actions.

How have anti-oppressive educators experienced and navigated their own adversities and marginalisations, both as youth and as those leaders who have re-entered the institution of public school, and to what extent does storytelling foster this resilient behaviour?

Specific research questions:

1. What are the philosophical and aesthetic considerations necessary to encourage meaningful storytelling?
2. To what extent does the experience of marginalisation contribute to the desire and courage to enact anti-oppressive pedagogy?
3. What is the "role of others" in the fostering of resilience in marginalised populations (for example: does a facilitator need experience with marginalization in order to be recognised as a leader of such a group?)
4. What is the role of "visionary practices" in resilience, and how can telling one's story create this vision?
5. What role does language and labelling play in the fostering of resilience? For example, how does my labelling of you impact your vision of yourself as a resilient individual? Does the language used change depending on who utters the description? For example, a marginalised youth may not use the word "resilient" and say "street smart."
6. Does "reciprocal resilience" exist? In other words, am I made more resilient due to the

interactions with the youth I work with?

7. What role does storytelling play in the process of resiliency development?
8. What is the significance and effect of sharing one's story from a position of power to those in subordinate positions?
9. Can the knowledge and practices of narrative work found within fields outside of education, such as counselling and group therapy, be transferred to the contemporary secondary classroom? Can this knowledge support the educator wishing to create a classroom based on authentic inclusivity?
10. What resistance to anti-oppressive pedagogical methods have teachers faced and how can they be supported to overcome these practices?

Chapter summaries

For the purposes of clarity, here I will offer an overview of the thesis, with brief chapter summaries outlining the content of each chapter. In Chapter One, I provide an introduction describing my path to the research, the statement of purpose and my list of objectives. I include here a description of the research problem and my overarching research question, and list some specific research questions which narrow in on various elements of the problem, the context, and the objective of the study. Chapter Two provides a review of the existent literature on resilience, when studied in conjunction with storytelling practices in collective spaces. Here I offer key concepts with working definitions, including how I have personally taken up the various vocabularies for the purpose of my research. This chapter isolates and critiques four waves of resilience study and provides analysis of key themes which emerge from the existent literature. Here, too, is a discussion on the link to curricular practices. An apparent gap in the literature is

identified and discussed, with commentary on the value of novel research on risks to educators. Chapter Three outlines my methodology and methods, including an overview on the nature and value of autoethnography. Here, methodological limitations, as well as credibility and reliability are considered. Chapter Four is the autoethnography itself, which includes a prelude and five entries. Chapter Five discusses the results of the participant interviews. This section offers a definition of reciprocal resilience, describes the emergent themes, both theory generated and *in vivo*, ending with an exploration of the risky terrains traversed by anti-oppressive educators: validity, professionalism, rigour, academia, and gender are named as challenges and barriers. Chapter Six discusses what occurs when the results of the literature review, the autoethnography, and the interviews are triangulated. Found here is a focus on power and resistance, the fluid and complex nature of both the state and label of resilience, the significance to anti-oppressive practices, and a discussion on the potential for further study. Chapter Seven concludes by reviewing how all the threads from the research connect and tie back to the original question and problem, with a reflection on the significance of this work to both the field and to myself as an educator.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Stories as Change Agents

People may be silenced because they are not 'authorised' to tell their own story. They are prevented, by whatever means, from being the 'author' of the stories they tell about self. The self-stories may be imposed by someone else, which can be confusing and maddening.

(McLeod, 1996 as cited in Kellner, 2004, p. 177)

Key Concepts:

- **resilience**
- **at-risk, vulnerable, marginalised youth or adolescence**
- **narrative, storytelling**
- **school, classroom, group settings**
- **teacher resistance, identity, activism, discipline**

Introduction

To better understand how resilience building works in collective spaces, such as classrooms or support groups, researchers must take a highly intersectional approach, one which looks at the history of the study of resilience and borrows from studies conducted in a range of contexts. Ultimately, while the focus applies to the public school system, my review of literature on resilience and narrative practices extends outside of the field of education. It is necessary to borrow from work done in social work and other helping professions in order to capture the literature I believe to be useful to those who wish to implement anti-oppressive pedagogies. This

work borrows from others which have primarily had (as a focus) group therapy sessions with participants involved in such supports as addictions recovery, counselling of incarcerated populations, programs to support the impoverished, women's empowerment programs, etc.

Teacher-leaders are responding and innovating within the rapidly changing landscapes of contemporary classrooms: classrooms which increasingly are composed of an extraordinary diversity of students in one room[2]. The obstacles and everyday realities facing youth, and by extension, teachers, in public school classrooms are present, whether the curricular design acknowledges and welcomes this truth, or not. This is where both anti-oppressive pedagogical approaches and the magic of storytelling come in. The significant forces at play that enact the marginalisation of youth and create circumstances of intersecting adversities, which include and interact with those of their teachers, can be explored through storytelling. In my experience teaching for 15 years in arts and humanities classes, I have grown increasingly aware of the power this has in a classroom. Spontaneous eruptions of storytelling increase myriad positive outcomes in a class. However, to capture literature on this phenomenon involves extending beyond one narrow field of study, as it moves across disciplines and geographical and socio-economic contexts. Furthermore, my literature review and my lived experience have revealed a gap in our knowledge base, and thereby protocol, when it comes to teacher resilience, particularly when enacting pedagogy that swims against the current of the status quo. Therefore, my literature review includes work found in various disciplines, including the fields of socio-emotional regulation, anti-oppressive pedagogy, and social work. To be clear, the literature reviewed here captures existing data from studies that used all three streams: resilience, groups,

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[2] See Appendix 1: Statistics

and storytelling.

What is resilience? Four waves

The study of resilience has spanned at least 40 years and while there is no unified, agreed upon definition (Laursen, 2005), the study has moved along a continuum from a focus on innate traits, such as temperaments (Laursen, 2005; Marttila, Johansson, Whitehead, and Burstrom, 2013; Ungar, 2007) towards examining how protective measures may intervene and improve the chances of an individual's success (Bottrell, 2009). Culture, environment, and context grew in recognition as part of a "complex interplay" between an individual and an environment (Tupuola, Cattell, and Stansfeld, 2008, p. 2), and critical and linguistic considerations comprise what Ungar refers to as the fourth wave (2007). Importantly, Ungar reminds us that "finding one uniform explanation for what constitutes resilience would be neither likely nor desirable" (Ungar et al., 2007, p. 294).

First wave of resilience study:

In assessing the relative "at-risk" versus "resilient" status of individuals within care settings, authorities and care providers often refer to agreed upon developmental markers, which are seen as construing healthy development. Notions such as "dispositions of sociability" (Bottrell, 2009, p. 324), and brain development, particularly through adolescence (McLean et al., 2013), are noted. Interestingly, and of particular concern to educators, it appears meaning-making in younger adolescents through developing identification with marginalised or isolated positions has actually been associated with lower perceived well-being and with an increased risk of depression and suicide (Borst, Noam, and Bartok, 1991, referenced in McLean et al., 2013). Navigating developmental goals within the impact of trauma and scarcity, means that at-

risk students may not meet normative criteria or timelines (Ben-Yosef and Pinhasi-Vittorio, 2016). For example, learning to trust others is commonly viewed as a developmental goal in order to live and work effectively in community, but if one perceives a lack of trustworthy people in one's life, removing oneself may in fact be a sign of agency (Ben-Yosef and Pinhasi-Vittorio, 2016). So while a youth may have the innate drive and may develop skills to pursue such things as employment and higher education, their need and ability to remove themselves from harm may in fact delay or impede the attainment of such milestones.

Critique of the first wave:

What is lost or insufficient in the first wave of resilience study is an analysis or recognition that there are variables outside the locus of inherent traits, such as culture, as well as external interventions, both of which are addressed in later research. While questions remain around the role of innate, individual traits, this focus is not a current, or expansive, approach (Ali, 2013; Ben-Yosef and Pinhasi-Vittorio, 2016; Bottrell, 2009; Davidson, 1999; Laursen, 2005; Marttila, Johansson, Whitehead, and Burstrom, 2013; McLean et al., 2013; Sanders and Munford, 2016; Ungar, 2007; Tupoula et al., 2008). However, more recent research on the concept of *grit* involves the concept of inner drive, but as I discuss later in my discussion on terms, I consider grit different from resilience. While considering the detrimental potential of meaning-making processes through the process of identifying with isolated social locations (Borst, Noam, and Bartok, 1991, referenced in McLean et al., 2013) is an area which warrants further attention, such work goes beyond the scope of my study.

Second wave of resilience study:

The second wave of resilience study focused on outside influences such as the role of adults in a youth's life, interventions that could be developed from institutions, and other

external protective factors. Participants in a collective space will often look to the "idiosyncrasies of other members" (Laursen, 2005, p. 139). What we can see here is the role of others, both that of the formally recognised authority figure, but perhaps more importantly, that of the other participants in the space.

Those who exist on the margins of a community, or experience adversity and challenge, may look to those who surround them for models of behaviour. They will likely see evidence to confirm their adversities and positions; likewise, they may find people who act as beacons, or guides for appropriate or resilient behaviour. One participant in a study using structured story-telling techniques to foster women's empowerment referred to such people as "lighthouses" (Ali, 2013, p. 102). Individuals may see the light emanating from such lighthouses as a guide towards a different behaviour or story. The concept of borders between the leader and the group, or the resilient versus the non-resilient, inevitably arises "when the knowledge, skills and behaviours in one world are more highly valued and rewarded than those in another" (Davidson, 1999, p. 339). The personal behaviour and response of the leaders of such spaces is integral to creating an environment which elicits both story and resilience. The facilitators have the power to resist or re-establish such borders. What the teacher or carer views and names as desirable influences the outcomes. Youth in such spaces seek evidence that they fit or belong, even if at first glance their behaviour sends the opposite message. They are "hungry" to be seen as having potential (Davidson, 1999, p. 350).

Therefore, outside forces, such as members of a community, leaders of group spaces, decision makers selecting protective factors and interventions, and anyone else who finds themselves within reach of a person's story, play a significant and noteworthy role in the establishment of resilient behaviours, particularly those found within group settings.

Critique of the second wave:

Viewing interventions such as the inspiring teacher or the perfect lunch program as the solution can be easily oversimplified and romanticised, and we must remain critical in acknowledging the structural violence within which many of those marginalised exist. We are cautioned here: “when youth have lived with structural violence, perhaps generationally, ‘the power of stories to transform may be strained’ as the youth’s story is embedded within larger story structures that limit possibilities for resilience” (Hammack, 2011 referenced in McLean et al., 2013, p. 433). Additionally, Ungar reminds us that the “perception of what is and is not a ‘need’ varie[s] across contexts” (Ungar et al., 2007, p. 296). Ungar is addressing the power structures inherent when determining what constitutes a response from decision makers in terms of implementing protective factors. Similarly, Ali (2013) and Bottrell (2009) remind us to be cognizant of cultural blind spots. Researchers and educators alike are encouraged to move beyond a passive tolerance of diversity; employing a simple acceptance of “underground culture” falls short (Laursen, 2005, p. 138).

The concern here is that focusing on the individual or pulling individuals from “within collective, non-conformist” spaces, such as a skate park, a hip hop session, a graffiti mural in progress, etc., under the apparent guise of fostering individual resilience through an intervention of sorts, may in fact “circumvent (or risk manage)” legitimate forms of protest to inequities (Bottrell, 2009, p. 334). In addition, the recognition and naming of protective factors was established through a Western lens, that of the white, middle-class heterosexual, able-bodied populations (Bottrell, 2009; Ungar, 2007) which “has resulted in a narrow set of indicators being associated with resilience” (Ungar et al., 2007, p. 288). For example, gang affiliation might

actually be a protective factor: "children do not band together to fight and steal; rather, they band together to meet primary physical and emotional needs not being addressed elsewhere" (Ungar et al., 2007, p. 290). For someone to remove themselves from an existing, embedded, structurally violent scenario may also mean existing in an ecology for which they have limited models of survivance. Being removed from risky but collective spaces can result in a relative isolation and loneliness, which in itself is a risk factor and deterrent for those who seek different circumstances (Mclean, 2013). This furthers the point made earlier about the role of the facilitators and decision-making leaders: if youth can see their behaviours invited into the spaces, encouraged to tell their story, and furthermore, learn that of the leader, they may unearth some models of behaviour they did not know exist. Here we see how the second wave of resilience study is one to be considered, but we must acknowledge the gaps inherent in it, in particular the missing pieces around power, ecology, and language. Narrative practices can be supported, *or extinguished*, by the environment the teller finds themselves within, a concept my research will address by looking at the intersection between resilience, narrative, and collective spaces.

The third wave of resilience study:

Addressing some of the gaps in the previous two waves of resilience study, Ungar's work brings into focus an analysis of the environment and the role it plays in shaping, determining, and labelling resilience. What is often framed in dichotomous terms, such as resilience or failure, is an ethnocentric (most often white, middle class) viewpoint (Ali, 2013; Bottrell, 2009; Ungar, 2007). Assessing and labelling risky behaviour from a power over and/or ethnocentric position is problematic: resilience can involve "a defense process that uses insulation, isolation, disconnection, and denial…in order to survive in adverse environments" (Tupuola, Cattell, and Stansfeld, 2007, p. 3); Resilience and at-risk behaviour may not be an easy dichotomy if we

consider that some behaviour that is necessary to survive may be viewed by outsiders as rebellious, adverse, risky, or oppositional (Ali, 2013; Bottrell, 2009; Ungar, 2007). Creative, resilient, problem-solving behaviours can easily be pathologised within our institutions (Bottrell, 2005). What is seen as psychopathological in one environment by one social agent may be viewed as adaptive and resilient by another (Bottrell, 2005). The child runaway is seen as engaging in at-risk behaviour, whereas, if we learn the story of why she ran, what from, and what tools she used to do so, we may cast a different label to the behaviour. Tupuola, Cattell, and Stansfeld summarise this carefully when they state, “aggressive and rebellious adolescents may be showing resilience, and not necessarily maladaptation or psychopathology” (2008, p. 175).

What emerges here in the third wave is the intersection of culture and labelling. Building upon critical discourses, we see that what may be positioned as a marker of development is culture bound and exists within power structures (Ali, 2013; Ben-Yosef and Pinhasi-Vittorio, 2016; Bottrell, 2009; McLean, 2013; Sanders and Munford, 2015/16; Ungar, 2007). Where we choose and apply descriptors such as *resilient* or *at-risk* is dependent on where we situate our positions within a given culture as “resilience is a relative, culturally and contextually dependent concept” (Marttila, Johansson, Whitehead, and Burstrom, 2013, p. 4). Similarly, the labelling is bidirectional. We know that culture can act as a protective measure, offering support and relevancy. However, researchers describe that when participants tak[e] time out from one’s ethnic, faith and neighbourhood peers tospend time ‘doing one’s own thing’ [it] was often interpreted by their peers as ‘acting out’ or ‘non-conforming’ when, in many instances, they were navigating through their personal and sociocultural obligations at the covert level (Tupuola et al., 2008, p. 178).

In line with this, Ali speaks to the difficulty some youth experience when challenging

their adherence to cultures of origin, or that of family, particularly in cultures where respect for one's elders is a key teaching: “it is still very intimidating for some young people to differ with their elders” (2013, p.99).

An increasing acknowledgement and inclusion of spiritual practices is present in many social work contexts (Williams and Lindsey, 2010). The shift towards the inclusion of spirituality is one which brings people together, often into a place of connection. Spirituality in general, by “plac[ing] an emphasis on belonging to a greater whole, creat[es] a sense of meaning and purpose” (Williams and Lindsey, 2010, p. 3). The co-created culture of story-sharing in the classroom then, can be a value based, student-led space. Borrowing from the social work community, we can see that the inclusion of culture and spiritual practices that share common ground, such as the use of music, art and dance to promote experiential expression, place-based pedagogy, and of course, storytelling, can inform classroom set up, curricular choices, and teacher approach. This, in turn, may affect the perception of at-risk students, shifting from that of *problem youth* to creative, resilient, agents (Ali, 2013; Ben-Yosef and Pinhasi-Vittorio, 2016; Bottrell, 2009; Ungar, 2007; Williams and Lindsey, 2010). This can be understood, then, to be a process bettered by, and should be embedded in, an awareness of culture. Ungar captured religion as a source of relief from the tensions experienced by individuals aiming to straddle these two different worlds, “contributing to a sense of cohesion” in their lives, which acted as a resilience resource (Ungar et al., 2007, p. 298). Practitioners may be tempted to increase specificity in terms of labelling, but scholars urge researchers, teachers, and administrators to keep this larger, evolving solar system of cultural forces in mind.

Critique of the third wave:

Decision makers take a position from their own perspectives in order to assess an

individual's placement (Bottrell, 2009). Behaviour deemed as resilient in one culture, *may create adversity* in another. Consider for a moment the young Indigenous female who has stopped attending class, without any communication from home. In order to learn that she is attending a cultural event in her home territory, the teacher leans in to relationship with Indigenous community and staff members; however, without that "leaning in" (Reynolds, 2013, p. 54), the student is marked as absent, possibly reprimanded, and her mark in class is affected by her lack of completed homework. Consider another example: the Indigenous student working in relationship with the teacher, who calls the class phone from her territory, where she is attending a government organised event designed to engage Indigenous community. Again, this student and this teacher face forks in the colonial road of public school settings: what is seen as a threat to a healthy development, measured by institutional standards? And what is recognised and included as culturally relevant teaching, albeit formally not recognised as curriculum? Howard and Ticknor address this conundrum and gap in pre-service teacher training programs; they argue there is a need for better "preparation of teachers that acknowledges the social and political contexts in which teaching, learning, schooling, and ideas about justice are historically located and filled with tension" (2019, p. 28). Authentically including culture and inviting spiritual practices into collective spaces is an area wrought with tension in such settings as the public school system, which has arguably moved from a Christian dominance to a secular one. For Indigenous teachers and students in particular, this enacts colonial worldviews and can serve to marginalise and threaten a sense of belonging (Kovach, 2010; Smith, 1999; Wilson, 2001).

Bringing stories into a shared space is considered a sacred practice in Indigenous cultures (Kovach, 2010; Smith, 1999; Wilson, 2001). Settler teachers, however, are often frightened by this acknowledgement, as Eurocentric teaching has historically emphasised objectivity,

hierarchies, and emotional detachment, working with an ontological foundation in which "there is only one reality" (Wilson, 2001, p. 175), along with a Western, individuated sense of professionalism (Kim and Lee, 2022).

My research addresses this gap provocatively. My study contains two data streams: one gathered through the interviews with storytelling teachers enacting anti-oppressive pedagogy and one through my own lived experience, written as an autoethnography. It is my hope to reveal, for myself and other researchers, the complex intersecting directions, barriers, and oppressions many teachers face when attempting to enact anti-oppressive pedagogy within a patriarchal, colonial system. The data from the interviews may also address this current insufficiency.

The fourth wave of resilience study:

What Ungar names as the "fourth wave of resilience research" (Ungar, 2007, p. 288) is one that recognises and synthesises the previous three approaches: that of a focus on innate traits, to protective measures, to acknowledging the role of the environment. Ungar, Bottrell, and Ali in particular bring the work forwards to encompass a critical and linguistic analysis. The naming and subsequent assessment of behaviour inherently involves a positioning of power. The word *resilience* is one a youth may not choose to use (Bottrell, 2009; Tupuola, 2008); for example, some words captured in studies working with disadvantaged youth included a range of colloquial terms: "hard core," "hustling," "inner strength," "street survival," and "in the know" (Tupuola, 2008, p. 24). Additionally, some view the term resilient as an exclusionary or an elite term. The acknowledgement that there are compounding identities and vulnerabilities helps us to understand that a critical and dynamic approach is necessary (Ali, 2013; Ben-Yosef and Pinhasi-Vittorio, 2016; Bottrell, 2009; Ungar, 2007).

Furthering the discussion with criticality and bringing into the story the work of Paulo

Freire (1970), other researchers have brought forward the idea that resilience involves or may even "*require* resistance" (my emphasis) (Bottrell, 2009, p. 323), arguing it entails resisting the forces which create and uphold marginalising conditions (Ali, 2013; Marttila, Johansson, Whitehead, and Burstrom, 2013; Ungar, 2007). What role do resistance and rebellion play in the development of resilience? This one question continues to emerge, and sets in motion many other, critical questions and considerations, namely around power structures. Here, justice is considered: for resilience to exist, attacks to survival are present. For example, does resilience exist if there are no challenges to it? The critical lenses of Bottrell and Ali, in particular, capture these complexities.

Furthermore, identity work and cultural management are processes occurring congruently with the behaviours studied (Bottrell, 2009). Those existing on the margins of the dominant are continually navigating, assessing, and responding to the behaviours of the dominant. When speaking about resistance, we must recognise the context within which it is situated; in the case of gender dynamics, those not necessarily considered *at risk,* indeed those individuals who may be regarded as even part of the mainstream, dominant culture such as white women, may in fact, exist within an oppressed environment, one with "normative inequalities and biases" (Ali, 2013, p. 99). Overlapping marginalisations found within power structures, including colonial, capitalist, patriarchal institutions and settings, can create what Bottrell has described as "intolerable" situations (2009, p. 329), and that cumulative and compounded adversities can force individuals to continually readjust and reassess what is possible (Marttila, Johansson, Whitehead, and Burstrom, 2013). Resisting through the enactment of behaviours deemed as "patterns of deviance" is often necessary to survival and thriving (Ungar, 2004, qtd. in Bottrell, 2009, p. 325). Researchers who are also activists may agree that sharing patterns of deviance is also a form of resistance, as "storytelling is subversive in its nature, not only pedagogical" (Brune, 2002; Josephs, 2008, as cited in Ali, 2013, p. 99).

Critique of the fourth wave:

Answering the question on how resistance plays a role in resilience is not easy, but it is clear that rebellion is a necessary ingredient in dealing with structural violence and marginalisations. It has been noted that adapting to compounding, structural violences may not actually be resilient, and the language we, as educators and researchers, use to capture these behaviours can be part of the problem. If resilience is to include the protection and revitalisation of marginalised experiences, adapting (often listed as a key component to resilience) may be as harmful as it is resilient, if it means conforming to the expectations of the dominant worldview.

The mystery remains surrounding how to thread the needle between overt and covert resistances in such a manner that the story is not only told, but listened to and believed. Ungar supports the use of stories to capture "experiences of prejudice … encountered individually, within one's family, in one's community and culture, as well as experiences of resistance, solidarity, belief in a spiritual power, and standing up to oppression" (Ungar et al., 2007, p. 300). This is an area clouded when it comes to teacher experience, which I will return to later in my discussion on teacher well-being.

Stories set us up to examine these inequities and may foster resilience and give us tools "for imagining otherwise" (Bell, as cited in Ali, 2013, p. 98). For stories to be just and contribute to positive change, they will challenge the reader or listener to assess what within themselves needs to change. If the audience agrees that injustice is at fault for the storyteller's story of adversity, then the audience, or the authority figures and decision-makers, will need to themselves, "accept influence" (Gardikiotis, 2011). The conundrum here is that those who stand

to gain from the power inequity have the convenience of dismissing the storyteller.

A discussion on terminology

Looking at this through a linguistic analysis, we can see how different disciplines have aimed to name and capture the phenomenon of resilient behaviours. The term *resiliency* is sometimes used interchangeably with *agency*: resilient individuals are seen as not only capable of acting, but furthermore seen as having the choice to act or to *refuse action*; they are "autonomous, purposive and creative actors, capable of a degree of choice," (Marttila, Johansson, Whitehead, and Burstrom, 2013, p. 2). The study of resilience may need to acknowledge alternative terminologies such as "hardiness" and "wellness" (Tupuola, Cattell, and Stansfeld, 2008), and others, such as Bandura's *self-efficacy* and more currently, *grit*, as well as a host of language captured when those experiencing adversity are asked to name it, which I discuss later when defining the population studied.

For my research purposes, I chose to review but not include the concept of grit. Grit has been defined as including commitment, motivation, and passion (Vainio & Daukantaite, 2015). The origins of this term focused on what innate dispositions may lead an individual to persist in goal-oriented behaviour over the long term. Studies focused on what set *high achievers* and *experts* apart from others. Part of my critique of this term is a result of learning the original studies looked at the adherence to exercise regimes, remaining married, and completing "tough military training" (Vainio & Daukantaite, 2015, p. 2120). Further studies focused extensively on post-secondary academic performance of "traditional-age, high-achieving students, attending more selective residential institutions" (Hamilton, 2022, p. 180). I find it insightful to differentiate from similar social constructs (such as resilience): "a gritty individual does not

require feedback - they can continue in the absence of clear indicators that their effort is paying off' (Duckworth et al., 2007, 2010, as cited in Vainio & Daukantaite, 2015, p. 2120). I believe this reveals the individualised nature of this concept and negates the ecological and critical models of resilience, and therefore is not of use to me. Supporting this is the acknowledgement that grit has not been studied extensively outside of Western contexts and researchers are cautioned about generalising results (Kim & Lee, 2022).

After careful review of the literature here, I offer the following definition of resilience, which includes and synthesises the four waves of resilience study while differentiating it from the concept of grit. My definition draws heavily on the work of Ungar, Bottrell, and Ali in particular, and yet offers a succinct definition within which I can anchor my research questions:

The definition of resilience has changed over time and is culturally determined, but it can be loosely understood as an individual's ability to cope with, adapt to, and recover from adverse circumstances, a process which encompasses both individual traits and one's engagement and location within the ecology of their environment.

A discussion on the population studied

When reviewing literature on those individuals considered at-risk, I chose to include terms commonly found within educational settings: *vulnerable*, *at-risk*, *marginalised*, and *disadvantaged* are often used interchangeably. It is commonly understood that judgements and/or evaluations must be made so as to determine how an individual is viewed and labelled (Bottrell, 2009). One method of measurement used within institutions is to determine whether the youth in question have met the "developmental tasks appropriate to life-stage" (Bottrell, 2009, p. 324).

Four determinants are used as a rubric of sorts (Erikson, 1968; Masten, 1994; Steinburg,

1990; ascited in Bottrell, 2009. p. 324):

a) “engagement and achievement in school”

b) “social competence in peer and intimate relationships”

c) “moving towards independence in social and career domains”

d) “personal identity formation”

However, measuring these tasks in a linear fashion, with a checklist of sorts, is naive. A “multi-layered vulnerability” (Marttila, Johansson, Whitehead, and Burstrom, 2013, p. 8) can exist in which “vulnerability in one aspect seemed to lead and result in vulnerability in other aspects” (Kellner, 2004, p. 63). McLean et al. add that many youth viewed as engaging in delinquent behaviours are often living with “structural violence, especially poverty” and that those youth “least likely to desist [from risky behaviours] come from distressed backgrounds” (2013, p. 432).

In resisting “the system,” youth may identify as a resister, thereby achieving one developmental task (independence) while inadvertently creating further barriers (such as a negative label on file, associated with engagement or achievement in school). Many researchers remind us that adolescent transitional markers are culturally determined (Ali, 2013; Ben-Yosef and Pinhasi-Vittorio, 2016; Bottrell, 2009; Ungar et al., 2007). An insightful, comparative example is given: “the developmental pathway of the urban African American teen is problematized in the literature as non-normative…The slow, even plodding and arrested developmental trajectory of more privileged (most often white) youth is accepted as the benchmark of success” (Ungar et al., 2007, p. 290). If we were to flip the dominant script, we may see the African American teen as independent, resourceful, energetic, a self-starter, etc. This

highlights the need to "challenge a Eurocentric bias in the literature" (Ungar et al., 2007, p. 290). While we may enjoy the convenience of a binary mode of thinking, which pits "at risk" and "resilient" as opposites, we can take a more ecological perspective to re-view these states as interlocked and not mutually exclusive. My research sought to analyse from resilience-building practices found in therapeutic group settings which utilise narrative processes to elicit and support storytelling. The following section will detail how storytelling is found within said spaces.

What is storytelling?

What is storytelling? Is it verbal or written, prose or poetic? Visual? Performed? Can any creative expression be called story? Must it make meaning? Is it thoughtful creation or spontaneous eruption? Researchers may risk losing something when they attempt to quantify story: this brings power into the equation and can damage the data. When over-analysed, something of the original story is lost, "subsumed" into positivism (Bottrell, 2009, p. 326). My research will focus on the very broad, global, ancient, and human practice of storytelling, specifically what can spontaneously erupt in a classroom, but I situate my practice in gratitude for the Indigenous story protectors, who have guarded and nourished story since *time immemorial* (Weir, 2013). While we generally recognise that storytelling as a practice is ancient and human, it cannot be separated from our nation's colonial understanding of story belonging to the oral cultures of the First Peoples on Turtle Island.

Stories are inherently symbolic. Telling a story is not one directional- it involves an audience, a listener, a viewer. In this way, stories can check for truth. While easily romanticised, stories can also be rigourous acts of inquiry and revolution. Storytelling implies story-listening

(Ali, 2013); stories are never really just one thing: they are creative and co-creative, they are timely, they are personal, they are historic, they are cultural. For my research, I used "storytelling" in a very broad sense: I enjoy the word itself, over "narrative," which feels dull and unimaginative. I use the word to capture self-expression in a dynamic group setting, involving the selection of content, vocabulary, and timing; an artistic, radically imaginative call and response.

In my review of the literature on resilience building through narrative practices in group settings, I encountered two overarching themes: stories as helpers and stories as catharsis and agents (Ali, 2013; Ben-Yosef and Pinhasi-Vittorio, 2016; Bottrell, 2009; Davidson, 1999; Laursen, 2005; Marttila, Johansson, Whitehead, and Burstrom, 2013; McLean, et al., 2013; Sanders and Munford, 2016; Tupoula et al., 2008; Ungar, 2007).

Theme one: Stories as helpers

Not everyone is compelled to tell a story, particularly one of hardship, exclusion, pain, marginalisation. Those adversities themselves can leave a person preferring silence. However, it appears the act of helping can be restorative to a person's sense of self-worth. Participants may become motivated to share a personal experience if and when they feel it is of assistance to the other members of a group. They may not have initially seen the value of storytelling to their own resilience-building, but by empathetically aiding another in a group, the participant is given the opportunity to view their contribution as worthy. Learning to view their own self-expression as worthy and helpful to others, individuals existing in states of adversity may find an agency and a developing connection to community. Describing group community arts programs in which youth self-express and share their products publicly, it was noted that such spaces can "help adolescents develop an increased locus of control, increased self-esteem and increased

commitments to helping others" (Fliegel, 2000 in Kellner, 2004, p. 66). This is corroborated by Miner-Romanoff, who explains that when the creative expressions of incarcerated youth are shared, it can "increase the offenders' social capital and provide bonds with the community" (2016, p. 62). Furthermore, the community gains access to the human behind the label; visitors gain insight and shift their attitudes towards the offenders by witnessing their contributions (Miner-Romanoff, 2016). Laursen adds: "when a person gives and becomes valuable to others, feelings of self-worth are increased and a more positive self-concept is built…they become aware that they have the skills and knowledge that might benefit others" (Laursen, 2005, p. 138). Sanders and Munford encourage us to foster this desire as though youth may appear reluctant to engage and form relationships, their research suggests the youth themselves name relationship to be a protective factor, one that aids in identity decisions (2016). Stories support a shared self-expression, which provides the "*social capital* [which is] vital to their resilience" (Bottrell, 2009, p. 327).

Stories, then, can act as helpers: given the space to tell a story, we may not initially act. However, seeing how we help others in the sharing of a particular narrative, we may become mobilised. In telling the story, we continue to reflect and construct, which in turn, affects how others view and respond to us.

Theme two: The catharsis and agency of storytelling

A link can be found between the telling of one's story and the reality one wishes to capture, reflect, or even project. Catharsis is a process of expelling: the catharsis of storytelling is one that engages the storyteller in their own agency, or their perception of such. In choosing to expel a story, one enacts agency. One participant in Ali's study on storytelling in women's support groups wrote, "Along the times in which we have gathered to write, read, to listen or to

rehearse and perform, a new part of me was developing" (Ali, 2013, p. 102). This speaks directly to the agency integral to the telling. Group settings such as humanities classrooms, theatre programs, art studios, etc. which encourage the expression of one's life experience translated into story, performance, or showcase, can empower individuals to reflect upon experiences, changing "the perception of the experiences themselves" (Androutsopoulou, 2001, as cited in Kellner, 2004, p. 66). Remembering the fact that challenges to one's resilience can be manifold and often involve maladaptive behaviours, researchers McLean, Wood, and Breen differentiate between "desistance from delinquent behavior" and "meaning-making" (2013, p.435). While some destructive behaviours may not desist, the naming and framing of them can lead to a greater sense of ownership and responsibility.

However, somewhat paradoxically, meaning-making can be dangerous and lead to negative coping mechanisms, depending on the community the storyteller finds themselves within. This connects to what Bottrell referred to as predefined criteria for resilience: "what fosters or inhibits… resilience" is a shifting terrain (2009, p. 335). The storyteller must distinguish between audiences. In doing so, they enact resilient and adaptive behaviour. Though this process has its inherent risks involving the glorification of maladaptive behaviours, the process of selecting a story and sharing it with others remains agentic.

Storytelling is robust: telling one's story is not one directional- it involves an audience, a listener, a viewer. In this way, storytelling is "interactional and fluid" (Giddens, 1991, in Sanders and Munford, 2016, p. 167). Members of one's community react to the story shared, and reflect back, whether through acceptance, engagement, or opposition and contrast, and the interaction helps to establish truth and meaning-making.

Bridging from these spaces found in social work settings to that of the public school

system, we often find storytelling in “humanistic” courses such as those found in social studies or literature study (Ali, 2013, p. 103). In such spaces, participants are given a chance to practice a new self-story in a caring setting, which in turn can alter behaviours, which then extends out to the community (Laursen, 2005). However, facilitators are cautioned around focusing on trauma and problems and instead to focus on strengths and hopes (Laursen, 2005). This can be integral to a child’s understanding of themselves and can have far reaching effects (Miner-Romanoff, 2016). We need to be careful, however, as Bottrell warns us, of cleaning up stories which actually act as agents of truth-telling. Kellner captured this complexity, writing, “many adolescents…exposed to violence, feel others marginalize their experiences” (2004, p. 65) and the role of hope can be useful but ambiguous. One participant in an outreach creative program to support youth exposed to violence, stated, “Hope is a bunch of lies… Hope is fleeting…Hoping too much is not good” (Kellner, 2004, p. 73).

Participating in a creative outlet that is shared with the community can provide the chance to reflect and alter perceptions (Kellner, 2004), and “to know more and endure the truth” (Ali, 2013, p. 102). As one storyteller queried, “The main question in my head is how to transform such harsh realities into a creative writing piece in order to make it known to a broader audience” (Ali, 2013, p. 102). Bottrell warns, however, that “what may be lost in this process is young people’s legitimate critique and social protest based on their collective experiences of institutions and communities” (2009, p. 333). This important observation must not be lost within the easily romanticised view of storytelling. Merriweather, Guy, and Manglitz offer imperative reminders here: white supremacy frequently acts in a covert manner, meaning in multi-racial groups, “those who have white privilege feel emboldened to speak more freely than others more often” (2019, p. 132). Furthermore, “racial bias tends to be unrecognised because it now

manifests less as explicit discriminatory practices and more as covert, seemingly nonracial actions" (2019, p. 132). Teachers "need to continually develop their sensitivities, timing, and ability to be reflective before, during, and after interactions" (2019, p. 133).

Viewing stories as semiotic, as in pertaining and relating to signs and symbols, we can see how storytelling can become agentic, as in, creating the capacity to choose, to select, to craft. "People live storied lives, and in the telling of them reaffirm them, modify them, and create new ones," (Clandinin and Connelly 1994, as cited in Washington, 2008, p. 23). The inclusion and exclusion of details is inherently agentic and cathartic: given the tools and space to tell a story allows individuals the chance to "break the walls and spread the wings" (participant quoted in Ali, 2013, p. 102).

Collective spaces of story-sharing: Bridging the gap

There is a need to describe the parameters I used when gathering studies on collective spaces. The studies referenced in this literature review take the concept of "group setting" quite broadly. These locations include classroom settings, community arts programs, treatment centers, community outreach, poverty interventions, educational settings within the prison system, etc. I took into careful consideration the increasingly complex compositions of the contemporary public school classroom[3], which include many of the experiences explored in settings typically found in support services. A secondary humanities classroom may have over 20 different examples of adversity faced, much of compounded vulnerability. What may we learn from specialised programs supporting at-risk youth, which may be harnessed and used in the

[3] See Appendix 1: Statistics

contemporary classroom? Therefore, the key terms used in this literature review aim to capture any group setting that has programming and/or curriculum outlined, and which tend to elicit narrative as a helping/learning process, whether that be a rehabilitation center or a humanities classroom. The other area worthy of note, but beyond the scope of this review, is that of the aesthetic and physical considerations of a space when considering developing a storytelling program[4].

The completed review of the literature on storytelling in collective spaces saw three themes emerge: the existence of behaviour modifications and performativity; the strong need for belonging; and the practice of envisioning difference and change.

Theme one: Behaviour modifications and performativity in groups

Phenomena emerging from group dynamics is of particular note when discussing resilience and storytelling. Those interested in pedagogy and leadership are familiar with group dynamics, from small toddler playtime sessions all the way to mass political movements. Teachers, especially, know that the addition or removal of one individual in a group can effect remarkable change in the behaviour of those in the room, adults included. Researchers on resilience have commented on how the group can elicit and influence behaviour, whether risky or resilient, and that these shifts can occur spontaneously, and exist within a constellation of factors (Ben-Yosef and Pinhasi-Vittorio, 2016; Laursen, 2005; Miner-Romanoff, 2016; Munford, 2016; Nelson et al., 2008).

In settings in which participants are supported in story-sharing, the group dynamics

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[4] In an article titled “Contextualizing Risk and Resiliency: Using Narrative Inquiry with Female Adolescents in an Alternative High School Program” author Stephanie Washington offers some useful steps to establish storytellingetiquette

create norms such as "helping vs. hurting" and inform the culture of the room (Laursen, 2005, p. 138). A type of microcosm emerges and participants within are given moments of choice and opportunity. Participants look around and assess their next behaviour. Will they speak? Will they help? Will they lead? Will they disrupt? When the culture of the room has focused on strengths and resiliencies, a vantage point is provided from which members "become more effective at accessing their strengths and using them to bounce back from adversity" (Laursen, 2005, p. 141). So, what we see in such moments is the transformational power possible in a group: each member looking around at the others and towards the facilitator, in a continual shape and re-shape of assessment, identifications, voicing, retreating. Merriweather, Guy, and Manglitz remind us to remain both diligent and vulnerable here and to also share our own stories, as facilitators of such spaces (2019). These collectives rely "primarily on change in the young people and, to varying extents, change in significant others in their lives through processes of sharing and shifting subjectivities" (Bottrell, 2009, p. 333). Therefore, storytelling practices which are rooted in strength-based work have the potential to enable the investigative, relational processes necessary for positive change to occur.

It is difficult to locate and name the multiple shifting variables which appear to be necessary for this described phenomena to occur. Consciously creating these spaces takes multi-faceted approaches. Still, a type of unpredictable magic seems at play. However we aim to describe it or create it, it seems evident that the group one finds oneself within has enormous potential to influence one's behaviour. It is an exciting and dynamic phenomenon.

Theme two: A sense of belonging

Researchers from multiple disciplines agree that a sense of belonging is a core human need (Glasser, 2006; Laursen, 2005; Mate, 2011; Neufeld, 2004). Marginalised individuals can

experience a sharp sense of isolation, and will at such times engage in behaviours to have the core need for belonging met. These behaviours do not always equate to positive outcomes. It is clear that "social exclusion is a major risk for people living long-term in adversity" (Marttila, Johansson, Whitehead, and Burstrom, 2013, p. 1). "In order for a person to feel positive about himself, he must feel accepted by others and he must feel that he deserves this acceptance" (Laursen, 2005, p. 141). Individuals have reported that "being different translated into a sense of not belonging" (Sanders and Munford, 2016, p. 162). People will engage in a range of behaviours, which can be highly determined by the spaces they navigate, which in turn can impact self-esteem. Resilient behaviour operates within an ecological system involving innate traits, the shifting experiences within an environment, and the role of the people with whom one comes into relationship.

This may be of particular importance when it comes to young adults and adolescence. Continuity and consistency within a caring community was found to be important as it connected youth through the exchange of ideas and through the sharing of values (Laursen, 2005). Disorganized attachment relationships can result in "fragmentation and incoherence" (Solomon and George, 1999 in McLean et al., 2013, p. 445) So, continuity which fosters narrative and develops a shared sense of value and experience, appears as a key ingredient to resilience-fostering collective spaces.

The work of Bottrell, Laursen, and McLean, Wood, and Breen converge in their findings around the influence of belonging to a group. Thinking critically about how behaviours are defined as healthy or disruptive, collective spaces invite "activities, places and relationships" (Ungar as cited in Bottrell, 2009, p. 325). Participation in a group is "associated with fun, status, and support"; "sticking together" can become imperative, even if it leads to the labels such as

"bad kids" (Bottrell, 2009, p. 328). Many people will choose adherence to a group and behave according to that group's set of norms, over meeting other individual needs. We must maintain an awareness of this core human need as we can see that when it is not met, individuals will prioritise it. Certain behaviours and the ability to shift between them, such as crying with those who are seen as accepting, while withholding emotion with those who do not tolerate it, can also be seen as resilient (McLean et al., 2013). This shift in behaviour is an example of how a person will choose how to act, in relation to maintaining status in a group. Again, we must remain flexible and reflexive in the assessments as an easy dichotomy is dangerous and does not serve the purposes of an anti-oppressive educator.

Ungar helps us to draw somewhat of a conclusion:

> *Relationships*…Whether these relationships are with family members, peers, elders in the community, teachers, mentors, role models, intimate partners, and/or foes, it is through these relationships that access to resilience-related resources is facilitated…these relationships in and of themselves are the resources youth said they need to face challenges in their lives (Ungar et al., 2007, p. 296).

It appears, based on this analysis, that collective spaces hold the power to facilitate resilient behaviour in individuals because they provide a humanising space, one in which participants can situate themselves within an ecology and gain access to opportunity. This opportunity is not simply one that is limited to preventative measures and interventions, but one which offers a space of agency and change.

Theme three: Visionary practices

One resilient behaviour that involves the role of others but intersects with a highly individual practice, is that of visualising a difference: a difference in circumstance, a difference in personal involvements, a difference in outcome. This is a highly imaginative practice which is helped along tremendously by accessing role models and witnessing diverse representation, both

of which can be found in group settings which invite narrative. One participant in an ethnographic study which used storytelling through mentor texts, involving students at risk of failure, summed it up well: “We tell our stories to realize our voice, our place in the world, our understanding of being alive” (Ben-Yosef & Pinhasi-Vittorio, 2016, p. 487).

Perhaps the first step in this visualising practice is the awareness of one’s perception of *others*’ perceptions. In one study involving youth participants in an intervention program, participants were asked to create stories in response to prompts. The provided prompts were intended to create coherence and included imagined characters experiencing the actual hardships the youth participants faced. So, while the stories were ostensibly creative works of fiction, two labels emerged with consistency: “rebel” and “loner” (Nelson et al., 2008, p. 133). However, when the youth were asked to describe the “long term transformation” of their character, they focused on the change “in how they are seen by society”; the protagonists were able to “achieve a successful job…[they] were looked up to” and they were “integrated into a social context and then gained esteem within society. In the future, the person affects others by being a stable member of society” (Nelson et al., 2008, p. 133). In this case, the youth could use stories to envision a future in which they not only saw themselves as capable, contributing members of society, but could see others seeing them as such.

Additionally, visionary practices have been found to guide individuals in decisions in the present moment, by imagining possible future states. Borrowing again from the field of emotional regulation, the term *prospection* is useful here: the representation of possible futures is a ubiquitous feature of the human mind (Seligman et al., 2013). A wide range of evidence suggests that prospection is a central organizing feature of perception, cognition, affect, memory, motivation, and action (Seligman et al., 2013). In addition, *teleology*, the mental simulation of

possible consequences, is a tool which can allow individuals to imagine various future routes by examining other, adjacent consequences to similar actions; "'telos' means 'end'" (Seligman et al., 2013, p. 120). For example, an individual may employ visionary practices such as these to imagine a future, and thereby, imagine consequences, based on either their own story, or that of those around them. One can see how storytelling could enhance or assist these processes.

Ali's study focused on women, many of whom had the compounded vulnerability and experience of being mothers (2009). Davidson (1999) and McLean et al., (2013) captured similar data with the young participants who were mothers in their studies. Marttila, Johansson, Whitehead, and Burstrom echo what appears as a recurrent theme in their studies: the mothers' drive to better the lives of their children; the very act of becoming a parent came to be viewed as becoming an "agentic self," as envisioning a better future for their children seemed to act as a galvanising force (2013, p. 9). Bottrell writes again here of resistance and the need for criticality: "resistant modes of coping and cultural management are necessitated by the struggle to maintain positive identity in situations *when ascribed identity is intolerable"* (my emphasis) (2009, p. 329). Compounded marginalisations can become intolerable when one sees the story laid out in front of one's child (Bottrell, 2009; Davidson, 1999; Mclean et al., 2013). Resilient behaviours appear to be fueled by this intolerability, and visionary practices assist in the creation of a new story.

It is vital to recognise that no matter how strong a resilient person may be, power shifts need to happen multi-directionally (Bottrell, 2009). "Shifting significant others' understandings may be crucial for disadvantaged or marginal young people's resilience" (Bottrell, 2009, p. 333). When the general public is given the opportunity to witness the "voices" of those who are marginalised, "punishment philosophies, viewpoints, and perspectives [can be] challenged,

altered, or at least, called into question" (Miner-Romanoff, 2016, p. 64). Envisioning a new, more positive, future "self-story" takes agency (Bottrell, 2009, p. 333). McLean, Wood and Breen state that agency "typically emphasizes an orientation to future action and outcomes" involving goals, planning, and mastery (2013, p. 434). When students have an accumulated sense of negative labelling over their school careers and family life, they can begin to embrace it in order to find some reprieve. In other words, instead of resisting the negative label exhaustingly, they may absorb it as though they owned it in the first place, almost as an act of reclamation. One youth offered this advice: "Be that person that they think you are, be the baddest, hardest-out person there is. Be that" (Sanders and Munford, 2016, p. 165).

School professionals can have an impact here, and some have been described as "arresting, refocusing, and helping with re-authoring the educational stories of these children whose hold on a positive educational self was fragile" (Sanders and Munford, 2016, p. 165). The story that others tell about the youth has an obvious impact on the identity the youth embraces (Ben-Yosef and Pinhasi-Vittorio, 2016). However, here we also see how collective spaces can influence the story held by outsiders, in relation to those who struggle. Members in the outer circle can themselves accept influence from those who are disadvantaged (Miner-Romanoff, 2016).

In *Man's Search for Meaning*, Viktor Frankl teaches us this concept poignantly. Frankl, held captive in a concentration camp, would hold the vision of his wife as a type of lighthouse to see him through. More cutting, however, was his vision of lecturing again. Here he enacts the extraordinary: keeping the memory of a loved one at the forefront of one's mind when experiencing challenge is easily relatable. Imagining oneself lecturing on the very reality, the very trauma, one is experiencing in the moment, goes beyond this. This visionary practice is

extraordinary; it involves a faith that crosses over into audacity. How can a victim, a prisoner in a concentration camp, step out of the immediate *how* of surviving, in order to essentially time travel, imagine himself in the future lecturing on the moment he is presently experiencing?

Visioning practices can aid in identity formation. Ungar speaks of identity formation being embedded in cultural norms. Two contrasting examples are given to illustrate: one girl utilises the visionary practice of prospection: "I got this far, right? By focusing on what I wanted" (Ungar et al., 2007, p. 297), whereas a youth from a more collective culture spoke "in recognition of his role as a part of the collective political movement…His identity as an individual appeared to be irrelevant to his sense of well-being" (Ungar et al., 2007, p. 297). So, what is seen as resilient is highly culturally bound, but envisioning story and change seems to run through many examples of agentic enactment and is described as a key practice in the development of resilience.

From research to practice: Curricular considerations for educational professionals

The classroom is a space that holds its members between the dichotomized positions of power and vulnerability, agency and risk, standards and authenticity. Curricular design and decision making is always in flux, necessarily. This physical and philosophical space is a liminal and fertile one and is of particular relevance in our current educational climate. Two streams emerge here: that of aesthetic approaches and their impact on storytelling and resiliency, and academic considerations, a place of constant re-negotiation.

Ben-Yosef and Pinhasi-Vittorio ask, "Why stories?" (2016, p. 485). Personal narratives can "improve… abilities in sophisticated reading, writing, critical thinking, and inquiry strategies" (Kirby and Kirby, 2010, as cited in Ben-Yosef and Pinhasi-Vittorio, 2016, p. 485);

working with personal stories can also "become a jumping board to increased interest in school learning in general" (2016, p. 485). While many at-risk students find themselves in alternative settings (by choice or otherwise), such as detention centers, addiction facilities, or alternative school settings, they actually may find relief there from the constant pressure to create an acceptable self within the dominant paradigm. As referenced earlier, some students create the very circumstances that lead to removal from a traditional setting as an act of resistance to what they perceive as further damaging and alienating encounters in the school system: "To construct a coherent narrative thread youth needed to find somewhere else to fit" (Sanders and Munford, 2016, p. 164). In these new, alternative settings, some students find they can write "new, bold, powerful and independent self-stories over painful school selves" (Sanders and Munford, 2016, p. 164). Of course, this is challenging terrain; once students are removed, their chances of creating a "prosocial self-narrative" within the "educational narrative thread" may be lost (Sanders and Munford, 2016, p. 164). How, then, can these "new, bold" stories be fostered, within the traditional classroom, as preventive measures? Sanders and Munford call this "reauthoring the narrative thread" (2016, p. 164).

Ideally, "educational encounters [could] become dynamic, active, relational exchanges that are as much about youth finding answers to…identity questions…, as they are about accumulating knowledge" (Sanders and Munford, 2016, p. 159). Such dynamic, ecological spaces can been named as "capability-producing environment[s]" which can aid in the progression towards resilient behaviours when further challenges arise (Bartley et al., as cited in Marttila, Johansson, Whitehead, and Burstrom, 2013, p. 9). This is supported by Sanders and Munford, who write that youth who leave school settings as a result of their marginalised status, "lose access to the resilience-building resources these ecologies contain" while acknowledging

that the schools themselves can paradoxically be the very spaces that "reinforce disparities apparent in society more generally" (2016, p. 164).

It is important to note, also, that many at-risk youth, due to compounding vulnerabilities, may not have adequate literacy or language levels which may exclude certain stories from being told in a classroom (McLean et al., 2013). This is where alternative modes of storytelling and expression can be particularly powerful. Ben-Yosef and Pinhasi-Vittorio suggest that when finding alternative formats to "develop agency through storytelling," it is important to implement options where "the format and content [are] relevant to their [youth's] lives and experiences" (2016, p. 485). These researchers focused on Slam poetry as a means of gaining and providing access to resilience stories.

Supporting students in "writing personal stories require[s] students to examine and reflect on key elements of exposition, teaching them to '…to explore, remember, reflect, reveal, analyze, organize, prioritize, and understand' the texts at hand" (Kirby & Kirby, as cited in (Ben-Yosef and Pinhasi-Vittorio, 2016, p. 488). This is an area, however, that can be dangerous for all participants, as assessment can act as a detriment. Teachers are mandated to construct, assign, and defend a percentage as a grade. Sanders and Munford acknowledge the difficulty of making pedagogical change in the "already pressured environment" of many schools, and stress that "it is important to identify practices that can be easily adopted…within existing operations" (2016, p. 158). I am reminded here again of the work of Merriweather, Guy, and Manglitz, Freire, and hooks. Having to assess work and report to administrators according to a pre-arranged schedule is in direct contrast to working relationally; this process reminds each participant, teacher and student, of the hierarchy inherent to public school systems. Ultimately, it is divisive. Freire's and hooks' works speak to the audacity of love in activist and educational spaces.

Merriweather, Guy, and Manglitz, while recognising the need for a facilitator to maintain a groundedness of sorts, also name the inherent tension here when they encourage teachers to operate brave classrooms in which honesty and vulnerability are shared amongst all members present. As I willdiscuss later, this practice as a storytelling teacher is one full of intersecting and competing pressures.

So how have teachers and researchers navigated this tricky, evolving terrain? Nelson, McClintock, Perez-Ferguson, Shawver, and Thompson used a structured storytelling technique (2008). Davidson notes teachers who enact an "interactional" (1999, p. 343) pedagogy can affect "[youth's] willingness to adapt to varied classrooms" which "illustrate[s] that stigmatized youth prefer teachers who give personal attention to students, who convey respect for and confidence in students who are socially different from themselves, and who support and elicit student voice and input. Youths also express a strong distaste for lecturing and seat work and prefer personally relevant information" (Davidson, 1999, p. 338). "Petty rules, irrelevant curriculum and lack of support for dealing with difficulties" are viewed as detrimental, and students, particularly girls, feel they may be "stereotyped in pejorative ways" (Bottrell, 2009, p. 328). Interestingly, Bottrell's female participants noted they can "identify particular teachers who are exceptions" (2009, p. 328). This identification is of particular interest to me, given my research focus on reciprocal resilience.

Reflexivity and perspective shifting enable facilitators to "stand alongside young people and be incorporated themselves into the struggle for positive identity against dominating institutional and social logics" (Bottrell, 2009, p. 333). This aligns with Sanders and Munford who found that "the relationships that some school professionals formed with the youth allowed them to re-author their educational narratives…so that school became a powerful resilience

resource and a place that fostered a sense of belonging despite feelings of difference" (2016, p. 165).

In consideration of gender dynamics, taking a feminist approach to pedagogy can allow for a rich, context-embedded use of the "mentor texts" that researchers Ben-Yosef and Vittorio (2016, p. 488) refer to, which can combine the critical with the creative: stories which offer "different gender stereotypes and gender power relations" enables participants to "read and watch from a gender sensitive perspective" (Ali, 2013, p. 99). The mentor texts can be popular, contemporary texts (Ben-Yosef and Pinhasi-Vittorio, 2016), but they can also include the "rewritings of often familiar stories such as fairytales" (Ali, 2013, p. 100). Additionally, interesting modes to complicate the dominant story can be utilized whereby "the development of certain issues throughout three generations of women from the same family" are explored; for example, from the perspectives of "a grandmother, a mother, and a granddaughter" (Ali, 2013, p. 101). Allowing participants to choose how and in which format they might express the rewrite gives agency by allowing a way *in* that is less intimidating than simply telling a story (Ali, 2013).

Addressing the gap in the literature

Enacting anti-oppressive pedagogy in today's public school classes is challenging, and minimal literature exists on the toll this constant insertion into dominant paradigms takes on the teacher-leader. Much of our current literature on anti-oppressive pedagogy has rightly focused on the youth. However, by gathering material on storytelling practices involving vulnerable youth in group settings, I gained insight into the gaps in our knowledge base when it comes to understanding the risks inherent to the facilitator. This is a research area where I hope to offer a

contribution.

Curricular design can be structured and static, at the risk of becoming the ubiquitous "safe" (Merriweather, Guy, and Manglitz, 2019). Or, it can be ever-evolving, random, and iterative. Genuine storytelling classrooms can be dangerous and unpredictable and untamed, and yet the dominant systems, of which they are a part, demand a response in which the products from such classrooms are measured. Both physical and philosophical considerations are of particular relevance in our current educational climate, one which is flooded by competing demands, distractions, and vested interests. Storytelling and resiliency-building resources and practices, on behalf of both the student and the teacher, demand constant re-negotiation.

The review of the existing literature on narrative practices and resiliency building in group settings has led me to understand there are two gaps in our knowledge that interest me. First, understandings surrounding both the physical and aesthetic considerations of those group settings is limited. Laursen writes, "limited thought has been given to transforming the environments in which youth intermingle" (2005, p. 137). I take this to not only refer to the physical environment but the social as well. How aesthetic concerns intersect with and influence pedagogical practices that aim to foster supportive, inclusive, brave classrooms is an area that has received limited study. While the importance of diverse representation has been studied, it has often resulted in mass produced, glossy pictures and posters with quotes and imagery deemed as acceptable by the dominant culture. If I were given the chance to take my research further, I would like to extend it to these aesthetic considerations; what power does the inclusion of student work and aesthetic product making /storytelling have in influencing story sharing in the classroom? And, how can this process and product creation affect change in terms of reconciliation and decolonisation? However, of greater urgency is an examination of the

positionalities, vulnerabilities, and marginalisations of the facilitators of said spaces, which is how this study contributes. I have come to question what supports are necessary to foster an educational setting of "reciprocal resilience," a hunch I am developing through the meeting of my literature review, life experience, and teaching career. I wish to test this concept of reciprocal resilience as a type of hypothesis.

While the study of resilience has at least a 40 year history, much of that work has been conducted on those *named* as vulnerable, such as the more typically homogeneous groups seeking help in therapeutic spaces, such as treatment settings, community outreach, poverty interventions, educational settings within the prison system, Alcoholics Anonymous, etc. It appears this consideration is lacking when it comes to a focus on the leaders creating and managing those spaces. Such support spaces tend to focus on a group of individuals tied together with some common experience, such as a challenge to their health and safety, past experiences with criminality, etc. In contrast to these relatively homogenous groups (with acknowledgment of the highly nuanced and varied nature of adversity) is the increasingly complex compositions of the contemporary public school classroom. Contemporary public high school classrooms will invariably include members experiencing many of the adversities explored in settings typically found in support services[5]. Teachers are navigating this terrain while under the pressure to meet curriculum, assess, and report. In a large study conducted in China which analysed global trends in education, researchers assert that educational reforms have been implemented since the 1990s which have ultimately led to "management logics such as accountability and competition into school systems" which have in turn, "profoundly affected teachers' work and well-being" (Day,

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[5] See Appendix 1: Statistics

2017, as cited in Tsang, Du, and Teng, 2022, p.1). Burnout, a decrease in mental and physical health, impeded social and emotional regulation, ineffective coping, and a loss of boundaries on social media are cited as reported effects across several studies in response to the increased demands to manage and run classrooms with a business type model while keeping abreast of current social justice iterations (Kuen, 2012; Maior, Dobriean, and Pasarelu, 2020; Tsang, Du, and Teng, 2022). This is gendered and ageist terrain (Furman, 2020; Henderson, 2019; Marshman et al., 2017). In addition, teachers' social-emotional competence has a direct impact on student achievement, engagement, investment, etc (Oberle, et al., 2020). This research intersects with my research question around anti-oppressive pedagogy and has, in turn, led me to further curiosity about the said marginalisations of not the students, but the facilitators of these groups; in particular, the teachers who have persisted in the face of personal adversities, systemic oppressions, increased depersonalisation (Maior, Dobriean, and Pasarelu, 2020), and disciplinary actions, all of which act assertively to obstruct the path of the storytelling teacher aiming to insert anti-oppressive pedagogy into the system. In my research, I have come to name these teachers as misfits.

Existent literature on the risks to facilitators

Anti-racist educators Merriweather, Guy, and Manglitz remind teachers to consider "how to deal with the possibility of conflict that produces resistance, silence, or backlash ahead of time" when attempting to initiate anti-oppressive lessons into their classrooms (2019, p. 131).

Their focus was primarily on the resistance of the students in the class, and they offer profoundly useful strategies for navigating this terrain. Their highly useful and interventionist article does not, however, explore in depth the risk factors to such educators on a personal level.

Addressing this risk, several researchers have located and named adverse effects on teacher well-being but I have not yet encountered research that names intersecting and specified impacts on those teachers who entered the system with histories of vulnerabilities.

These adverse effects have been amplified by the global COVID pandemic, with an abundance of reports across disciplines describing the detriment to teacher well-being. At the top of the list is an increase in anxiety, which is revealed in physical, cognitive, and emotional effects, including increased heart rate, sleeplessness, rapid and intrusive thoughts, hypervigilance, and triggers of past traumas (Savvidou, 2020). A comprehensive review of these emerging reports is beyond my discussion here, but I believe it is highly imperative to acknowledge that developing and implementing anti-oppressive pedagogy increases the vulnerabilities of teachers across a spectrum and may be of particular relevance to understand the health and persistence of already marginalised teachers.

Teacher burnout *is* an area receiving attention. It is defined as "more than emotional exhaustion, it is more than chronic tiredness and fatigue, it is discouragement, alienation, a crisis of meaning and values, a fundamental crisis in the connections with one's work life" (Cherniss, 2014; Leiter & Maslach, 2016; Light, 2015, as cited in Maior, Dobrian, Pasarelu, 2020, p. 136). Considering how charged the climate is around the proscription of ideas, some argue that educational settings fail in delivering robust, liberal arts education if a teacher is disciplined for making a mistake, shunned on social media, and told only certain ideas or content are welcomed (Kuen, 2012; Osei, 2019). Depersonalisaton, which refers to "treating others with a numb, indifferent, and negative attitude" (Tsang, Du, and Teng, 2022, p. 2) is a particularly terrifying potential response to chronic stressors. If we, as researchers, educators, and leaders, consider how much we already know about positive teacher-student relationships and the impact that

teachers with highly developed social intelligences can have on students, particularly vulnerable ones, we can see how we have to sit up and pay attention here. Strong bonds with teachers have been shown to act as protective factors, particularly as students progress throughout high school, where the focus shifts to a more academic environment with more teachers; in addition, immigrant and racialised students are more intensely affected by the existence, or lack thereof, of strong bonds with their teachers: it is reported that these relationships can limit the consequences of discrimination but can also exacerbate the consequences when misunderstanding and interpersonal conflicts arise (Civitillo et al., 2021). Teacher passivity may sound like a far less dangerous consequence to ongoing demands and stressors in relation to depersonalisation; however, even though teachers are stereotyped "derogatorily as rule followers" (Meiners, as cited in Furman, 2019, p. 3), it has been observed that this perceived behaviour can be the result of being "coaxed, pressured, and/or forced into both obedience and silence" (Forrest, 2015; Grumet, 1988; Santoro, 2018; as cited in Furman, 2019, p.3). Feminist teachers and researchers discuss the added pressure to "get it right" when introducing gender justice content: if a feminist teacher does not succeed in delivering a perfect session under these circumstances, they run the risk of inadvertently convincing a group of students that feminist/gender content is not "proper knowledge" - resulting in not only a "blow to the lecturer's self-esteem, but to the 'cause' to which they subscribe" (Henderson, 2019, p. 118). Bring this intersectionality into discussions around racialised and Indigenous content, and we can start to see how enacting anti-oppressive pedagogy as a misfit teacher utilising stories can be incredibly challenging and dangerous terrain.

My research aims to better understand what occurs in the humanities classroom when storytelling practices are shared, across disciplines and geographical and socio-economic contexts. In conducting this review and subsequently, writing my autoethnography and

interviewing storytelling teachers, I sought to examine how storytelling can develop resiliency,in both the student and the teacher: a reciprocal process rooted in the foundations of Indigenous, anti- oppressive, and feminist paradigms. Furthermore, I wished to better understand how educators have remained resilient through their own marginalisations, how they recognise and label those so-called challenging students, and how they story-tell through this process as an act of resistance. My review has captured some data on teachers who enact pedagogy counter to the hegemonic practices and the significant challenges they may encounter when doing so. This paper acknowledges and explores teacher resistance to these compounding and contentious spaces. In a paper addressed to educational leaders, Joseph Smith notes that while curriculum wars are common on the "micro-political" level of schools, what is uncommon is finding teachers willing to overtly contest limitations. Smith writes: "teachers often resist reflexively and instinctively in circumstances where policy change impacts on their core ethical values, but that they lack alternative discourses to argue intellectually against it" (2020, p.28). Risks to teacher well-being, particularly when compounding, existing, and continuing adversities and marginalisations are present, are manifold and reverberating. Evidenced are dangerous consequences, including but not limited to, impacts on mental and physical health, depersonalisation, increased passivity, shunning, and disciplinary actions.

Concluding thoughts

Reviewing the literature exploring the risks misfit educators take to initiate exilic (Brogan, 2017) spaces of decolonising, reconciliatory, anti-racist, anti-oppressive, inclusive classrooms, it becomes apparent that a gap that exists in our knowledge base involving the intersection of leadership, activism, and education. Those educators who create spaces of

experiential learning and critical examination, who engage with reconciliatory practices, and create questioning spaces of agency, may draw on a wealth of knowledge and first hand, personal experience. By capturing their stories of past and continuing adversities, marginalisations, and other challenges to their own resiliences, we may locate and name the gaps existing which serve to further marginalise those very educators. By collecting their stories of resiliency and pedagogy, we may find avenues to create slower, more effectively inclusive, critical, and decolonising classrooms. I would argue we urgently need to assess the compounding vulnerabilities the teachers face themselves. Considering the highly relational process necessary to invite decolonising and feminist research practices in order to gather their stories means that research conducted with efficiency in mind reinscribes the "dominator" culture bell hooks (2000) names, and keeps these voices not only on the margins of our data, but perhaps entirely out of it.

In review, then, the 40 year study of resilience contains four "waves": a focus on the individual with inherent traits; a query around interventions and protective forces; an increased understanding of culture and its role in defining, assessing, and responding to behaviours, known as the ecological model; then, a movement towards a critical and linguistic approach. This literature review has captured some emergent themes when resilience is studied through the lens of storytelling in collective spaces. My review reminds us that the re-telling of stories has the power to help others and ourselves; that it can take something from the mundane to the inspired; that it gives us a tool to reframe a story from one of victim to agent, and in fact, to take a story from the past and use it to create and frame one's identity in the present in order to design one's future. I remain curious as to how the themes isolated in this review inform or illuminate the results of both my primary research and my own autoethnography, particularly in light of the perceived gap in the literature surrounding teacher well-being and persistence in anti-oppressive

teaching methods.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Methodology

Contemporary qualitative research involves a kaleidoscope of ever-shifting and expanding, innovating, inserting, capturing approaches. My research approach was and is highly influenced by feminist, Indigenous, and resistant paradigms, such as those described by hooks (2009), Kovach (2009), Tuhiwai Smith (1999), and Freire (1970). This qualitative study embraces a transformative worldview as defined by Freire (1970): "for the truly humanist educator and the authentic revolutionary, the object of action is the reality to be transformed by them together with other people" (p. 94), not from a top down, oppressor position.

Choosing a qualitative research design fits with my research questions because I seek connections between ideas and experiences, story, and the veritability and accountability that this approach embraces. Here I drew upon the teachings from Indigenous research methodologies.

Reporting back to the participants, reciprocity, and a wider view of validity are approaches not traditionally found in colonial research (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999; Kovach, 2009), which also speaks to the feminist researcher in that it invites the truths not always accommodated. While these academic and formal teachings were highly influential, perhaps more so were the relationships built over time with members of various Indigenous communities. It was here that I learned to the core that my research would be reciprocal. This resonates with my worldview as a feminist educator working to decolonise my own practice.

I work from the following three tenets in order to frame my work, positionality, and design: the research process can be used to turn power on its head; relationships are central; and knowledge is constructed (Strega and Brown, 2015). My work is heavily determined by the great Paulo Freire, whose work was criticised as being too "idealistic" for containing "love, dialogue,

hope, humility, and sympathy," and dismissed as "so much reactionary 'blah'" (1970, p. 37). Because of Freire, I reclaim the label *radical* (1970). My fascination with resilience stems from my own life experience and through witnessing the phenomena of marginalised youth accessing, practicing, and implementing resilient behaviours in my classrooms. Through studying the storytelling practices of anti-oppressive educators, and triangulating the results with that of my literature review and autoethnographic writing, I seek to understand if, how, and why this reciprocity occurs. I believe what we do not know, and I hope to answer, is how resisting the reinforcement and re-implementation of traditionally Eurocentric, patriarchal educational systems through radically innovative, and yet historically centered, course deliveries can create ecosystems of empowerment and resilience building through story sharing.

Method

Two data streams were collected in the research process: semi-structured interviews with nine teacher participants, and data informed by my own autoethnography. Seeking insights from various disciplines, I first reviewed studies conducted in a variety of therapeutic settings which used narrative practices within group settings involving marginalised and/or at-risk individuals. This review became the source for the interview questions[6]. Semi-structured interviews were chosen as a method due to the potential for creating a type of meta-narrative; the questions were designed to elicit story. Teacher participants were recruited in the public high school setting through a highly relational process involving years of collaborative work with me, the researcher. This process would be difficult to replicate if this research were to be taken further

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[6] See appendix for a list of the interview questions.

and expanded. While relationship and time spent is held in common for the recruitment of each participant, inherent to this process were factors unique to each participant. Some participants were known to me for years as we each traversed the difficult journeys of moving from places of adversity into the more mainstream world of public school teaching. Some participants heard of my research question and shared in it, and so gravitated towards me by their own curiosities. Some participants were encountered through shared activist work, primarily through the avenues of Indigenous content and context and through work on gender equality. In all, conversations were had, questions asked, invitations to participate were discussed. This culminated in a list of educators who were sent a participant consent form. I documented this process with the school district which employs me, and submitted the required forms to meet the standards held by the institution. Throughout the entire research process, from problem-posing to literature review, and on to interviews, writing up results, and triangulating, I maintained relationships in an active manner with my participants. The manner in which I did this was also responsive to each participant's need and their relationship with me. For one participant, this meant a weekly after school conversation in which we asked and answered questions. For another, it meant regular text messages to ensure validity around such things as tone and culture. For those participants in which distance influenced our relationship, we worked primarily through email. One participant chose to meet with me and go over the results and work collaboratively on various changes, such as the use of synonyms or ellipses. Every time a change was made, whether in terms of content, such as in the results section, or through my own personal barriers and challenges to resilience, an email which updated the group, termed "The Storytellers Guild," was sent out.

All the participants are humanities teachers who use, teach, and invite narrative as a pedagogical practice. Because the teachers recruited have varying degrees of personal experience

with past and continuing adversities, I aimed to capture their stories of resistance and persistence. These teachers became affectionately known as “misfit” teachers, those who invite, use, and elicit story-sharing in innovative and often spontaneous fashions. Important to note here is that this identification and terminology stems from my own perception of the educators: they did not necessarily name or even view themselves as “misfits.” Additionally, the concept of reciprocal resilience is likewise rooted in my own perspective: it is a hunch I have and wished to examine.

Participants ranged in age, but all are experienced educators with a minimum of ten years of teaching, with one teacher retired. Four teachers identify as male, and four as female. In terms of ethnicity, four identify as white, three as people of colour, two of whom are Indigenous to Canada, and one identifies as white- presenting, with mixed ethnicity. Due to the risks involved,[77] one participant requested removal from the study. Blatant bias in the selection process is acknowledged, as to engage in feminist, decolonial study and practice without relationship, time spent, and reciprocity is itself an act of colonisation[8]. Semi-structured interviews (approximately one to two hours in length) were conducted over ZOOM, recorded, transcribed[9], and then analysed for thematic elements[10]. These I coded and analysed, searching for similarities and results found *in vivo*, during the interviewing and transcribing process. Two interviews were impacted by technical difficulties with formatting, mainly due to COVID protocols and restrictions. As a result, one interview was recorded over a voice memo instead of using the software ZOOM; another needed a follow up conversation in order to verify results. All

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[7] See participant consent form for potential risks to participants outlined.
[8] This is a teaching from various friends and mentors from various Indigenous communities.
[9] Five of the nine interviews were transcribed by the software, ZOOM, and then edited for accuracy; two interviews failed to transcribe and led to personal transcribing; one interview was recorded over voice memo due to issues with internet connection and transcribed by myself.
[10] See Appendix for interview questions and participant consent form

initial transcripts were sent back to the participants over email for their review and approval. I then met with participants to discuss the results, or exchanged edits over email. I spent considerable time editing each interview closely for punctuation. For example, I often would transcribe, take a walk away from the interview, and conjure up the person and their voice in my mind. Here again, I acted as a participant in my own study, as some of my own marginalisation is a result of my neurodiversity; with the blessing and curse of hyperphantasia, I can bring forward the "spirit" of a person. In this way, I poured over every dash, semi-colon, pause, question mark, etc. to ensure I could "hear" the person and see their spirit in my work. While this led to some welcome sensitivity, in this way, I also honoured my commitment to the veritability of my study and my conviction to turn research on its head, as mentioned earlier (Strega and Brown, 2015). I sent the first draft of my results section to the participants for review. In this fashion, I attempted to ensure informed consent for the material being referenced and/or quoted. All participants were given the option to use pseudonyms and all wanted their names to be used. One participant made a point of explaining that using her name was an act of anti-oppression in that she had lived in Apartheid South Africa and had made a vow to always have her name signed as a political act: "after living in a totalitarian state like South Africa I'm never prepared to be anonymous." Indigenous participants mentioned having their names included acted as a type of space taking and space holding. Hence, I chose to use their real names when quoting.

My overarching research question evolved from focusing on what physical and philosophical considerations can be borrowed from therapeutic group settings to better facilitate brave classrooms, on to look at the potential relationship between adversities experienced by facilitators of such spaces and their ensuing enactment of anti-oppressive pedagogy through storytelling. Questions emerged around how marginalised, at-risk individuals enter the systems

of the *dominator*[11] (hooks, 2009) culture, infiltrate, persist, adapt, and effect change. My results section examines how storytelling can develop resiliency, in both the student and the teacher: a reciprocal process rooted in the foundations of Indigenous, anti-oppressive, and feminist paradigms.

Autoethnography

Autoethnography aligns with my research design as my own resilience story is intricately woven into my teaching practice and is what led me to locate and name "reciprocal resilience." Autoethnography is a form of narrative inquiry which emerged from the fields of sociology and anthropology. It differs from *ethnography***,** an immersion in and study of culture, in that it invites personal memory; as both the researcher and the participant, the writer intentionally acknowledges themselves, their position, their experience, and their memory as primary data (Chang, 2008). Autoethnography connects here with feminist and emancipatory research methodologies through the rejection of the notion of a positivist truth and that of statements around objective data analysis. The researcher is not positioned over the researched.

When autoethnography is used dynamically, with a critical reflexive rigour, it can capture a voice and some phenomena that otherwise may fall through the cracks (Atkinson, 2006; Chang, 2008; O'Connor, 2011). Often described as evocative and reader friendly, it takes some creative license in its discourse style. This creative license, I believe, also aligns it with the goals of emancipatory and feminist methodologies and can bring a voice to the data that is seen as freer and more interesting than other types of reporting (Chang, 2008). Because it can enhance the

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[11] I use hooks' conjugation of the word as I seek to insert resistant and provocative voice - hooks uses this term as a type of shortcut to "white supremacy capitalist patriarchy" throughout her works. From here on, I will be inserting her active voice to draw attention to the overt and covert violences of oppression.

understanding of self and others, and centers the researcher as participant, it is useful in social justice research and multicultural settings. Additionally, it is seen to increase criticality and reflexivity in an explicit and investigative manner, thereby attempting to disrupt traditional, hierarchical structures (Abrahao, 2012; Atkinson, 2006; Chang, 2008; O'Connor, 2011). I used autoethnography as a tool of personal interrogation and reflection. Freire (1970) galvanised my work in an ever-reverberating fashion:

> Problem-posing education is revolutionary futurity.
> Hence it is prophetic (and as such hopeful). Hence it
> corresponds to the historical nature of humankind. Hence,
> it affirms women and men as beings who transcend themselves,
> who move forward and look ahead, for whom immobility
> represents a fatal threat, for whom looking at the past must only
> be a means of understanding more clearly what and who they are
> so that they can more wisely build the future (Freire, 1970).

In review, I initially used autoethnography to establish myself in my own developing hunch around "reciprocal resilience." In a sense, I had to write in order to uncover the myriad complexities of my own life to understand why the educators I wished to study would see themselves in me. From there, I made connections between their responses and my own experiences, which I highlighted in the results section through the use of footnotes, to help the reader circle back to the stories in the autoethnography section. After this process was completed, I myself circled back to the review of the literature on storytelling, resilience, and group settings, and I pulled the threads together into a short section which threads the three components together thematically: the literature, the results of the interviews, the autoethnographic material. This I wrote as a stand alone analysis because I acknowledge the complexities of being so intricately enmeshed in my own data: the reader is given a moment to

compartmentalise and distinguish between the data threads.

Credibility and reliability

Standards to ensure credibility and strategies to assess validity in qualitative research can prove to be circuitous. I have struggled my entire life with the concept of validation. To address validity in qualitative research, it appears one must be willing to accept that story is truth. Power and hierarchy are inherent to research that is conducted by an outsider looking on or in: the researcher determines what they have gathered and witnessed as valid. In an article titled "Research That Matters: Finding a Path with Heart" curriculum scholar, Cynthia Chambers (2004) looks to *worth* in relation to validity. Research solely "aimed inward" and focused only on that writer/researcher's experience, would be difficult to view as valid or ethical (p. 2).

Chambers writes that the author of such work must look to see what others have written about said phenomena, including those ideas that may contradict the line of thought. Failing to do so means the author "shows discourtesy and does not instill confidence in the insights she may gain from her inquiry" (p. 2). Chambers' discussion led me to seek strategies and vocabulary for a method that would align with my values, and my goals of courage and truth. Therefore, I offer two strategies to invite credibility to my research, that of *transgressive validity* and *transformational validity*, both of which challenge and interrogate the very notion of validity (Marshall and Rossman, 2016; Ravitch and Carl, 2015). I embrace both of these approaches as I appreciate the focus on the change and social justice inherent to each.

Marshall and Rossman offer a table outlining three categories to refer to when seeking to establish trustworthiness, all of which involve outlining in a transparent manner the goals, questions, methods, and writing styles for the reader, the participants, and fellow researchers. In

contrast to traditional, foundationalist approaches, I insert my data as a hopeful “catalyst for a widened understanding of the human condition” (Marshall and Rossman, 2016, p.48). Therefore, I embrace what Marshall and Rossman refer to as an “Art/Impressionist” instrument to work towards trustworthiness (p. 45). My goals are directly borrowed from the table they offer: “to unravel accepted truths, to construct personal truths, to explore the specific, to make art” (p. 45). My overarching research question and my listed specific questions fall under Marshall and Rossman’s broad style of questioning: “How can we cope with life? What other ways can we imagine? What is unique about my or another’s experience?” (p. 45). My methods are autoethnographic and through semi-structured interviews. My writing is mixed-genre, including the use of first person voice, literary techniques, and stories (all of which fall under the Art/Impressionist approach) as well as what they describe as a middle-ground approach, which includes “brief narratives” and “snippets of participants’ words” (p. 45). As my goals are to “empower, transform, catalyse” (Marshall and Rossman, 2016, pg. 48), I will weave the data from the two data streams into a mixed-genre, artistic, impressionist meta-narrative.

Therefore, my strategies for inviting credibility and validity are to clearly outline my intentions, positionality, and background experience from the beginning; to continually offer my research back to my participants, during and after the process, in both written form and verbal, seeking their confirmation and clarity; to rely and draw upon my own fifteen years of teaching using narrative and anti-oppressive practices; to revisit memos written over a period of five years; and to continually seek further knowledge and diverse voice in response to my work.

Because my sample sizes are small, and I am aiming for depth in responses, I have maintained a highly relational process throughout. My goal is to seek a deeper understanding of the human condition when we are brought into storytelling, collective spaces in which adversity

is present. Hawaiian scholar-activist Manu Aluli Meyer teaches us that there is a difference between knowledge, knowing, and understanding. Knowledge deepens to a knowing, and epistemology is the process of naming that new understanding; she teaches us that *Aloha* is a type of understanding that is "in service to others" (2011). My hope is that my trustworthiness is found to be sound, through my transparency, honesty, reciprocity, and service.

CHAPTER FOUR: AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

Prelude

What follows in the upcoming chapter is a series of vignettes, written as autoethnographic inquiry. As discussed in my methodology, autoethnography can be a powerful tool for the researcher who is inherently entwined within their data collection, as is the case with my work. It is important to remember that the data elicited from the participants in my study was captured as a result of their recognising of me as a fellow misfit. This is the very hunch I am endeavouring to name: reciprocal resilience. This journey towards misfits recognising misfits is described in my own stories, but in an impressionistic manner as described by Marshall and Rossman (2016). It is my hope the reader will see how the cyclical nature of resilience through storytelling occurs through the acts of witnessing, risking, and co-existing on margins. This form of research relies on more than data collection: it takes one's experience and analyses it while simultaneously authoring it. It is more than research, it is more than memoir: it is a demanding, rigourous practice.

I allowed a deeply artistic practice to occur as I moved through the recollections. It was as though I wore many hats, one of them the analyst's, one of them the little girl who remembered. More and more stories visited me as I wrote these ones, asking to join in. The reader may notice nods to these visiting stories as they are alluded to throughout. As the reader progresses through this section, I wish to remind the reader that the data found here will be integrated with the discussion section towards the end of this thesis.

In, Around, Through, and Off

A personal leadership narrative, told through the story of knitting

"In"

We are in England, in an old Victorian house full of layers of story: every decade in its one hundred year life is here in its carpet, its curtains, its furniture, like an old woman wearing makeup from all the eras of her life. Here, my Grandad was a boy. Here, he came home to nurse his mother. This is where he returned, a silenced World War II veteran. This is where my grandfather's mother's kitchen became my grandmother's kitchen, with her flour box, her step stool, her horseshoe reminding me of my pagan roots, threadbare but present in my culture. I still remember it vividly. The mirror by the front door, the only phone there with a collection box and a note reminding users to pop some coin in to cover the cost of the call. Here is where my mother lived as a goldilocked child, who became the Mod in the swinging sixties, and who returned as a mother herself, with two children and a husband. This is where I think of home: my river close by, my early breakfasts with my Grandad, my fairies in the backyard. This is where I learned lessons that are with me today, and this is where I learned to knit.

"In, around, through, and off!" my Nan says, as she sits beside me in the room off the kitchen. The front room, with its black-out curtains and heavy furniture, English sweets, and Coronation Street, is off limits. That is the room used for special occasions; we are not in a special occasion at all. We are in an everyday moment, at least to us at the time. My Nan was likely waiting on something in the oven. It might have been my favourite, "Foo-flay." Or Birdsnest. Or we might have been waiting for the blackcurrant jelly to set. I was so intrigued by this thing that kept my Nan happy. These threads and needles that started off as simple strands and only one or two loops, would end in something that had not existed before. Leave Nan for a

run outside, or a favorite television show, or a day at school, and you would return to see her every stitch pulled into an actual fabric.

Something my Nan understood was the need for children to experience the wonder of choice. What magic it was to be invited to her chest of drawers, every drawer absolutely bursting with texture, colour, strands, thicknesses: to a young artist's mind and hand, this was beyond enticing. Every piece held potential. And a sense of risk! It was all so random. These were her off cuts, all the balls of yarn leftover from decades of knitting. Here were her sweaters, her gifts, her baby clothes made for her children and her grandchildren. Pick a colour and take a chance.

Rummage through the itchy Aran wool, the angora teal, the thins and the thicks. One might run out before finishing a project, but none of that mattered because my Nan also taught me this: the love of process.

The very first thing my Nan taught me was to memorize *in, around, through, and off.* She was one of my first teachers. She knew she was teaching me the concretes, the stitches, the vocabulary, the how to's. What she likely didn't stop to analyse was the impact this would have on me; she likely had no idea this little, long haired, curious, spirited, questioning child, "you are your father's daughter….," would grow up to teach literature, Gender studies, visual art, and Social Justice. That her knitting, her very needles, would find their way to my classroom. As I sat next to her, she taught me explicitly and implicitly. She taught me how to hold the needles, how to knit and purl, how to read a pattern, how to cast on and cast off. She also taught me what impatience did to the knitting, although she didn't know this. I saw her passivity, her melancholy grow when needles were not in her hands, making that distinctive "clack," the sound of an expert knitter that I still seek to replicate successfully. She would grow impatient with knitting and talk about the project being over and done, packaged up, given away. And yet, her still hands left without yarn to pass in, around, through, and off, would replicate the listlessness her

spirit would succumb to if a project didn't announce itself within days.

My Nan was one of the first to shine the teacher's "look," upon me. As Catherine McGregor writes about the work of Grumet, the look is a "moment of embodied knowing…The child moves from the nearness of mother centered in touch, to the connection through sight…" (McGregor, p. 83). This is a profound moment between learner and teacher. I believe it is what differentiates an instructor from an educator, moving from the explicit to the implicit; it is what makes the teacher a "participant" and this is what I find to be the highest honour. McGregor writes, "the emotional bond of triumph, celebration and success created between teacher and child, is foundational to the act of teaching" (2007, p. 82). I can clearly remember my Nan's face, after she had laid her veined hands over mine, with fingertips enticingly soft, her wrinkled thumb pad lined with a thread-thin scar from a nappy pin, to guide my stitches, and I clumsily thread it *through*. "There you are. See? You did it." And the chuckle that would follow. How I would swell with pride and then motivation to do more. To persist. The teaching of process is here in how it felt to be with her, the smell of her creamed hands, and if I got close enough, the faint smell of her armpit beneath her polyester house dress. Her hair always styled, the lingering whiff of tar shampoo present. This she shared with me, and in it, she taught me intimacy. She made me feel worthy of her time and effort and stories.

"Around"

Riot Grrrl: "An underground feminist punk movement that originated in the early 1990s in the Pacific Northwest. It is a subcultural movement that combines feminist consciousness and punkstyle and politics" (Wikipedia, 2022).

Third Wave Feminism: A movement that seeks to reflect upon and use the gains of first and second wave feminism, while acknowledging the role of power and privilege, and relying heavily upon the work of Kimberle Crenshaw's coining of the term *intersectionality* (1991).

Stitch n' Bitch: "A name used to refer to social knitting groups since at least World War II in which [individuals] mostly women meet to knit, stitch, and talk. The groups have been analyzed by scholars as expressions of resistance to major political, social, and technological change. The term is now used across the globe to connect others in virtual space. The movement has been considered as a means of reclaiming women's domestic work in feminist circles…and to resist the taboo representation of the traditional woman" (Wikipedia, 2022).

Upcycling: "Also known as creative reuse, is the process of transforming by-products, waste materials, useless, or unwanted products into new materials or products of better quality or for better environmental value" (Wikipedia, 2022).

Slow Movement: A movement which advocates a cultural shift toward slowing down life's pace. Carl Honore, author of *In Praise of Slowness*, describes the Slow Movement thus: "It is a cultural revolution against the notion that faster is always better. The Slow philosophy is not about doing everything at a snail's pace. It's about seeking to do everything at the right speed. Savoring the hours and minutes rather than just counting them. Doing everything as well as possible, instead of as fast as possible. It is about quality over quantity in everything from work to food to parenting" (Wikipedia, 2022).

Bohemian: Usually refers to an unconventional, artistic person who bucks any sense of t*he way it is done*. Synonyms: nonconformist, free spirit, drop out, hippie, Beatnik. Antonym: conservative.

We are in Victoria, BC, in the very early 90s. This Victoria is not the Victoria we know now. This Victoria is a little dark and dank. The ghosts of its past loiter in the closed alleyways, the exposed bricks, the hidden areas of grime and neglect. This is the place from where the middle class professionals flee. This is a home to trumpet sounds from fire escapes, incense from back doors, oil paint fumes from surreptitiously stolen moments of resistance. This is the place where hippies eek out of mysterious rural locations smelling of patchouli, B.O., and wood smoke to dance to reggae sounds. This is where the Beatnik scholars congregate to share poems and politics with aging draft dodgers. This is where, if you know where to go, you can saturate yourself in witchcraft and hear the rumors of Victoria's satanic past inhabitants. This is where you peck and hunt in the stinking thrift stores, next to the old urine smelling woman and the hobo-pant-wearing man. This is the place of used bookstores. Girls in grandmother's dresses on bikes showing their underwear and stinky boys writing in black books, scrambling for highs of caffeine and otherwise. This is the place where I learned to knit as a resister; where I brought my Nan and my fairy river childhood to meet my craft, my seeking, my non-compliance.

At the time, if anyone had asked me if I wanted to be a teacher, or even to go to university, I would have looked at them as though they were privileged and ignorant. My world was not one for the mainstream. I was a well indoctrinated, working class girl in the service industry: my picture for myself was to waitress forever, to draw and paint and travel until I became a mother, and to live in a small bohemian dwelling. I did not see a man in my life, I did not see stability coming from anyone other than myself, and I certainly did not see myself as

capable of contributing to any type of academic discourse. My labels were daydreamer, punk/hippie, and rebel. However, this list of what I believed then was for a different type of human - the education, the stability, the career- are the things I am now engaged in and with.

Those old labels have now become maverick, dismantler, and resister. Why? That old Victoria is in there, sitting comfortably in my classroom with the plants, the knitting, the revolution. I have thread my past into it. I believe it is this that enables me to see certain students. It means that when I shine “the look” at a student, I mean it: I am incapable of faking it. My students know there is something a little different in Mz. Hope’s room. Increasingly, I am seeing the need for a digital reprieve for students. I swim against the current of Google classroom, GAFE accounts, tech packages, and all other impositions impeding our ability to slow down and connect, to reflect and to really experience something. I welcome in the students who walk as though they are the detritus of a Ray Bradbury prediction. This is how my Nan’s teaching of intimacy and process, choice and time spent, stories shared is what I now recreate. The Riot Grrl is there with her zines. The Third Wave feminist teaches intersectionality and facilitates a student’s storytelling of theirs. The Stitch n’ Bitch happens Fridays at lunch, everyone welcome, as we break down the gender binary and teach boys to knit. Upcycling is there with our salvaged wool. The Slow Movement grounds us as we take the time to “experience” and “encounter” each other, as Viktor Frankl illuminated us with his definition of love (1984, p. 111). And the bohemian is there with her informal and unconventional social habits.

"Through"

To understand this next stage in my leadership sweater, you must be introduced to some memories that might appear unrelated to the textile narrative. Bear with me as we visit some mini-stories.

Page One: Tight belted, crisply starched maid's aprons mimic the frilled tea cakes we serve. The aprons are intended to weave an illusion: to bring the customer to a different time and place, a reconstruction of the stereotyped British afternoon tea, with maids hiding grit behind gritted teeth. They grin and bear. And snicker and giggle behind a false sense of privacy in the server's station. This is where two transplanted, bewildered gypsy artist spirits find themselves, participating as actors in a play of colonization and class struggle: one a Brit, being force fed a story of her own culture; one a Shuswap Kootenay girl, dancing and giggling while dreaming of turquoise escapes. These two do not know each other yet.

Page Two: A crowded popular clothing store in a mall. Each girl with her different girl gang, both parties seeking the outfits that would tell the story they want to tell tonight. They see each other dancing in the aisles, growing impatient with the wares. One shakes her impossibly long tightly braided hair and the other wonders if she could pull that off and where that hair came from. They recognize each other. "Yeah! Hey, I'm Gail from the restaurant! See ya!"

Page Three: Steaming air trapped in a small space, the floor beneath the feet an insufficient spongey barrier to the wet cesspool of a dish pit, the smell of old mop water and rotting, thin blue rags putrefying in the corner, the angry rattle of the industrial dishwasher; she slams the sliding door down and sees a grinning impish face peeking through the masses of dishes. "Don't worry George! We got this! It's you and me and we're in this together! I'll get a handle on your tables and then I'll get in there and do a shift!" With the smile of a sister. They

reach out hands older than their 20 years, hands already used to labour and love, hands already scarred, but hands that paint and draw, and hands that connect over chaos to shake the other. Eyes connect and trust is sealed.

Page Four: It's late and the two discover they are taking the same bus home after long shifts. Straight to the back of the bus. Who knows how they start this conversation? But the questions are asked: where do you come from? What brought you here? And the answers: "I am not from here; I was brought here as a little girl. This crap we are serving is a theatrical spectacle of the real English tea. In England, tea is something that is not pomp and ritual. It is a time of reprieve and connection and replenishment and these idiots play at being aristocracy and tell me I am doing it wrong."And the other answers: "I am Native. My parents live in the Kootenays." Her answer is shorter. Both girls are taken aback. Are they more different or more alike?

Page Five: The two girls are sitting in the sun on a blanket. Buckets of tiles incongruously surround them. They clip and talk. "I'm doing it George. I'm moving back to the Kootenays. It's time. I'm going to play jazz flute. I am going to live in my little trailer on my parents' property. I'll be gone for a couple of years. I need to go home." Crestfallen, George, the more reclusive ofthe two, sits quietly and stares at this beautiful fire starter. How does she do it? How does she take the pain and use it as fuel? And she asks herself if she could. Would she dare? Gail looks and giggles and says, "You'll come up of course and visit me!"

Page Six: The Kootenays. George is out of her league and retreats. And watches. Wow. This is a whole other world. This is a world of hemp and huskies and pubs and noodles and gatherings. And cute tree-planting boys. They stay up late and share stories that are buried deep. They speak of their fathers mostly. They look at each other from time to time, "I didn't know." And "We share a lot." More than they ever knew. The deep aching love for fathers who struggle;

fathers who spill stories; fathers who have taught and hurt and loved and led and escaped. And then stayed.

Page Seven: Years later find these two pulled back to Victoria, a place they had left numerous times by this point. Gail is motoring on. That pain that she uses as fuel is abundant and it keeps her burning. The flute has been abandoned and the future teacher is lit within her. George is staggering under the weight of loss, lost, buried deep under the striations of intergenerational class messages, left behind as childhood friends gallivant around the globe and climb the ladder. A phone call. Every single thing changes in one sentence: "George, you have to check out this class I am taking. Every time I am there, I think of you. I think I am taking it because I am supposed to bring you to it!" "Ha, you are so funny Gail. Thank you for thinking of me. One day I will." But inside, the fairy river child whispers, *stay quiet, stay in your place, stay hidden, and don't burden her.* The sentence that changed everything? "*Ok, I'm coming to get you! I'll see you in 15 minutes!"*

So, how does this story, told in seven mini stories, illuminate my leadership narrative? Two massive tectonic shifts happened in those handful of years following that fateful sentence. Gail, who had up until then been quiet about her Indigenous heritage, not secretive, but quiet, went on to become a very well known, respected teacher in the district. I stood and watched in awe as she continued to take that pain and burn it. She ran away sometimes. She fought. She spoke. She was quiet. She sang. She drummed. Every once in a while, she'd call me with something along the lines of "George! You know what I am doing?!" I remember being moved to tears hearing how she was going to present to all the principals in the Greater Victoria School District on issues pertaining to First Nations students. I have forever felt honoured to have witnessed her story.

Of course, that fateful sentence also set me on fire. Gail handed me the lighter and said, “Light it up George. It’s time.” And when my fire was lit it was like a huge house doused in gasoline. It became engulfed, quickly. Gail’s teachings, her story, her example, her love: these are the things that opened my eyes. Gail embodies the teachings of non-permanence. She never holds on, she never tries to own something or someone. She just experiences it all and she passes it on. Her generosity is astounding. My low income, London Blitz-surviving family taught me to “Make do and mend.” Hold on to things, make them last, thrift, save, and worry. To some, we would appear to be on opposite ends of a spectrum: Gail, feet planted on land that has been hers since time immemorial; and me, more settler than settler, a white British immigrant. And yet, our stories overlap. Our old hands still reach out and hold. Learning about how my ancestors colonised and built their Empire led me to learn about how they colonised their own people, their women, their poor, their children, their misfits.

Gail introduced me to Indigenous culture, truly. Before her stories and songs and poems, I had an activist mind but an ignorant one. This is why I was taken aback when on the bus Gail told me she was Native. I didn’t know it at the time, but I know it now. I was used to hearing all the different places Canadians came from. Ask most generational Canadians about their heritage and their family tree branches across the map of Europe. I didn’t know what I didn’t know. I didn’t know that my understanding of Indigenous people came from constructions in books and films; the construction of Britishness in Victoria that pissed me off, the audacity of Canadians telling me what my own culture was and how to perform it, gave me a slight insight into the construction of Native-ness I had been fed. Stories are incredible shape shifters. They shift us and shape us. Constructions are stories. We must stay open to the fires but responsible with them too, lest they take us to destructive places.

"and off!"

And so we come to the last chapter, the last step in the sequence in, around, through, and off. This step is the step of my classroom, the step of my teaching. This is where it all comes together. So, how does knitting influence and represent my leadership?

"Mz. Hope, why do you have yarn in here? Can we use it?"

"Yes, that's why it is here. Who knows how to knit? Who wants to learn? Ok, perfect. You two sit together. Anyone else?"

"Really, Mz. Hope? We can do this in English class?" "Yes. And I'll read a story."

And so it begins. Some years, it is contagious and others, the needles and yarn sit, dejected, almost embarrassed in their bohemian audacity. It appears there needs to be a certain critical mass. When enough students think it is worthy to learn and practice, it takes off and they teach each other. Of course, what they are doing when they knit in the classroom involves mindfulness, reprieve, connection, a slowing down. I witness youth become children again, with smiles and curiosity, and phones forgotten. Eyes are focused, brows are knit in concentration. And stories are listened to and shared.

What I find the most endearing are the boys, with a lot to lose. Those young spirits willing to face the ire of the gender binary police. When two young men, Carlos and Dawson, ask me to teach them, I invite them to sit with me on my couch, set in the very middle of my room. This couch in itself is an activist statement. It resists institution. It is covered in the positive graffiti messages from years of social justice and gender studies classes. Anyone walking into this "English" course at this particular moment may judge me to be straying too far from curriculum. In fact, snide remarks suggesting teaching my courses must be so cute, so cosy are passed my way. What the commentators fail to note and understand is that inviting students

into a love of process, a feeling of home and connection, warmth and exploration takes deep work. It takes rigour. It takes slowness. It takes love.

Carlos sits to my left; Dawson to my right. Two seventeen year old boys, with large gentle hands, holding small needles, in around through and off. They memorise and they fumble and they allow me to sit with them. They allow me to put my hands over theirs. I teach consent and respect and mutual teaching through this. This is, again, explicit and implicit teaching.

Our young are learning the ropes of interpersonal communication through the onslaught of social media; they walk through the hallways and doorways under the stress of missed nuances, ambiguous emojis, and the incessant hyper vigilant documentation of their lives. Added to this are expectations to succeed across multiple domains, while they seek out their own identities. When they knit, they seem to remember a time when company and craft could happen without the risk of shame or embarrassment; it is as though they could almost jump in puddles again and experience the glee of the splash, without the concern for the reprimand.

It is this moment, this magical moment in which a student feels the fairy tale again, feels the intrigue of lore, and steps through… they step in, around, through, and off…that I believe is the essence of the revolution of Mz. Hope's classroom. I bring my "in"- my English fairy childhood; my "around"- my 90's riot grrrl; my "through"- the Indigenous teachings of place, time, and story; and my "off"- my willingness to misfit, to dismantle, to infiltrate, into my room; I bring it into my face, into my responses and into my choice of material. It is here, in this moment of intrigue and exchange, that I find myself as an unexpected leader.

The Invite Table

The first floor room feels like a basement, slightly damp and concrete smelling. The barred windows remind the visitor of the school's past as a prison and the rumours of bodies buried, after the hangings- though the windows were likely barred some generations after the building's incarcerating purpose had ended. Ask some students, however, and they may tell you their experience in the school system doesn't feel that far from incarceration. Depending on how they tell it, how the generations in their families tell it, school may be just that - another restraint. The room is chaos - surreptitious graffiti over the tables and walls claims space and ownership; art supplies everywhere. Broken. The supplies are broken. The room feels broken. The students respond in two extremes to the tensions: some refuse to claim the experience, they passively wait out their time. Others defiantly claim their autonomy through physicality and voice. Some take pride in their belongings and work; others do all they can to show their complete detachment.

I had taken this job as my first teaching contract. This school was notorious in the district. Known as the alternative school, it was often the end of the line for many students. Some were in and out of detention and/or rehabilitation centres. Many students were in foster care. Most had experienced generational violence, drug addictions, abuses. Some were simply incapable of following the formal and the informal rules of our society, imposed and managed and taught by our traditional schools and had been sent here in a last ditch attempt to get them through some semblance of school, to give them that golden ticket of a high school diploma. I was scared every day.

When I first inherited this art space and teaching position, I took a look around and knew I could not teach in this filthy, overwhelming space. Every surface was covered in abandoned work and supplies. Nothing had any sense of value placed on it. I knew immediately that, for

myself as much as for the students, I would have to get to work cleaning it up. Every day, I went to work two hours early and cleaned and organised. I set up stations: one for drawing, one for painting, one for quiet time, and one for communal work.

It became clear to me after day one that change was a trigger - there were two responses to change here. One was to hate it, resist it, deny it, challenge it, doubt it, sabotage it. And I was seen as change. This was expected. Many of these students had experienced really nothing but change and unpredictability. Some knew that adults would leave and so they decided to speed up the inevitable and show me their most frightening behaviours in the form of rage and threat, disdain and mockery. One student even accidentally electrocuted himself in front of me.

However, there were a few tentative creatures who had held on to the ability to wonder: these souls looked at me quietly. They approached the tables cautiously but with a sense of possibility. Researcher Mona Ibrahim Ali discusses this dynamic in her study that used structured storytelling to foster women's empowerment. In response to those disadvantaged individuals who may "choose to surrender" to less engaged and possibly risky behaviours, remaining on the periphery, one participant in the study reflected, "it will be our role…to work as a lighthouse, just pointing out to them that there are different choices and pathways" (2013, p. 102). I kept those students, who were the first to join me at the table, as my "lighthouses."

I persisted. Every day, I cleaned another area. Every day, I avoided entering the supply cupboard once the class started, as to do so meant turning my back on a room full of damaged, hurt, scared kids, some with a history of violence. After learning about some of their histories, histories that included abuses that left kids brain damaged, or had landed the youth in jail for aggravated assault, I decided not to read their case files. I decided every day was a new day,every day was a new start. They would be greeted with love and kindness and invitation.

The idea of *invitation* became more and more tangible in my approach to teaching these students and setting up a space. I realised that the only way I could encourage participation and a sense of belonging in this studio was to foster the student's agency; they needed to know that I saw them as capable artists. They needed to know I was curious about them without being another adult wanting to control them, to force them into boxes. As an artist myself, and one who had experienced my own share of adversity, I knew criteria, control, and formulas were the antithesis to the potentials here before me.

And so, the ideas of placing value on the space, starting anew each and every day, and *inviting* came together in my approach. No two days were ever the same, as many students would come and go: sometimes they were arrested; sometimes they were moved to a new foster home; sometimes they just couldn't get there. And so the Invite Table was born.

The Invite Table was one I set up in the center of the room, close to the front. I kept all the other tables, those for drawing, painting, etc., circling the center table. And each day, I placed something new on the table. I would start the class by inviting the students in and letting them go to where they wanted, and then I would sit at the Invite Table myself and quietly start Making. Sometimes it was earrings, or cards, or watercolour. The key was it had to be low risk and something that could bring a sense of accomplishment in the 80 minute class. Those tentative lighthouse students would often gravitate towards the table, their sense of curiosity still with them. I often wondered why, or how, they had kept this childlike wonder. They had just enough of a thread of trust in them to sit at the table with me. What this meant was they acted as bridges to the other students. Some students immediately wanted nothing to do with this invitation: "No thanks, I'll be over here," said with a dismissive smirk and an agentic rebellious swagger to their own chosen table. Some students, however, would hover around, circling the table, while I

listened to music and quietly made art. The beauty was when those who hovered would hesitatingly join. This could be because one of the lighthouse students had taken the risk and were acting as a leader. Or, it could be because whatever was on the table for that day was irresistible to their creative spirit.

And then, the magic started to happen. Participation in the Invite Table grew. Around this time, the administration decided to amalgamate the Alternative program with the Continuing Education program. This was, of course, to save time and money. It most definitely was not to best serve the needs of the students. Obviously, this added an incredible challenge to my teaching load as I now not only had 14 -18 year old at-risk, criminal, and abused and abusive youth to teach, but adults attending for a wide range of reasons. Some had been the at-risk students themselves and not made it through school and were trying again. Some were new immigrants to Canada, learning English and trying to find work. Some were simply older folks wanting to take an interesting class. My classroom now consisted of 14–65-year-olds. Initially, they were all baffled. The need for the Invite Table intensified. And what occurred was transformative for many of us.

“All the women in my family were teenage mums - I will not be. My mum was a teen when she had me, and her mum was a teen as well.”

“I’ll be the first to graduate in my family.”

“My grandmother’s teeth were pulled out when she was a child in residential school.”

These were the types of statements that were said at the Invite Table. Sometimes they were met with stories. Or silence. Head nods interspersed with, “can you help me thread this needle?” When I, the teacher, seen as a representative of “The System,” shared my stories of transiency and rebellion, pain and resilience, some eyes would look up. The tactile nature of

Making allowed for the spaces and the silences to feel productive. The hands-on demonstration meant that intergenerational learning occurred. My interest in resiliency, creativity, and space creation was set aflame. I knew, in this very first teaching contract, that I would return to school to study what I could see was a phenomenon.

The school system interacts with the teacher union in such a way that denies any real consistency in teaching positions. This meant that I lost this contract several times over my year at the school. Part of the pain I experienced with this process was the knowledge that some of those students, who had come to trust me somewhat, would perceive I had left them. The fortunate thing was, none of the teachers who came in to replace me would stay. I would be called back. Eventually, it came to be that when I showed up again, exclamations of “You came back!” would be uninhibitedly thrown my way. By the end of the year, I organised a community art show in a coffee shop and everyone participated. I devoted hours and hours of my personal time to this community and this studio, but I am the better for it. The art show was emotional and a huge success. The youth invited their families. Some families of origin attended with the foster families. Everyone had something on the wall, for the public to view.

The human condition is one that, when shared, brings us into connection with one of our deepest needs, that of belonging. Borrowing from the field of Educational Psychology, Self Determination Theory (SDT) is one which aims to answer how and why individuals become motivated (Deci and Ryan, 2008, p. 182-85). This theory posits that in order to motivate oneself, especially in challenging circumstances, the proposed activity must offer three things: competence, autonomy, and relatedness. When we feel competent at something, we are more likely to pursue it. On the contrary, when we feel incompetent, we are likely to despair or disengage. When we feel a sense of autonomy, a sense of personal choice and the ability to act

on it, we are likely to become more motivated. And, I would argue, perhaps the strongest of them all, is the need to relate to others. When we feel we have a connection to the others, especially significant others, we will pursue the behavior. This can be seen in all types of groups. We see people act in ways opposite to their values, or we see them overcome fear, belief systems, and surprise themselves in positive and negative ways in order to be accepted by the group.

I believe what I was seeing and creating and responding to in that alternative school can be understood through this lens. The notion of invitation allows for autonomy. Students were recognized for their abilities and their contributions. Breaking the tension and taking a risk were those lighthouse students; why and how they survived with some curiosity intact is still a mystery to me and informed my research questions. They were leaders for those others, those who were too timid. Making art, and telling and listening to stories while doing so, allowed for a sense of competence. Some students realised they had something they could teach, something they could share, something they could offer. Laursen writes, “When a person gives and becomes valuable to others, feelings of self-worth are increased and a more positive self-concept is built” (2005, p. 138-139). We know that those who experience positive emotions are more likely to think creatively, make unusual cognitive connections, and possess the desire to work collaboratively. A feedback loop exists here, in which individuals will purposefully engage in social group settings, such as church, school, or we could even argue, gangs, in order to increase positive emotions (Quoidbach, Mikolajczak, and Gross, 2015).

I believe those students making art, sharing stories, and listening to others, while witnessing and experiencing the adults who wanted to learn from the youth, meant they would “become aware that they have the skills and knowledge that might benefit others” (Laursen, 2005, p. 138-139). When this culminated in an art show, all three motivators - competence,

autonomy, and relatedness- were nurtured. My hope is that this experience gave them a chance to see things a new way, to frame their story differently. My resilience led me to them; their resilience motivated me to persist. They are now a part of my story, and I a part of theirs.

Filmmakers know this: the crow's story is a remarkably different one than the worm's. Of course, what I am referring to here is the role that perspective and perception plays in the remembering of one's story. However, because the crow tells it from up high, and the worm from down low does not make either story untrue.

I believe my own resilience led me to that art studio: I knew I had overcome adversity and beaten many odds. I was standing in a place where I had already been, but now I had the opportunity to affect change. I knew the skills of my own resilience and applied them.

Furthermore, I saw my students seeing me. Witnessing their lighthouse moments in relation to my leadership meant I knew I had to continue to persist, which led me to further education. From this space, I created the following "recipe for resiliency".

Recipe for Resiliency

1. **Tell the truth.**
2. **Be patient.**
3. **Take creative risks.**
4. **Know yourself and believe in what you know.**
5. **Find a new way.**

What brought me to create this "recipe"? My story is one that demands retelling at certain key times as much for me as for the listener: I still cannot believe my own story and in retelling it at certain times in my life, to the right people, I learn more about how I have survived. That story is too long to share here, but it involves poverty, unexpected pregnancy, isolation and dire circumstances in the form of homelessness and lack of medical care or income. Sharing it often leads listeners to ask me, "What made you this way?"

How *did* I get this way? In my research, I hope to learn about what makes a person resilient, and whether it has an innate component or can be nurtured: are we born with it, as the first theories surrounding resilience proposed? Can we grow it? If it includes the overcoming of compounding vulnerabilities, does it necessarily include some rebellion? *Tell the truth* is my first ingredient. This has proven to be a radical and rebellious behavior in my life. I have come to observe that there are many folks who believe they are telling the truth, they believe they are not liars, but in fact, they play with the truth, they mask it, they avoid it, they circumnavigate it when it is bold. By telling the truth, I have cut the garbage and time wasting from my life. *Be patient.* When you know something to be true, stick to it and wait for it; don't settle in order to get it over with. *Take creative risks.* These are the best risks, I believe. These are the fun ones. The changers. The invitations to magic and adventure. *Know yourself and believe what you know.*

This one is a journey. I think it links to the previous one. I have honed this skill now and I have moments where I need to stop and check in with myself and ask what I know to be true. *Find new ways.* When an obstacle or a rule or an institution or person or routine says there is one way and it is not the way for you, then find a new way. I believe this is a very demonstrative feminist action: as a woman, I am often told what will work or what will not, often due to someone else's lack of vision or willingness to put in the effort. Resilient people can leave others dumbfounded. People will shake their heads. They will say no. They will sneer a little bit. They will be annoyed by persistence. I have observed this throughout my life: People have tried to contain me and my voice and my rage and my creativity only to find that I *find another way.* It was my finding another way that led to the Invite Table.

Privileging Voice and Space

The Intersection of Colonialism, Capitalism, Patriarchy, and the Public School System

In the following story, I aim to provide a critical exploration and analysis of an activity which I have facilitated during the delivery of the course, *Social Justice 12*, a BC Ministry of Education approved course currently offered in high schools throughout British Columbia. A critical pedagogical approach, as explained by Gruenewald, "represents a transformational educational response to institutional and ideological domination, especially under capitalism" (2003, p. 4). By moving through the public school system and attempting to promote critical literacy, I act upon Freire's assertion that "pedagogy begins with recognizing that human beings, and learners, exist in a cultural context" (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 4). This context is colonial, patriarchal, and capitalist. I will story-tell to provide an experience for both myself and my reader; I align storytelling here with arts-based pedagogy, which can "provide a vehicle for enhancing critical thinking skills…synthesise across ideas, increasing self-reflection" (Merriweather, 2012, p. 53). Furthermore, "rational cognition" has traditionally been placed above "affective, embodied, and spiritual ways of coming to know" (Merriweather, 2012, p. 53) and my intention here is to provide a voice of resistance and questioning of that rationality. This autoethnographic recollection will act as an immersion into the capitalist, progress-driven context of the contemporary public classroom and is intentionally feminist, critical, and anti-colonial. The mechanisms of bureaucratic organisation, hierarchical structure, corporatisation, rationalisation, and industrialisation and colonisation scaffold and uphold the hegemonic process in broad daylight, even while many working in the public school system hold the values of Freire's pedagogy of hope. Educators seeking anti-oppressive classroom activities are continually traipsing through an intersection of competing demands and ethics. As an observant,

vociferous witness, I aim to gather the individual roadways that make up these intersections: that of power and marginalisation; privilege and poverty; voice and shame; progress and epiphany; scientific approach and embodied learning. To operate a decolonial, feminist classroom in this context forces facilitator and participant alike to be "brave" as these spaces certainly are not "safe" (Merriweather, Guy, and Manglitz, 2019, p. 142). If teacher warriors are "prophetic," with a "deep devotion to sacred ideals with a determination to speak out vividly and loudly on the profane," then I am warrior-ing up (Merriweather, 2012, p. 82).

The Privilege Walk

Members of the classroom enter the space: some hesitantly, moving to the outskirts of the room, not sure or willing or safe to ask the questions. Others boldly walk into the center, knowing immediately something is different. Just the simple act of moving a few desks and chairs disrupts the predictable nature of what counts as education most days. Those bold folks ask the questions, step into action, and with energy and optimism help move the desks. Some members respond in a measured way, neither hesitant nor bold: they want to know what is happening before they commit. Once they hear what is on for today, they step in.

The space is cleared and the lights are low. There is a palpable feeling of expectation in the room. Some students are familiar with this activity; some are so curious about where they will fall in the privilege mapping that they are visibly brimming with enthusiasm. The expectations are set out, both the practical and the philosophical; this pedagogical space is one which must include consent, boundaries, options, space, time. The questions start.

If you grew up in a home with more than 50 books, take a step forward.

If your parents worked nights and weekends and/or shift work, take a step backward.

If you ever attended a kids' camp, take a step forward.

If you can walk down the street at night without fear of violence, take a step forward.

If you cannot show affection publicly to the person you love without fear, take a step backward.

The questions continue. Students are moving further and further away from each other. Their demeanor has shifted noticeably. The room is only so big. The back of the room is filling with females. The only male of colour is moving with them. One Indigenous female steps back for most questions, until her boots hit the wall of the classroom and she cannot go further. She looks up at me, questioning, silently communicating, "I have nowhere to go." She is looking for permission to be imperfect as she can no longer answer these questions by moving her body; a moment of tension where she wonders about fulfilling criteria. She cannot participate by moving; her glance communicates volumes. She is safe here, and she is braver than most. And yet she is afraid she is not meeting expectations. She has to stay still and watch, mentally calculating just how far back she would be moving if it weren't for the masonry of this century old establishment.

As the facilitator, I am painfully aware of what is going on here. Am I furthering her pain? I am watching the clock. I know I am inserting a disruptive activity into a colonising space; I am acting as warrior pedagogue:

> Warriors act to reveal contradictions between dominant ideologies and aboriginal [sic] subjugation, act out the world as it could be, ... to oppose their subjugation, and call upon the public to support aboriginal [sic] struggles for mutual survival and justice (Regnier, 1995, p. 67).

I know I am a settler teacher in a position of leadership, and I also know I am in a place of trust in my students' eyes. I know I must provide time for them to think and reflect and speak if they choose to. I am cramming an embodied pedagogy into a systemized space, and I am

exposing layers of pain and privilege. I see the pain on the faces of those at the front, the pain of shock and embarrassment. I am hoping this activity "enact[s] the possibility of a reconstructed order within the school" (Regnier, 1995, p. 74). This is the sociological imagination (Lange, 2015). By hosting such an activity within the walls of a patriarchal and colonial system, warrior pedagogues can change "the politics of coercion into critical knowledge" (Regnier, 1995, p. 79). The activity exposes those tenets operating as the "hidden curriculum" (Regnier, 1995, p. 80) and converts it into critical knowledge for all participants, including the facilitator.

While I did not design "The Privilege Walk," my inclusion and protection of it in a demanding, busy, unsafe classroom delivery offers the potential of a transformational educational response. It takes the cultural context of a capitalist, colonial setting and exposes it. My use of storytelling is not limited to my writing: I take up an Indigenous and feminist pedagogy by sharing, during the activity, my own story of overcoming poverty: doing so exposes the fragility of workers seen as leaders and breaks down the assumed hierarchy between myself and my students. The activity envelopes embodied learning in that one moves in response to questions, witnesses peers and students in compromised positions, and is forced to feel the emotions associated with that witnessing. This is feminist pedagogy in that it seeks and validates the stories of those who have not been invited to speak in a text-privileged system. It is activist and unsafe in the colonial, patriarchal context: the bell will interrupt, the students will wonder how they will be assessed, and I am asked to quantify the experience with grades. The cultural hegemonic monster is in the room, as I have the privilege, as an educated white authority figure, to push my students into unknown and painful territory: what has given me the right to do so, and how dare I? I run the risk of re-establishing the colonial compartments inherent in this institution: "risks taken to tell stories are not equally shared" (Butterwick, 2016, p. 11). The

activity draws upon race, class, ability, gender, sexuality, but in the interaction between my Indigenous student with her boots against the wall, and myself, we see how the experience of poverty, defined as “a lack of freedom in relation to participation, decision-making, self-determination, and the capacity to function” (Butterwick, 2016, p. 131), brought teacher and student into shared, lived experience. This sharing scours the established hierarchy of teacher as know-all and replaces it with the values inherent in anti-racist, feminist pedagogy, that of connection, listening, and reciprocity.

Working as an anti-oppressive teacher in a colonial system focused on creating complacent workers means a daily confrontation between dichotomized value systems. If an individual/pedagogue seeks to “comprehend, critique, and alter the social structures and phenomena that embody features of oppression, domination, exploitation, and injustice” (Evans, 2019, p. 12), they are inevitably going to hit the boundaries of that system, those well-established markers implemented in order to sustain the goals of the “industrial capitalist paradigm” (Evans, 2019, p. 10). Even the potentially critical members of the middle class, possible influencers in the system, often include those “who live in a state of forced dependency upon unsustainable economic and social systems" (Evans, 2019, p. 16). The list of descriptors, values, ideologies that we inherit and uphold in the endless hegemonic process includes a grocery list of emphases: objectivism, rationalism, a mechanistic worldview (laws of cause and effect over creative, interactive processes), reductionism, scientism, efficiency, standardization, bureaucratization, centralization of power and decision making, hierarchical structure, anthropocentrism, denial of nature, compartmentalization, dismissal of the spiritual and sacred whole (Evans, 2019, p. 24): our bell schedule, our curricula (hidden and explicit), our punitive processes, the interruptions, the superficial talk, and the emphasis on professionalism and so-called safe spaces.

Public school classrooms are often described as *diverse*. What is not seen clearly, without a radically critical pedagogy, is the above mentioned grocery list. Warrior, feminist, arts-based, de-colonial teachers, then, continually press against it and in doing so, reveal it to both the students and, often with personal detriment, to those in power. In my experience, this is very treacherous terrain.

My story

Some may ask, "What is your resilience story?" Indeed, I ask myself this daily. To share it, I have to consider where to begin, and that is not an easy decision. Does my story begin with me? Knowing that my story contains the stories of many, many others, I hold it carefully in my hands, as though it is a bird come to visit. Pushing it too hard runs the risk of it flying away. I attempt to cradle it with gentleness, honesty, humility. I have a responsibility to it, myself, and to those loved ones my story contains.

Does it begin in pain? Or does it begin in strength - the persistence, rebellion, and outright sass of my existence as a member of the Canadian status quo, a recent inhabitant? For to find myself here has taken, and continues to take, these ingredients. Perhaps a list is necessary: if a resilience researcher were to study me, my story, they may capture poverty, mental illness, transiency, isolation, pathologised neurodiversity, sexual predation, abandonment wounds, unexpected pregnancy, and disordered eating. It is quite a list, and the reader is forgiven for taking a moment's pause.

One thing that has followed me around all my life is poverty. Even in this Masters research process, it has sat behind me, looking over my shoulder. It came up when I began seeking literature on at-risk youth. Little did I know then that my thesis was actually about *me*. I removed the concept of "poverty" as a key term when initially foraging for studies as it elicited thousands of results. I didn't know then that part of that removal was a part of me keeping my poverty story sitting where it was, behind me, looking on.

I have come to believe that the structural violence of poverty and class structure is so pernicious that we fail to even see it most of the time. We focus on what we see first: the major social locations of gender and sex, race, etc. I often share my stories with my students and one of

them starts with, “if you look at me now, you likely see a middle class Canadian, cisgender female teacher with all the trappings of a pension, a mortgage, a relatively new car, an education, and benefits - the 2.2 kids of the socio-economic reports.” What people don’t see (they have to lean in and listen) is the childhood of multiple homes, big Atlantic goodbyes, donated sleeping bags on floors, parentification, and a lifetime of hypervigilance.

I have written about “compounded vulnerabilities” in my research. My story is a compounded one, a *compounding* one. So what would you like to know? Let me begin by telling you a fairy tale:

The church bells are ringing. I am a little Brit, sitting alone by a big window, high up above a busy Highstreet. My home is a small Victorian-era flat, long abandoned before my family had arrived. My experience of it is one you might need a book such as *Narnia* or *The Borrowers* to help you picture. My Mum and Dad’s experience of it is so painfully different from that, and it is here, I believe, where my story begins. It begins here because my artistic child brain concocted the charming story and allowed me to remember it as enchanted. My parents’ love and labour shielded me from their truths, which included scrubbing walls of grime, a balcony falling from the building, no heat, no hot water, and slashed tires. Georgina remembers, however, the fun of getting into a baby bath in front of a big roaring fire, my mum boiling water on the stove in pots to fill up our tub. Or the giggle-inducing sight of seeing my father sit in a bathtub in the middle of a large room, the knees on his skinny legs pointing up to the ceiling like a *daddy long legs.* Or my joy of being all snuggled up in one room, all of us together. Or the mystery of the spiral staircase behind the closed door. What I only know now as a mother myself, looking back, is that it wasn’t normal. The structural violence comes in when you see that I was alone at that window because my mum was trying to work in the chemist below the

flat. That my dad was out looking for work in Margaret Thatcher's England of 1981. If you could step into my mind and see the images, you would think I am telling you a story set in the 1930s. But I am telling you a story that began before this, before the church bells keeping me company by the window. I am telling you a story that started with another little girl, born in 1918. Or maybe it began before that, but those stories are lost, subsumed. Poverty is one that carries such shame that the victims do the dirty work of hiding it.

Perhaps my resilience story shows you Georgina, sitting in her room in a brand new townhouse practicing her Canadian accent. We were amongst many new arrivals to Canada in a low income housing development. Here, I met people from all around the world. Canada to me meant immigrants, languages, delicious food smells, reggae music, and wide open places to explore. We were *all* walking around asking, "Where do you come from?". My accent was suddenly apparent to me - it was my first encounter with "otherness." Fellow immigrants didn't bat an eye; white Canadians of all ages, however, were fascinated by it. Children circled me daily, chanting, "Say something! Say something!"; adults made me read aloud to rooms of visitors, and teachers made me stand up and correct my "incorrect" pronunciation. Years and years later, when I was studying to become a teacher and I met Scout, from Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, I recognised myself. Her precociousness made me smile as I remembered telling Mrs. Baker, my grade three teacher, "No, actually. I am speaking English. English comes from MY country. YOU are the one mispronouncing the letter "r" - you sound like a bear."

Maybe my story includes the hallways I stood in, alone, ostracised from the classrooms for my restlessness, daydreaming, mischief making. By the time I was a young adolescent, I was taking matters into my own hands. Here is when I started asking, "What's the punishment going to be?" and from there, determining if it was worth it. It was the 1980s and teachers could yell

and spit, humiliate, and touch students with apparent impunity. This was the year I got my permanent record. This is the year I learned no one was going to save me. No one was coming in to defend me. My only ally was my mum, a beautiful young woman hit on by my teacher in front of the class. My mum, who worked all day in high heels at *Woodwards*, having to take the bus to my school to be grilled in the principal's office, as I was in it at least once a week. My mum who had to pick me up from the creep who "babysat" my brother and me. That is a story I cannot share here.

So is my story one that includes the places I found to hide? It became my go-to question: "where is the *out of bounds* in my new school?" Attending six elementary schools gave my radical imagination ample opportunity to concoct stories. Does my story include all the memories of my father leaving and spontaneously returning? My entire life my father would leave: to the store unannounced, driving away from playgrounds, packing out on work trips without itineraries, or taking one-way tickets to England. He always had a good reason to go, but he never knew how to say goodbye, or even hello. But when he returned, he would whisk me away to see the meteor showers in the middle of the night. Or collect pebbles on beaches, and weep tears of wonder and regret.

Or does my story include my sweet James? The baby brother who entered my life and lit such a fire of protection in me that has continued to burn, given me tools and strengths to fight and fight. The chubby cherub at the many babysitters' houses whom I shielded, who grew up to have a devastating diagnosis at the age of 17. My journey with him is one that informs all my work, whether as a teacher, as an activist, or as a mum. His is a story of loss, homelessness, and demons no one but he can describe. Here, I have spoken truth to power more times than I can count. Because of him, I see the child in every person living a street entrenched life. Because of

him, I can hold space for the most damaged children in my classrooms. Because of him, I am able to live so acutely in the moment with those who struggle: I can sit on the sidewalk with former students experiencing homelessness; I can walk into boarding houses and bring Christmas decorations; I can see the frightened eyes of the man camped out in my van and know he is a hurt child. I can sit with truth.

Shall I continue?

Perhaps you would like to know a bit about how I became a teacher? Well, that story has been told in another chapter and I will leave it to you to find (hint: it involves knitting). No, I think now is the time I speak about my cold and wet feet, months pregnant, collecting recycling at night while trying to write essays. How did I get there? That story is long and I would have to tell you all about running away, lying, running away again, finding my family, and receiving a phone call no one wants to receive. I was in Hastings, England. All my belongings fit into one bag, as I had left my meagre other belongings in a rented room in Grand Cayman. My home was cosy, small, and filled with love and story. My Nan lived down the road, my other grandparents a couple of hours away. I was beginning to feel a sense of home that I hadn't felt since I was seven years old. The phone rang and it was James. My brother, left alone in Canada. He had been living on the street for a few months and none of us knew what to do. He had been hospitalised (again), stabilised, and placed in an apartment. He was clean, he had some food, he had a roof over his head. But he was alone. I still remember what he said to me: "Georgina, I feel I am at the bottom of the ocean." He cried and told me he didn't know how to make it through the night.

I told him I was on my way. I told my parents my plan - then and there. I dropped my home, my plans for university, my newly found job, and my hopes to have my own flat on George street. I walked out the big heavy British blue door Dad had persistently painted and

walked across the street, and stood looking at the raging Atlantic ocean. I prepared to say goodbye to her, *again*.

When I arrived at the door of James's apartment, after hitchhiking from the ferry to save the bus fare, my brother was at the door, smiling. He had found me a foamie and some blankets, he had tried to clean up what little belongings he still had. All of his photos, furniture, clothes, books, presents, pretty much all of it was gone. We spent a few months like that. I got a job at a sandwich store and walked two hours a day to save the bus fare. I ate one good meal a day. The rest we scrounged from the food bank. Every paycheck, I bought us one condiment and over the summer we were able to supplement our flavour choices, which is excruciatingly important when you eat a lot of rice sandwiches. Mayonnaise and mustard are so divine. But I knew I would be doing this until I was an old lady if I didn't change something. I was looking at the long tunnel of a life lived in poverty and service. This level of poverty is one that is so difficult to name. The pain of asking for help from rich family members and being denied is indescribable. It was during this time my dear old friend took me up to the University of Victoria to visit an Art Education class (again, you must find the other story to hear that one!).

I moved to Vancouver to work with children. I met a cute boy in a yellow hat, working at the daycare, and against all my hardened intentions of not having a partner, ever again, this one smelled like home. He fell into fascination with me and thought, gallantly, that he could do something about my life, my situation.

I mentioned earlier that I find myself pregnant with cold and wet feet, writing essays. That comes soon. First, I spend more months transient, discover my pregnancy, couch surf, and have no medical care. Slowly, day by day, month by month, I crawled myself and the growing baby into more security. The boy became a man because he stuck around. I lived for a bit in a

hotel with my mum, who by this point had come back to Canada to be with my brother. I applied for school and learned that my previous academic record, while stellar, contained a black mark for a course I never officially dropped, back years before all of this, when I first attempted to help my brother. This meant I would not make it into my teacher program. So, we found a cheap basement suite and I took courses to upgrade. I should mention here that I had fallen into such a deep depression and had been in that dark place for months. It didn't lift. I just persisted. But my thoughts were dark and I cannot describe them here to protect people I love.

This was when I first really, truly began to see I was alone. I was really, really alone. I had been alone as a child, an immigrant, alone as the traveler kicked out of the house and onto the street in the Cayman Islands, alone in England when I answered the call, alone trying to survive. But now, I had allowed myself the delusion of trusting another person. I had allowed myself to think, momentarily, that the partner I had chosen would understand. And I now confronted the cold, concrete fact that he didn't, he couldn't, and he wouldn't. He was, and still is, a good, good man. But structural and compounding violences had not been a pernicious guest at his table. So, I continued. I moved again to a better house, but this one shared a yard with drug dealers and rottweilers. By the time I wrote exams, I was 7 ½ months pregnant, and the baby was born fast and early at just over 8 months gestation. I felt relief but I was terrified. I was in a program for low income mothers, I was alone all day, my brother continued to struggle, and I just weathered it all. Eventually, when the baby was three months old, a friend happened to call one day. She listened. She named it for me. She asked me if I knew what I should do and I did. I had to admit the worst, most terrifying thing. I had post-partum depression. I was losing the battle.

I walked into the public health nurse's office and with my pleasant, smiling face, I told her

I had not been telling the truth. I was given a questionnaire and the nurse looked at me compassionately and said, "I had no idea."

From there, I got some help, went to my first ever counseling appointment (the government gave me *one*), and joined a support group. There, I experienced the sharing of stories, in a circle, for the first time. I only attended a few times. I met women in far worse positions and I counted my blessings. It was around that time that I walked down the street with my now five month old baby in a sling on my hip, and I looked down at him, *and I recognised him*. This will sound strange to anyone who has not been there before. *What do you mean, you recognised him?* I saw him as my child. Nathaniel. Prior to that, I had loved him as one loves (but in reality, fiercely guards) a kidney removed from one's body; he had not been my baby before. He had been a part of me that I thought the world would take. This moment is burned into my mind.

So, I had to go to both college and university at the same time, on student loan, with a baby. I brought him to school, I breastfed at bus stops, I read psychology books while he slept, I drank strong coffee and became, truly, a writer. I re-met an enchanted literature instructor, a total misfit. I got into my teaching program - one of only ten people per year. I graduated with distinction, but not before losing a pregnancy while at school, not before having another baby, and not before being a student teacher with a five year old and a breastfeeding baby. And this brings me up to becoming Mz. Hope. I still remember the small, nervous Black boy wondering how to do his work. I helped him out, he did well on the test, and the next day, I got my first, "Hey Mz. Hope!" in the bustling hallway of a high school. That was it - I became her in that moment. I stood up straighter. I felt I had made it.

My mum and I have a little inside code phrase: *Don't you violate me.* That's also another

story for another day. But as I sit here now, almost at the end of writing my Masters thesis in Leadership, in a warm home listening to my teenaged daughter sing in the shower, after tasting the home cooked meal my son has proudly made, knowing my husband (the good man, the cute boy in the yellow hat) will be home soon, I know I am a lot of things. I am a teacher, a writer, an artist, a truth-teller, a fighter, a lover. And I am *resilient.*

CHAPTER FIVE: RESULTS

My results section reviews how storytelling can develop a type of reciprocal resiliency, in both the student and the teacher. I set out to better understand the role marginalisation has played in the affectionately named "misfit" educators' lives, those who lead brave and resistant classrooms. I write my results here to learn how those critical educators "story" that experience, and how that process influences the perception of vulnerable students in their classrooms. I seek to cross-reference these results with my own story, my autoethnography, which will be demonstrated primarily through footnotes throughout this section, linking themes found in common between the interviewees and myself. I will follow the results section with an entry threading the connections between the literature, the interviews, and the autoethnographic vignettes, outlined thematically. By doing so, I hope to describe a model of teaching and activism that infiltrates hegemonic pedagogical practices. Furthermore, I hope to offer a contribution to the study of resilience and anti-oppressive pedagogy.

My contribution: Reciprocal resilience, a definition

Reciprocal resilience is a cyclical process whereby individuals are motivated to persist through adversities, and/or invite further challenge, in a reflexive, agentic response to witnessing those within their sphere of influence access and utilise resilient behaviours themselves: a feedback loop in which each participant is lifted higher in response to the other. It describes a phenomenon wherein those who have experienced adversity, and have gained the skills necessary to overcome, experience a call to action as a result of witnessing the impact their insight and lived experience has had on others experiencing vulnerability[12].

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[12] As several participants have inquired, I wish to make clear that this definition is my own intellectual property; it is a definition created in response to existing research on resilience and builds on the ecological model, examined primarily by Laursen.

Participant description

Frank

Frank is an Indigenous educator, elder, and generational residential school survivor, from the *Lyackson* Nation, off the east coast of Vancouver Island, with ancestry on his father's side from the British Isles. Frank teaches *First Nations Studies* and *English First Peoples* courses, and is an academic and family support counsellor with over thirty years working in the public school system and corrective facilities.

Phyllis

Phyllis is a retired English and Journalism teacher and is a Canadian settler of mixed European descent. Phyllis worked internationally as an educator, but her experiences in Apartheid South Africa influenced her lifetime of teaching, and continue to inform the work she currently pursues as an activist with the organisation GRAN.

Jan

Jan is a Metis elder, published writer, creative, and retired English and Creative Writing teacher. Jan worked closely with disadvantaged youths over her career through various interventionist programs.

Brad

Brad is a white-presenting teacher of mixed ethnic descent whose family hails from Barbados. Brad is a teacher of various English and Humanities classes and runs a unique education program within the public school setting aimed at delivering highly flexible learning environments.

Ian

Ian is a white British working class immigrant and currently works as a senior English Language Arts and Media Literacy/Film Studies educator.

Holly

Holly is a white Canadian setter with Icelandic and Irish ancestry. Holly teaches *English First Peoples* courses and English Language Arts across grade levels.

Dale

Dale is a Japanese Canadian teacher and generational survivor of Internment camps. Dale teaches English Language Arts and Japanese; he comes to school in a costume more days than not.

Tracy

Tracy is a recent addition to the *Teacher on Call* list, following two decades of teaching English Language Arts, Creative Writing, and Foods. Tracy is a white Canadian settler with Irish roots.

Themes: Theory generated and *in vivo*

This section describes the results of the interviews, particularly themes which emerged *in vivo*, as described by Marshall and Rossman: "In vivo codes emerge from the actual data as they are collected" (2016, p. 218). Most of the themes isolated in the previous literature review, referred to as "theory generated codes" (Marshall and Rossman, 2016, p. 218), were represented in these findings, which I anticipated due to the method of generating interview questions based

on said themes[13]. However, several *in vivo* themes emerged with some surprise, which I have grouped together into two key significant categories worthy of further investigation and commentary:

1. That of the differences experienced through gendered lived experience.
2. That of the risks to educators, particularly in relation to resistance to dominator norms, when attempting to enact anti-oppressive pedagogy.

For the purposes of clarity, I will initially summarise the findings from each interview question[14]. The second section will follow with a discussion of the implications of these emergent, significant themes and their relationship to anti-oppressive pedagogy in our contemporary educational climate.

Outside influences: A path to teaching and the significance of gender

The first question referred to the theory-generated theme "outside influences": those mentors, interventions, and other protective factors which may circle an individual. In regards to the misfit teachers I interviewed, most had taken an unusual path to teaching[15]. For Frank, "it wasn't in [his] plans." He "took time off" and when he returned, "[he] deliberately chose… Native Indian Education … as a focus because there were no courses then." Jan describes her path to teaching this way: "It was an accident." For Ian, it was a bit of an "emergency eject button," and Holly literally fell into performing, creating a character last minute who falls "down the stairs [making] sure [her] pantaloons showed in the air." When Holly heard that "people were roaring with laughter," she was hooked and found a way into becoming a theatre teacher.

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[13] For a table outlining both theory-generated and *in vivo* themes, see appendix.
[14] See appendix for a list of questions.
[15] See autoethnographic vignettes: *In Around Through and Off*, as well as *My Story.*

Almost all the participants could name one teacher or person who had played a significant role in how they now show up as an educator, or indeed, in becoming an educator in the first place. For Frank, an intergenerational residential school survivor, it was his mum, who

> … was there all the time. And internally, intellectually … and politically, [I'm] probably far more like my mum. She wanted to be a teacher … she was very articulate. She loved to read and write… and she would start retelling the story, whatever novel she was reading, quite often.

The role of others, particularly other individuals who may be seen as misfit, or unconventional in some manner, or who themselves had experienced hardship or marginalisation, entered many recollections. Most participants volunteered a key moment or even quoted the words that such a fellow misfit had uttered[16], which they credit with altering their trajectory and/or affecting their choices. For Dale, it was the need to communicate with his grandmothers, both of whom spoke Japanese exclusively, while Dale only spoke English, a result of his parents' desire for him to thrive in Canadian society. Dale believes this was likely a result of their experiences as youth forced into internment camps during World War II. Dale initially went to post-secondary to learn Japanese, which led to teaching Japanese. Here, Brad reflects on an unconventional teacher he had in university:

> I would say he was queer, just in terms of the way he interacted with the world, and with us, and the way he put himself out there…when I walked into that first day of class, he said hello to everyone in the class by our names. This is 1999. He's like, 'Good morning Brad.' … The internet's not really a thing. Like, I just learned about *Hotmail*, and we are like confounded, like how does he know our names? And he introduces himself, and says, 'I am your instructor, this is Classroom Management…' in such a wholehearted, interesting way.

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[16] It is worth mentioning that there is a connection here, mentioned throughout the autoethnography as I was blessed with several misfit educators and can recall their words.

Brad looked away poignantly as he spoke further: “As I’m telling you this story… maybe he impacted me more than I thought.”

However, here a significant theme emerged related to gender: almost all the women were late to teaching and were already mothers when they made the decision to return to post-secondary; each spoke to this playing an integral role in their decision to pursue teaching and to persist through the increased challenge their pregnancies and motherhood would bring. It was a surprise for me to discover that four of the five women I viewed as anti-oppressive educators were mothers at the time they embarked on becoming a teacher, as this aligned with my own journey to teaching, which I explore in my autoethnography[17]. All four of these women spoke openly about how this role impacted their enactment of pedagogy. Reflecting on this now as I write my results, I wonder if this is where some of my own unexamined bias comes in surrounding my naming of anti-oppressive pedagogy and reciprocal resilience.

Tracy responded with:

> I got dumped by my husband and I had two little boys…And myolder son, Tristan, was high functioning with autism, and he wasextremely challenging behaviorally.
> Very, very bright; behaviorally, very challenging…. At the time, there wasn't anybody else that I knew in town. No agency I knew that could handle him, and I knew I had to be off when he was off. I had tocreate a stable environment for my sons.

Holly, who experienced an unconventional path throughout high school, found a way to first work in a daycare:

> I don't know how I got the job… I worked as basically like an EA and then I also worked with the alternative kids down in town. Andso I was already in the school system, and I was doing a lot of Community Theater. And I was like, I'm too old to get an agent… I’ll become a theatre teacher. And so I went and I figured out

[17] See vignette *In Around Through and Off* as well as *My Story*

> that all you really needed to get into college was an audition. And I had to do a language test, and I was like ‘oh I can do that.’ So I was able to kind of skirt around, not having graduated. And it was so ironic. I didn't even think about how much I despised school…I hated it. But I want to teach theater. And I want to act, I want to perform. And so that's how I got into it, and then I got pregnant, and just kept going.

However, complicating this simple narrative around gender is Ian, a British immigrant from a working class background. He recalls:

> So I sort of got a little bit of college and then found out that my girlfriend was pregnant… [it is] an obvious job for someone with two in-laws that are teachers, with a wife whose parents are teachers, or both of our sisters are teachers, and it's the job I watched someone do every day for 12 years. I kind of understand it … and being kind of an artsy liberal/ liberal arts type person, what else can you do with that kind of brain? Really, without having some kind of other resources, right? Not to be too funny but like there's not many jobs in or with a liberal arts background, but not with your little kid.

Ian perhaps summarised a collective thought when he questioned, “I often think about what I would be if I didn't have that pressure.”

Storytelling: Indigenous worldview, kinesthetics, and pedagogical decisions

Three of the interview questions were tied to the practice and role of storytelling. One theory-generated code is “the culture and spirituality of storytelling.” It is here that Indigenous worldview became most apparent. Both Indigenous participants talked about Indigenous worldview and positionality in-depth; most non-Indigenous participants talked about the tremendous, and at times, life-altering impact it has had on their own resilience and pedagogy. For Frank it was an Elder he met early in his path to teaching. In addition to naming authors, particularly the author of *Tilly*, Monique Gray Smith, and of course his beloved mum, Frank described how this Elder impacted his journey as a storytelling teacher from the very beginning:

> I was listening to him…and he talked about [how] our knowledge or our way of speaking comes from both our head and our heart, …it gave me some good insight into when we're discussing something. If I can find a way to personalize it, it may help the students find a way to personalize it for themselves, find their own story within, whatever that is.

For Jan, however, existing in Canada as a "white-passing Metis" woman has meant continually forging her own path, creating her own distinct "delivery" in the classroom, and experiencing an intersection of oppression without any real mentors: "I have never, ever been any part of any Indigenous education. I am not invited, I am not welcome, it doesn't happen for me." Jan spoke of formal and informal racism, spoken directly to and around her, and of her perseverance. In the absence of mentors, Jan looked towards the punk scene, feminism, groundbreaking television such as *Welcome Back, Kotter*, and Black women for guides. Jan offers, "So we don't fight oppression, we override it." And she is taking the kids with her. She's "not foolish enough to think a sign at the Leg will do anything but make [her] feet tired," so she's "gonna grab kids and sneak through the keyholes."

For the settler teachers, teachings from Indigenous communities have impacted not only their pedagogy, but their own self-concepts and worldviews. Holly reflects that it has made her more "in tune" with being a settler: "It's made me feel I need to get back to *my* territory and connect again, to center myself." Phyllis spoke of continually learning from travel which had revealed insights about her "privileged white background." Recalling times her students have held her accountable, she keeps herself active in her own interrogation: "You have to look at it, you have to face it, you have to be conscious of it." For Brad, it also showed up in his reflexivity as a self- described "product of the system." He reflects a lot on how he uses gifts of learning from Indigenous mentors to push back against a system which privileges a narrow view of academia. Students in his classes, "are in Circle everyday, they like how it's not all textbook

learning kinda stuff." Brad credits mentor Indigenous teachers and local Nations with steering him and giving him not only the trust, but permission, and in fact, calling him up to do the work. Ian, however, has moved towards more self-directed education around Indigenous content. He uses Thomas King as a guide. He cautions against naively working with Indigenous pedagogy in a colonial, public school system: "It isn't an intellectual pursuit as much as an emotional pursuit right?" A link to resistance and the risks to educators exists here and will be discussed further in the following section as it carries significant implications.

Of less significance but interesting to note, was a naming of the kinesthetic nature of storytelling, with educators discussing such things as performance, proximity, humour, and timing. Phyllis illustrates this with her memories of a much-loved teacher, Mrs. Kale, herself a woman who had experienced severe loss and had persevered as an educator:

> And the thing about her was that she was- I mean, her pedagogy was so wonderful. She walked all the time. She walked around the classroom. She looked at us, she looked deep into our eyes… she made us learn how to spell and punctuate etc., etc., and taught us to love literature. She cried when she read poetry. She told us stories about her life… she would tell us stories about grief, about being married, and being in love, and a mother.

The idea of stories as helpers and the links to self-worth found in the literature did not emerge consistently in the interviews, although Ian reflected by saying:

> We tell ourselves stories all the time. We lie to ourselves, to make ourselves happy or whatever… Every single day, I tell stories. Right?... I visit this one and I see that one.

Similarly, Tracy mused, "I may be too caught up in stories as a way to explain things in my life, and

I think all humans need to do that."

When asked, "Do you tell stories?" each participant lit up and became animated. Jan said, "I don't know how to communicate without stories. Like, full stop." For Ian, it is "Every single day, every single day, every single day." Frank answered, "Yeah," and then paused and chuckled, "I guess all the time." There was such a marked change in demeanor in response to this one question that, for a time, I considered creating an art show displaying before and after pictures of storytelling teachers responding to this question.

Some participants spoke to the theory-generated theme, "the agency and catharsis of storytelling," by speaking to story as a motivator and story as a reward. Phyllis spoke to how stories brought validity to the literature she taught. She recounted how when teaching *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley, she would storytell about crossing through Checkpoint Charlie, between West and East Berlin during the Cold War in 1969, on a bus as a young woman.

Perhaps echoing back to what she had learned from Mrs. Kale, Phyllis brought the physicality of storytelling to life for her students:

> Everybody put your text right beside you and pretend it's a passport, and you're on the train, going into a totalitarian state. And I'm going to be that woman on the bus who looks at you, a security person who looks at your passport.

But she used stories as a reward as well:

> 'Mrs. Webster, tell us a story about so and so!'
> 'No, you're just trying to refocus the class.' I said, 'if you remind me at five minutes to… the end of class, I'll tell you a story.'
> And so, of course, they would always remind me. Somebody at the back of the class would always remind me[19].

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[18] Refer to the autoethnographic analysis.

[19] Regarding the care and reflexivity inherent to her teaching, Phyllis made sure to explain how she always established a strong relationship with her students beforehand, knowing who a willing participant and actor in such stories would be. She explained how important it is to debrief and diffuse the story afterwards, especially when dealing with traumatic events. A technique she shared is explained in this recollection: "My name is Phyllis Webster

Tracy recalls an experience which parallels that of Phyllis, which shows how motivating the promise and regular practice of storytelling in a classroom can be for students, and can elicit the joy of surprise, itself a reciprocity:

> This boy showed up at the end [of] the lunch hour. I was about tostart my class and he was just pouring with sweat. And I said, 'What is the matter with you, are you okay?'
> He said, 'No, no.'
> He goes, 'My lunch went a little long… I didn't want to miss any of the stories that you told us… I didn't want to miss it.'
> So he had run all the way from home to get back so that he wouldn't potentially miss a story. And the other thing that I do sometimes is I'll tell the kids when they are like, 'Mrs. Yarr! Tell us a story, tell us a story!'
> 'All right, if you work really, really hard and you work really well.You remind me. Somebody set your phone 10 minutes before the end of the block, I will tell you a story.'

Others spoke to the function of stories. Holly echoes the efficacy of stories in building connections between students and the material being studied: "It's a great way to kind of help them get to a particular place without me spelling it out… they see themselves somehow in the story."

Holly sums up just how valuable one story can be in that it can reach each one of these areas for both the teacher and the student. Holly tells a story which includes the line, "I'm gonna drown with my running shoes on." She explains how her "river story" can be functional (used to teach conflict, narrative, descriptive writing, etc.), but how it also mentors story as testimony and helps her students see her as human and vulnerable: "Because I talk a lot about what I saw, what I witnessed… And other times, I teach it when we're talking about conquering our fears … it just

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and I'm safe at the collegiate at university. I want everybody just say that out loud, just somebody, so they would say it out loud to somebody, so that I didn't, you know. So, you bring yourself back into the classroom back into the real world, etc.."

depends." Whether used as catharsis, motivator, reward, connection making, or solely for practical reasons, storytelling plays a role in each of the educators' pedagogy.

The complexities of labelling: Reflexivity, ambivalence, and gender

Approximately halfway through the interviews, the questions focus on the complexities of labelling, and this became particularly galvanising when discussing the term "anti-oppressive." Overwhelmingly, participants were conflicted when it came to viewing themselves as anti-oppressive educators. They demonstrated intensive reflexivity here, responding with statements such as "I think so," or revealed that the more they learn, the more cautious they become, such as Holly, who said, "This one was a little tough for me." Some participants linked this term with other terms, such as "resilience," which they viewed as academic and somewhat exclusionary, or not holistic in a manner. For example, Frank responded with, "I'd have to ask *you* that because I don't use that term," when asked if he viewed himself as an anti-oppressive teacher; he elaborated: "my whole work, my whole being and my position is anti-oppressive or anti-colonial is probably a better term for it." Frank helps us see how Indigenous worldview interacts with terminology found in more colonial contexts:

> And I was thinking, you know, that this didn't happen because I'm Indigenous. I had no idea what I was doing when I started. It evolved and evolved because I was open to question and open to the knowledge and open to hearing what the students needed.

However, one participant, Phyllis, did respond with an enthusiastic "yes!" to this question. For Phyllis, her experience living and teaching in a totalitarian state had unequivocally influenced her perception of education and the role she played in moving towards anti-oppressive systems. However, she noted:

> It's not just talking about oppression… It's also about remembering who's right

> there in your own class and not being oppressive yourself. And, you know, I think we've all had experiences where we may have done things unintentionally ... So I think we always have to be very conscious of that.

Jan declared that being asked that question was like being asked if she were a "benevolent slave holder," and held me to account, saying with emphasis, "I AM oppressed." In alignment with this was Frank, who spoke to the complexities of language choice and to a quiet insertion of what I, as a settler teacher, view as Indigenous pedagogy because of its link to relationship and time spent: "I come in, who is this old guy, keeps popping into classrooms? And, you know, that's just my style."

Speaking to how they were labelled as children and now as adults, there appears two streams. The males spoke frequently about their pathways to acceptance and positive self-regard through athleticism. The females spoke about being called "truth teller," "eccentric," "chatterbox," "clever," and a "show off." Jan and Tracy aligned with Holly's description of how she labelled herself: "rebellious and fearless and a loner." Interestingly, most of the educators discovered early that they were strong readers, or that their teachers had considered them gifted, especially in the Language Arts. Tracy shared a revealing story about coming to reading a year later than her peers, but within weeks of learning to read, she was reading chapter books. After reading the exciting *Tarzan*, by Edgar Rice Burroughs, Tracy found the *Dick and Jane* books her teacher read pale in comparison. Upon finding her daydreaming and chewing on a bobby pin, her teacher gave her a "huge slap across the side of the face" and then perpetuated the offensive behaviour by immediately conveying a long, complicated narrative explaining how she, the teacher, had saved Tracy's life by preventing her from choking on the hair pin. Revealing the link between labels and behaviour, Tracy concludes with:

> And I remember just looking at her and I just knew she was lying through her teeth. I just knew it. And I remember, I think my face probably said that 'lady, I know your line.' So, I wasn't always *teacher's pet*.

As mentioned above, one of the major findings that emerged was a difference in lived experience between the males and the females, and this was abundantly clear when it came to labelling. However, Indigeneity featured in these responses as well, and Jan spoke directly to the intersection of racism and misogyny in which she is continually positioned. Speaking to the bullying from males over the course of her life, Jan has been told on more than one occasion and in more ways than one: "Listen squaw, you don't have it right."

While Frank felt his "brown skin" did not lead to any conflict at school, it did lead to hurtful labelling within his own family. He recalls the white side of his family saying, "'Okay, well you're a half breed.' " Whereas from his mum, he was "First Nations or Native Indian." He offers: "and this is sort of upon reflection later: they [mother's side] just called me grandson, or nephew. And so there's a distinct difference there." Responding to the question of experiences with marginalisation, adversity, or challenges to resilience, Frank paused and asked for clarification on terms, reminding me of the teachings from the Elder he had shared earlier:

> You give me words and you come from your background and your academic studies, and I probably could have used some of those when I was there. I tended to shy away from the terminology.

True to Frank, he then responded generously: "I'll try it. My initial notion is yes, yes, yes." Bringing all the threads together, Frank summed it up this way:

> There is no magic answer. So you now, you can go to university and get to read about it in a book and that's great, but you still have to go through that process of being open-minded to the process, like what I do in Circle.

Frank speaks clearly about the barriers that academic language and a forced approach, or an over-planned approach, can bring to teaching, and reminds us about the role of relationship and speaking from the heart, in the moment - approaches that are difficult for institutions to measure. Here I was again reminded of the words of T-souke artist, Charlene George who uses the phrase "good hands" - meaning, to move forward, "humbly, with skills it takes a lifetime to learn properly and an openness to the spirits of the place and the wonder of the unpredictable moment" (Chamberlain, 2003, p. 236 as cited in Tanaka, 2016, p. 8).

Brad reflected on being white-presenting and how this affords him a choice around marginalisation that perhaps other members of his family were not afforded. Brad shares a bit of his story and how it has influenced his perception of students and offers him a place of connection:

> Yes, but like, not a traditional immigrant story. Like, her skin tone is very similar to mine. Like our ancestry is predominantly white. My initial ancestors came from England and settled... in Barbados,and we were slave owners. But we also have ancestors who were slaves, one was an orphan brought over from Calcutta: I think my great, great grandmother. So there's some mixed blood on that side, in terms of ethnicity. … But yeah, I am first generation otherwise, on my mum's side. Which is weird for me to think about too, right? 'Cause so many of my students are first, their parents came from elsewhere, so I'm like, 'Oh wait, my mum came from elsewhere too.'

Furthermore, a clear link is found between labelling and storytelling. Jan describes it well when she explains that while stories helped in connection making, being referred to as a storyteller was "*not* complimentary most of the time. 'Cause our society doesn't value storytelling - a lot of teachers believe that what I do is storytelling *instead of* teaching. That it's a time waster."

However, she also said:

> Of course, I use stories in my teaching. *How can you not?* And if a teacher, and I can think of several, is having a hard time connecting with their students… it is because they don't tell stories.

For Holly, who experienced significant losses and instability as a child, and later, becoming a young single mum and putting herself through university with very little support, the question around marginalisation is a difficult one to process because, as she explains:

> I can't even articulate it. I had to look at your definition below to understand what this question means. And it's almost like I've been in such survival mode that I don't even really recognize anymore that that's sort of been my reality. And I also don't [know about] the marginalisation because I recognise my privilege.

Again, these responses capture the intense reflexivity inherent to these misfit, storytelling educators.

Behaviour: Challenging or challenges?

In regards to the nature- nurture, or bio-psycho-social, theory-generated theme, which encapsulates such things as the attainment of developmental markers, dispositions of sociability, close family bonds, motivation and self-regulation, and attachment, one commonality found in the interviews was how the misfit educators handled so-called "challenging students." This question was phrased in such a way as to leave the door open for participants to determine what was meant as "challenging," and it elicited several, insightful responses. These responses followed the previous ones about how the educator's had been viewed as children, and I was curious whether this impacted how they viewed their students now. What they held in common was the kindness and openness each teacher practices in responding, whether the challenge came from behaviour, learning difficulties, or any other extenuating circumstance that could lead a youth to "challenge." Frank took the adjective "challenging" and turned it into a noun and

emphasised it: "*challenges*." He explained: "I find I tend to go to those, gravitate towards those kind of students, and I don't know why because I wasn't one of them." I took this to mean he separated the behaviour from the individual[20], in that he does not fuse the label with the human. He uses a story to illustrate:

> Because that's not the only measure of success. I've been saying that all along. I've seen those young people being successful in the communities… We do try to say, "What's going to happen to them?" And I knew right away you can't, well, I can never predict. I had a teacher say that, a grade 12 English teacher, 'I've been in the system for a while, so I can predict their success in life.'
> And I said 'No, I don't think you can predict how they're going to do in English *tomorrow*, and not in their life.'

Similarly, Holly spoke about establishing a relationship with each student, working with clear boundaries and an openness to experience. She used words such as "combative" "isolated" "resistant" "angry" and "disengaged" to describe such students, and spoke to her strategy, which echoes Frank's: "Sometimes I'll just look for a window… where it feels like there might be receptivity." However, she did caution that there are certain behaviours with which she will simply not engage, which Ian, Jan, and Tracy spoke to as well. Linking to the later discussion around the risks to anti-oppressive educators, Ian describes how access to teachers from the general public, specifically the parents of the students, has forced him to create strategies:

> It's almost never the kid, the kid you can kind of like, you know, find a way to like them or whatever, right? But the parents?
> You're just a part of the system. This oppressive system theyprobably had a bad experience with 30 years ago.

Another common thread emerged in which the educator's took experiences from their own lives

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[20] Connects to autoethnographic vignette, *The Invite Table.*

and transferred them to how they viewed so-called challenging students.Tracy elaborates:

> Well this is where experience with my older son really helps… a lot. You know, Tristan was very, very challenging and I had to learn how to love him unconditionally. And I have generalized… those skills and basic belief into my teaching practice.

These responses speak again to the highly reflexive nature inherent to these teachers. Overall, a commonality existed in all participants' responses around challenging behaviour in the classroom and the corresponding response from the educator, and that was to maintain the dignity of the student. This, too, brought the interviewees in relation to data from my own autoethnography, particularly that described in *The Invite Table* and *The Privilege Walk*.

The next question was drawn from the theme I isolated from the literature on behaviour modifications. Not much emerged in response to this in the interviews, except worthy of note is the self-policing the female teachers describe in relation to enacting desired pedagogy in the face of dominator culture; I will elaborate on this further in the discussion section. A link is found here in regards to the reflexivity of anti-oppressive teachers and their willingness and ability to change when necessary, in particular, in response to their own learning. Phyllis illustrates this with the following recollection about an interaction with an Indigenous youth, as she prepared to go back to teach in South Africa after the abolishment of Apartheid:

> 'Mrs. Webster, why aren't you coming up north to my community
> and teaching there?'
> Oh, of course that just broke my heart.
> I said, 'You know that such a good idea, and I would love to do that, I really would love to do that.' I said that one of the reasonsI'm going this time is so that I can teach Black African students, which I was not allowed to do when I was there in 1965-66.
> I said, 'I need to go back and teach students of the other races because I've been so unhappy about that for many, many years.' So he forgave me, I think… But, you know, that's the kind of thing that I needed to be reminded of. And I was very grateful for that reminder.

Resilience: a questioned guest at the table

Most participants appreciated my definition of resilience, which I offered before asking them what was missing, in their view. Some participants wanted to add to the definition. Tracy requested that "kindness," to others and oneself, be included as a key ingredient. Frank phrased it as "Hanging in there … you gotta just keep going. You may not know the actual outcome." Holly added "being able to come out on the other side with tools and hope." Several wanted to better understand the role of culture in relation to resilience, particularly noting how for marginalised and oppressed individuals, resilience is exhausting and not necessarily a compliment or a term they wished to keep taking up. For example, Jan repeated the phrase "ecology of the environment" and elaborated on it; remembering her own years as a runaway, sleeping in cars, she asked: "Did I keep going?...The alternative was worse. I mean… it's a very privileged idea that one has choices." Ian spoke to this too, when he parsed out that what is resilient for one person, at one time, may not be for another. Phyllis tied the discussion on resilience back to her learning around Truth and Reconciliation and I found these thoughts echoed in the other settler teacher responses:

> First Nations… always talk about *our* community, not about *my* life, or *my* family. But the community. Community comes up so often. And I think that's a great strength and something that really sustains me in this terrible world that we're living in… I've, truly, truly learned that they recognise, and we don't in our culture, that you can make mistakes, but that you can recover from them.

For Holly, resilience is something she takes pride in. Her responses echo that of Jan's, in acknowledging the lack of any real choice. This recalls the work reviewed from the literature, particularly surrounding compounded marginalisations (Bottrell, 2009; Davidson, 1999; Mclean

et al., 2013):

> I built major resilience, like being 17 or 18, when I was living alone in the woods in a tipi. I feel there was resilience in learning how to be alone, like how to survive in that circumstance. I mean it was, it was intentional, I put myself there. But I was so deeply engaged with the environment, like I needed the land in order to help me build my resilience. Because I had to learn a lot of things like how do I paddle across this lake? How do I chop a tree down and peel it and build a fence? And that resiliency helped me rely on my own inner strengths.

As we know from the work on resiliency, compounded vulnerabilities are magnified and become intolerable when one sees the path laid out in front of not only oneself, but one's child. If we consider that these educators went on to become parents, we can see how their past experiences shaped their enactment of anti-oppressive work, their reflexivity, and their ongoing engagement and interrogations.

Reciprocal resilience: a hunch worth exploring

In terms of finding a sense of belonging, several participants spoke about finding allies and being in community, but also spoke to the difficulties of doing so when one is seen as an outlier. In addition, my hunch around reciprocal resilience (see definition above) was captured in several responses from the participants. Frank linked the idea of a mentor's resilience being tied to that of his students, especially in regards to having expectations of oneself and one's commitment to community:

> Because I have to come in here ready to teach, no matter what. Now some days I'm not feeling so great. Some days there's big, heavy stuff happening in my family. And so, I've still got to come here and be professional. And so I, you know, I expect the same thing from you. Whether you're feeling a one or a ten. You need to be here. If you're not meant to be here, that's it: just acknowledge that. And, you know, you take the time out. So I think that's learned that over time- that's resiliency: it is also learning.

He furthered this concept of reciprocal resilience when he named a former pre-service teacher, Gail Higginbottom, whom he had mentored years before[21]:

> I think we're in a unique position and [Indigenous educators] want to have those conversations. Gail is one person. She's doing really well. When coming into the Indigenous area… she didn't know much, but I think it opened up. Just like me, you know? We all learn as we go along… She's one of those examples. Yes, now I would consider her a mentor of mine, one of my mentors, because she's accomplished, right? [It's] the kind of person she is.

All of the interviewees either looked back at teachers, elders, family members, and misfits, or looked forward to their students, children, grandchildren, and community and spoke to the reverberating effect doing so has had on their own practices as teachers. Phyllis thought back to the teacher who cried when reading poetry and taught them about grief, saying "And so, so many of us in that class who graduated in 1961 went on to teach." A student once told Jan she was only smart enough, as a girl, to be a nurse, not a doctor, but that she would never forget Jan or her class. After months of relationship and lessons shared, Jan approached her at the graduation ceremony and said, "Can I hug you?... I am always gonna remember YOU." And she [the student] said, "I'm gonna be a doctor, not a nurse."

Even after years of teaching, mentoring so many teachers, and acting as a political leader in many circles, Frank spoke to how the confirmation of 215 gravesites in Kamloops, BC in 2021 woke him and all of Canada up:

> Even though we all knew things happened, for some reason it resonated in a way that just woke everybody up and that we have to take some action, including me. Just letting go and saying, "okay, I'm going to drum. Doesn't matter what it sounds like." So, letting go of some of the inhibitions that maybe were there. I'll drum… you step into what you need to do.

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[21] See *In, Around, Through, and Off* in the autoethnography section for a serendipitous link emphasising the role of relationship and time spent in Indigenous and anti-oppressive pedagogy.

The cyclical reflexivity of these educators' speaks compellingly to my notion of reciprocal resilience. Linking back to the discussion above around the role of others impacting the educators' resilience and choices around teaching, Holly's story encapsulates this concept. She reflected that while most teachers in her youth viewed her as "unruly, defiant, shut down," with"a lot of walls up," some were able to "witness to [her] as being highly observant and fairly wounded." She recalls: "I didn't really respect authority." However, one teacher was able to see her in a way she had not really seen for herself. Holly recalls a time she was bullied while attending an alternative school as a youth:

> A kid pulled my pants down… and he was like, 'You live in ValueVillage!' I was a hippie and he was an asshole.
> I was mortified, and then I got angry and I pushed him. And Dave was my grade nine science teacher. Dave was really cool and he empowered me and he saw me and he even got me to sing…. He's like, 'Will you sing with me in the Christmas show?' and I was like, 'Okay.'
> I would never do that for anyone.
> But Dave *saw* me and so… I wanted to show up for him.
> And I got an A in this class because I worked my ass off… It was science - I'm not strong in science, but he, because he respected meand because he said, 'You don't live in Value Village Holly, like I know you don't, and you are a good person who's had a lot of shit.'
> When that happens with kids? And you see the little light go off in them, and they have gratitude? That's like hugely rewarding. And you can see how much it inspires their willingness to do the work, and there's something really powerful about that.

Interestingly, some teachers pondered the role of adversity and challenges, or "shitty experiences" have had in shaping how they show up as people and as educators, wondering about the word and the concept of adaptation. Holly sums it up with her statement: "But I don't see it as a challenge to my resiliency. I think it fueled my resiliency."

Anti-oppressive pedagogy: Resistance, existence, and rebellion

Finally, one of the most interesting and lingering questions for me as a researcher has been around the role of resistance in asserting anti-oppressive pedagogy. There were a lot of similarities found in the participants' responses to this last question about resistance, all of which further the two significant *in vivo* themes discovered, that of gender and that of risks to educators. All the educators spoke to the dilemma of attempting to teach in an anti-oppressive manner while working within what they view as an inherently oppressive system[22]. To rebel or resist brings risk, and the risks are magnified in relation to intersecting oppressions. Disciplinary actions and the fear of losing their job, as well as moral dilemmas surrounding choices and behaviours, were mentioned by most participants. Dale ventures: "We've moved to a more transactional mode of teaching. But I don't stop. I still tell my stories."

Frank and Jan brought forward the idea that resistance is inherent to their existence as Indigenous educators. Holly spoke as settler in response to this same concept, embodying allyship in her response, as she had spoken earlier about her own rebellion to institutional oppression as a youth:

> They go hand in hand. I mean, I, right away, think about Canada's First Peoples and without resistance, they wouldn't be here. They wouldn't be here today. The fastest growing population in Canada, without resistance, like without saying, "No, I'll keep my language.Thank you very much. And I will hold on to my traditions. Thank you, very much. And I will fight this school system. Thank you, very much. Until our voices are heard." So I think it's hugely important to have resistance. It's a survival mechanism. And rebellion? For sure, there's a place for it.

Frank shared his discomfort with "bucking the system," that doing so brought risk to him

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[22] Connects with the autoethnographic vignette *The Invite Table*

personally, based on a history with conflict. He reflected on his growth here, relating to rebellion:

> Though I always respected that, I just couldn't be around it. It made me feel uncomfortable, but I also realised in the job I'm doing, I have to listen to those rebels, to help guide my resistance to certain things. And you know, maybe helping students navigate through to grade 12 is a form of resistance to the mainstream of trying to change that person into something else and then say, 'no, you don't have to do that.'

Frank is not the only educator to talk about rebellion or resistance found in subliminal ways. Characteristically, Jan spoke to how she had resisted the system by teaching ways of surviving, knowledge not formalised in school settings, such as how to stay clean, feed oneself, and find shelter when living in poverty:

> I am so, yeah, I know, loud and crazy. They have no idea. I am Babette. They have no fucking idea some of the shit I have pulled off. I've got kids into housing. I've got kids jobs. I've got…ah, you do shit.

Tracy spoke, too, of creating spaces in which students found reprieve and perhaps a different definition of knowledge and worth. However, here again Ian was a complicating outlier by expressing some of the despair an educator can experience when attempting to persist with authenticity within the contemporary school system[23]:

> I'm having a hard time seeing when the rebels win. And like all the strikes - the miners' strike, the dock workers' strike, the teachers' strike, never win. Right? … A lot of heart out there and a lot of effort and you know, we were singing silent protest songs.
> But even all the hippies became bankers, you know? … So, I do think I am a bit of a rebel, I guess, … or I'm happy to be oppositional, if I don't agree…. All these terms are just designed to keep the status quo going, and to keep the oppressed down… these systems are just things that we kind of choose to

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[23] A link is found here, too, with the autoethnography. However, paradoxically, a vignette describing this scenario was removed due to inherent risks. The vignette *The Privilege Walk* outlines some of this tension

> believe but we don't have to believe or whatever, right? But rebellion like, I don't know where we're going. I don't see a way off of this train.

Frank summed it up succinctly when he asked, "Is not the definition of anti-oppressive, resistance or rebellion?" He then steered the answer to his rhetorical question thusly:

> I don't think I'm a rebel. I'm too quiet. I'm a resistor. Because I want to have a paycheck at the end of this. I can continue to work within. And I see a rebel as far more vocal.

In this one statement, Frank drew the other participants' comments into a coherent thread, which leads me to the second of the significant, emergent, *in vivo* themes: the risks to the educator.

Traversing risky terrains: Validity, professionalism, rigour, academia, and gender

The traversing of terrains showed up in the educators' encounters with validity, professionalism, rigour, academia, and the public school system's values, or lack thereof. Many participants spoke about how they have to constantly navigate this in-between space. I was reminded here of the concept of "neplantleras"[24]- people who are asked to be part of a group of "border crossers…cultural navigators, bridge builders, and advocates" by members of marginalised groups (Villarreal Sosa and Martin, 2021, p. 21). I had come across this concept also referred to as "bridge people" in the corporate world: people valued for their access to information and ability to interact and communicate across the borders defined by social locations. In the case of anti-oppressive teaching and the risks to educators, a hitherto unnamed

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[24] For elaboration on this concept and an example in my own classroom, see the autoethnographic entry titled *The Privilege Walk.*

risk made itself known in the responses to this final question, which I believe has serious implications, which Frank poignantly captures in his reflections. He talked about linking the Indigenous world to the non-Indigenous world of the colonial, public school, and the complex intergenerational trauma and cross-cultural fractures found when one exists in a bridging space:

> And then some family knowledge is (pause)…Because if you didn't grow up with it, it doesn't seem all that accessible…I think we, as Indigenous people, First Nations people, need to talk about that. Talk about going back and learning the traditions… And it may not be all that accessible. It's not that easy. I mean, you can go to the books and read. And then people get criticized for reading the books and speaking, not from their culture.

Later, Frank added:

> But I also was quite aware that I was thinking differently, and approaching education differently from the classroom to, you know, mostly with my work with students individually. And you know, … initially I used to say I was a buffer between the First Nations student and the system. Because I could work within the system and be successful at it, obviously you know, having a university degree and such. But so I became sort of the buffer, in my mind, but definitely I also …I became an advocate.

Phyllis's experiences differed greatly from the public school teachers' and brings some disconfirming evidence: by teaching in two vastly different educational contexts, that of a private school and that of a school in Apartheid South Africa, Phyllis' responses complicate the other narratives in a welcome and critical manner. While teaching in a private school, Phyllis was very supported in her self-described eccentricities and truth-telling. She offers: "I got away with what other schools, they would have fired me." While she had always identified as a truth teller, her experiences living and teaching in a totalitarian state galvanised her further to not care what others thought of her. She, too, hesitated to commit to the language I had chosen, similar to the other participants, which is revealed in her summarising answer:

> So, I think that I'm not going to call it resistance or rebellion. I'm just going to say, being a truth teller is very, very important to me. And I admire other people who are truth tellers, too.

Mentioned earlier is the *in vivo* theme found in a gendered lived experience. The risks named by the male participants differed generally from the females, in one significant manner. The risks they described were mostly what I would refer to as formal, such as risks to employment status, with the exception of Frank's sharing around bridging Indigenous worldview and the school system. While the formal risk of disciplinary action was true for the women as well, they also spoke, often at length, about what I would term the informal risks to their well-being as female anti-oppressive educators. Speaking up was recalled as "loud," "rambling," "ranting," or simply being dismissed by those who were inconvenienced by the dissenting female voice. After offering her perspective during a staff conflict, Tracy recalls: "I got blowback from teachers that just rolled their eyes." Jan described similar experiences: "Even speaking to the other teachers at the staff meeting, they just laugh at me or make fun of me. Every time I speak out loud, somebody will make some comment later."

These perceptions were compounded by their statuses elsewhere. For example, poverty, motherhood, divorce, race, and transiency all played an exponential role in the women's enactment as storytellers, truth tellers, and anti-oppressive educators and appears to impact both how they were viewed and their own self-concepts[25]. Linking back to the labels they received as children and as educators, the female participants reported being described in a pejorative manner, whether by administration, fellow staff, parents, or students in class, particularly male

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[25] Link to all the autoethnographic vignettes

students. Of significance here is the complex compositions of secondary high school classrooms[26].[26] After recalling one such incident involving a male student who had become threatening, Phyllis said:

> I walked back to the back of the office where he'd spoken to me …and I just sat down and shook. I was so upset. One of the secretaries came back and she said, 'Are you okay?' and I said 'no.' But that was the only person I really couldn't cope with, and I forgive myself because I think he really was very ill.

Referring to a management response discussed earlier, some female educators spoke to behaviour with which they refuse to engage. Jan, too, spoke to gendered differences here:

> I've never had a fight with a girl. I've never gotten in trouble over an interaction with a girl. A couple of times they've 'had enough' of me and stormed off… I just get them.

And later, she contrasted this with secondary male students:

> I don't get along with challenging boys that are being entitled misogynists, and I tend to ignore them. And I get annoyed when people pander to them? Like, because he's demanding, we have to give him…Well, that's how he got demanding. I extinguish. I ignore them. I really do. I try not to respond… I don't want to make friends with them… There was a basketball player a few years ago that I didn't get along with, who kept saying really homophobic things in my classroom, and there was a violent incident and a few other things. So after a month, I had him transferred… I don't need it.

After describing a mindfullness practice linked to writing which she facilitates in her classes, Holly expresses joy in sharing this with her students:

> It's just so cool to be able to identify what I see and how that impacts my sensory nervous system. So that is like, you know that practice of being, you know, sort of vulnerable? Like being with yourself? And then I ask them to share.

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[26] See appendix *Statistics*.

However, Holly also spoke to how she will not engage with or tolerate unsafe behaviour, and described her way of dealing with it:

> I had these two… boys [who] were always kind of joking around and were like,
> 'Where do we put the assignment?'
> I was like, 'We're waiting on you.'
> And he's like, 'Well, what the hell? Where do I put the slides?' And then I was like, 'You're asking me right now?' And I said,'Why is this my problem?'
> I was pissed and they were like, 'It is.' And then one guy actually pulled his mask down and raised his voice to me and was like,
> 'You're the teacher! You're supposed to tell us where!'
> And I was like, 'You're in grade 12. And you're asking me minutes before a presentation is due, while your peers are up at the front.'
> And I said, 'I'm gonna have to ask you to step outside.'

While upon first glance, this might be dismissed as typical teenaged behaviour, when we intersect it with the past and continuing adversities many women experience, and we consider the size of male high school students in relation to most female teachers, we get a sense of the terrain female teachers are traversing, particularly when they have been viewed as loud, angry, eccentric, etc. Couple this with the experiences of shunning, humiliating, and minimising that most of the female teachers described, and we see an unnamed, intersectional risk[27] for female anti-oppressive educators. Tracy speaks to the difficulty involved when leadership does not consider complaints valid or respond in a manner that leads female teachers to feelings of support and safety:

> And we don't all have to agree with one another. But that's not the point. When I got into trouble at that staff meeting, because I stood up and I said,
> 'I do not want to come to a place of work, where it is not safe for us to agree to disagree.'
> To come to a place of work, where people cannot speak freely, when they aren't coming from a place of mutual concern for the well-being of the kids… where one group is silenced by another group, because they have a dissenting perspective. I want us to be collegial, work together and come from a place of respect. Those were fighting words.

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[27] Referring again to the paradoxical nature of this research, some autoethnographic vignettes were omitted due to this gendered terrain and intersectional risk.

Captured here in this review of the data found from interviewing misfit, storytelling teachers are recollections, generosities, and insertions which parallel the data found in the literature review. Due to challenges encountered ethically and personally during the theory research review process, a pivot in focus was necessitated. While I had initially set out to study vulnerable students, my focus shifted from the marginalised members of therapeutic group settings utilising narrative practices, to the adults who facilitate such story-eliciting collective spaces. An amendment to the literature review was necessary to include recent literature on teachers who facilitate narrative practices in contemporary humanities high school classrooms. A gap is acknowledged by various scholars in which data is minimal and/or non-existent on said facilitators. Here, in the participants' voices and stories, we hear personal evidence of the theory generated themes, while also uncovering both distressing and poignant themes found *in vivo*. The following chapter will tie the educator's responses together with the data from the literature review, explore the hunch around reciprocal resilience, and will discuss the implications of the two emergent themes: the gendered lived experience and the risks to the anti-oppressive educator.

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION

Introduction and review

My interest in resilience is rooted in both my own story and that of the educators with whom I have had the honour of sharing space, time, and practice. To understand how storytelling may play a reciprocal role building agency and in embodying anti-oppressive ways of being, thinking, and feeling, it was necessary to extend my gaze outside of the field of education. I borrowed from research conducted in social work and other helping professions in order to formulate questions for my participants and aimed to compare their histories with that of my own autoethnography. The obstacles and everyday realities facing youth, and by extension, teachers, in public school classrooms are present, whether the leadership and employers welcome this truth, or not. Intersecting adversities can be explored through storytelling. As my research has revealed, these practices are both risky and rewarding.

My research journey was circuitous at times and was further impacted by the global COVID pandemic, which challenged all teachers, students, and researchers alike. As a result of the multiple pressures to adapt my focus, the important pivot, which led me to shift my gaze to the facilitators, appears to have elicited data which may act as a contribution to this field of study. Teacher-leaders are responding and innovating, surviving and questioning within the rapidly changing landscapes of contemporary classrooms. While some may argue that classrooms have always been dynamic, by taking an historical perspective, we may wonder about how the relatively recent presence of globalisation, neoliberalism, and quite frankly, the internet and social media has had our very constructions of knowledge and what a "classroom" even is, and in turn, what the role and responsibility of the teacher may be. We can then extend that even further to wonder what the risks to the educator may be, particularly if they have

experienced adversity and/or existed along the margins of the dominator culture. Enacting anti-oppressive pedagogy in today's public school classes is challenging and minimal literature exists on the toll this constant insertion into dominant paradigms takes on the teacher-leader. Much of our current literature on anti-oppressive pedagogy has rightly focused on the youth. However, by gathering material on storytelling practices of misfit educators, we may shed some light on the challenges of persisting in an anti-oppressive fashion while confronting dominant ways of being and operating.

Curricular design can be structured and static, at the risk of becoming the ubiquitous *safe* (Merriweather, Guy, and Manglitz, 2019). Or, it can be ever-evolving, random, and iterative. Genuine storytelling classrooms can be dangerous and unpredictable and untamed, and yet the dominant systems, of which they are a part, demand a response in which the products from such classrooms are measured. Both physical and philosophical considerations are of particular relevance in our current educational climate, one which is flooded by competing demands, distractions, and vested interests. Storytelling and resiliency-building resources and practices, on behalf of both the student and the teacher, demand constant re-negotiation.

The review of the existing literature on narrative practices and resiliency building in group settings, led by brave misfit teachers, has led me to understand there are gaps in our knowledge base. Here I will review the implications of the results found and discuss how this research could proceed.

Stories as helpers

Research from my literature review showed that storytelling may aid in identity formation. The ecological space of school is one which forces both students and teachers to

construct and maintain identities. These identities may be multifold and involve codeswitching. If we follow that train of thought, we can see that listening to another's stories can thereby act as a tool to assist in the assessment of the aforementioned developmental markers of success. Those in leadership positions, such as healthcare practitioners, teachers, and administration, could benefit from nurturing story-sharing spaces. If resilience is a combination of innate traits, protective factors, cultural transmission, and perhaps personal motivation, then setting up spaces in which stories are told can nurture resilience from all four perspectives. It is important to note that while culture is perhaps most commonly referred to in terms of nationality, race, and ethnicity, culture also exists in spaces, families, classrooms, and surrounding social locations.

Stories encapsulate culture. They link history with the present day. They allow us to share and connect, to reflect on our identity as well as to create it. Individuals can see themselves reflected in the stories shared by visitors to the space, and can be invited to share the unique cultures to which they belong. In addition, the acknowledgement and inclusion of cultural and spiritual practices into our classrooms is a practice that is in keeping with the four waves of resilience research. However, this is where the two significant *in vivo* themes emerged in the primary datafound in the interviews: the role of a gendered lived experience and the risks to the educators who facilitate "brave" and not simply "safe" (Merriweather, Manglitz, and Guy, 2019), storytelling classrooms.

The complexities of labelling

Analysing the complexities of labelling naturally extends from the acknowledgement that collective spaces create and maintain culture; what we name as healthy, resilient, gritty, adaptive, etc., is highly culture bound. This process is not simply one directional: while it is formalised

from a top down perspective, such as teachers writing reports, administration managing both employees and students, and counsellors assessing risk, the process occurs within an ecology, as the forty year study of resilience attests. This, then, means there are informal and thereby often unvalidated, and multi-directional processes involving the naming and labelling of behaviours. The data that emerged from the interviews showed this to be true, particularly in regards to the females' experiences and that of the Indigenous educators.

Consider here the traditionally collective, resilient practices, such as those found in Indigenous cultures, being seen as non-conformist and/or viewed by the mainstream culture as increasing the likelihood of vulnerabilities. Being denied access to said spaces, possibly though well-intentioned but hegemonic and ultimately, colonial thought, actually can reinscribe the very adversities the youth, and as we saw, the educator, face. For example, imagine the young, Indigenous female youth pulled out of school for cultural events such as tribal gatherings. Her school record shows absenteeism, missed assignments, and may even be judged as disrespectful of the school's timetable. Her presence in the school is named by some as "at- risk," and by others as "culturally resilient." The leaders in the spaces may choose to invite her story, or not.

A very real pain exists in this space for educators who themselves have been those marginalised students. While the teacher themselves may have sustained a positive identity and learned to make it work, the accumulated differences over time between their personal circumstances and the dominant culture can make sustaining the constructed narrative exhausting, confusing, marginalising, and as Bottrell isolated, "intolerable" at times (2009, p 329). Research on resilience shows that individuals will even create the very circumstances which result in their exclusion (Sanders and Munford, 2015/16). In such cases, people may create a type of reprieve for themselves by fulfilling the role they believe they are viewed as

occupying. This role may be labelled as oppositional, defiant, etc. However, looking at this from a different angle, we could view this as agentic behaviour because by providing resistance to a system, the individual enacts choice. For adults who persisted and either remained in or re-entered the school system, this process is highly complex. I remain curious about how this process is impacted or altered when the teacher themselves has had experience with the negative labelling, or exists in that *neplanterlas* space described by queer Chicana feminist, Gloria Anzadua (Villarreal Sosa and Martin, 2021, p. 19). Here I am thinking of Frank's words, when he described being a "buffer" between the First Nations students and the system, as he had been able to navigate it. Brad, too, reflected on how the system had worked for him, so he now finds ways to make it work for all. Jan spoke of dragging kids through the "keyholes" to safer spaces, and Holly spoke of seeking spaces of opportunity. In my own story, I wrote about the concept of "invitation" and lighthouse students. All of the educators spoke to how they maintain the dignity of the student by honouring their stories and lives outside of the immediate ecosystem of the classroom.

Power and resistance

The hierarchical nature of colonial institutions and worldview can impede the co-creation of spaces in which culture is shared and story is invited. As discussed in the literature review, teachers sharing their own stories and vulnerabilities can counteract this dynamic. Bottrell warns that while adaptive behaviours are prized, they are often framed as such through the lens of socially dominant populations; the degree of participation in such norms is through the value lens of the controlling group (Bottrell, 2009). This acknowledgement reminds us that what is seen as resilient in one space or one culture, may be seen as non-conformist or even maladaptive in

another: the rejection of mainstream norms and expectations (Bottrell, 2009) may be viewed as incoherent and unacceptable by those who benefit from and seek to maintain the status quo. This dynamic was described by several participants, but namely the females who were characterised by students, families, teachers, colleagues, and employers, and even as children themselves, in a pejorative manner when they spoke truth or questioned the norm. This is explicitly clear in my own story. To explore this responsibly, a much larger cohort of anti-oppressive educators would need to be researched. However, a difficulty emerges here as the nature of my study was so inherently determined by relationship and trust-building, that while I am deeply grateful for the data captured, I am worried that it could not be replicated in a larger scale for this reason, and cautious about the potential for harm if it were taken to a larger endeavour - it is a conundrum. We can see that the very act of resistance to the norm can be an act of identity formation for the youth, but questions remain around the compromises the educators are forced to confront.

Writing and sharing stories is a rigourous process. Confirming the motivation and value found in the intersection of storytelling, relationship-based, co-creative spaces, researchers of resilience acknowledge that challenges exist for facilitators bound by definitions of professionalism and academia. Having a storytelling classroom is one full of paradoxes. It contains the tensions between the system and those marginalised; authority and employee; teacher and student; culture and culture. There is a stress found around the need to create and maintain coherence. The classroom is an ecology itself, and as such can offer resilience-building resources; but dangerously, it can re-establish disparities apparent in a patriarchal, colonial, capitalist institution.

Autoethnographic analysis

The mixed-genre design of my study included an autoethnographic component. It is important to remember that autoethnography relies on memory and is closely linked to our understandings of time. I have come to understand that my role and positionality are inherently and intricately enmeshed in the magic I have observed in my Humanities and Arts courses, and that these have given me privilege to the witnessing and recognising of the misfit, anti-oppressive practices of my fellow storytelling colleagues. A synthesis of curiosity, privilege, relationship, and anger has provided the impetus for my autoethnographic writing. However, as I aim to work in an emancipatory and feminist fashion, creating in both my classroom and my study what Brogan names as an “exilic space,” (2017), I was not satisfied with focusing solely on my experience. To survive and change intolerable circumstances and thereby enact resilience, covert processes often become necessary, and here I found parallels between my own story and that of the educators I interviewed. By acting as both a participant and a researcher, I found myself in community.

Resilience: Fluid, circular, welcome or not?

As reviewed in the educators’ responses earlier, the concept of resilience is slippery. To be labelled resilient elicits a complex reaction, as it is a recognition that challenges exist and can reinforce oppressions that have accompanied the individual, which may continue to occur. The study of resilience has had a long history, and it now branches into different areas, such as grit or self-efficacy. But what this study illustrates, and participants’ responses showed, is the inherent complexities often left unnamed: while the label resilient is offered as a compliment, it is an exhausting state to inhabit. The questions around persisting, resisting, adapting, questioning, and continuing continually circulate in its practice. While the participants in my study appreciated my definition of resilience, they had their own journeys with the experience of it, and they

offered some additions to the concept, described earlier. I have suggested there are connections between the results found in their responses and my own journey with and relationship to resiliency, as I have noted through the use of footnotes in the results section. However, and additionally, there are differences between the results found in the interviews and that of my autoethnography. These differences are found primarily through my insistence on creating a collective space to mutually occupy. While the participants related to rebellion and saw its value, and in some cases, identified as a rebel or with anti-oppressive pedagogy, they did not initially burn with the same questions I brought to the study[28]. This is important because I believe this difference has to do with each individual's history with privilege and oppression, experiences that intersect and shift depending on context and life trajectories. Some of my own privilege as well as innate traits contribute to this demonstrability. I resonated strongly with the literature around stories acting as helpers and as agents of change, while this did not emerge as clearly in the participants' responses. Most surprising and challenging to me as both a researcher and a participant, and fellow misfit, was the absence of visionary practices in the participants' responses. In my own journey, envisioning a future, as far-fetched as it may have been, was integral to my resilience. This is named in the literature on resilience, which I have isolated in the theme titled "Visionary practices." In writing my autoethnography, I simultaneously used story as a helper, as an agent of change, and as an envisioning exercise. I still do – story for me is time travel and art, and is inherently enmeshed in my hyperphantasia and resilience story.

Furthermore, it may be considered an important finding that a type of continual push and

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[28] I wish to note here that while many did not initially offer a sharing in the rebellion and the questions, almost all of the participants reflected over time about a shared calling towards it. For example, I will never forget Jan saying, "We need to know the answer."

pull, call and response exists for those misfits who go on to enact not only brave lives, but brave classrooms. It is here, in this constellation of connection, experience, context, story, resistance – and in quietly finding another way - that I offer the addition of reciprocal resilience to the field of leadership studies. I have written at length about my own story and sought out the existent work that merges story, resilience, and collective spaces. In order to capture where my story overlaps and diverges (McGregor, 2023) with the existent literature and with the experiences of the participants, I offer here a brief overview of this constellation. Here I attempt to map connections between the three data streams: the literature, the autoethnography, and the results from the participants.

The four waves of resilience study and the critiques described in the literature review are evidenced in my autoethnography. The innate traits found in the first wave are seen in my independent streak, curiosity, persistence and mischief-making evidenced in the story, *In Around, Through and Off!*. The rebelliousness of my riot grrrl days, the constant seeking and persistence found in *My Story*, and the truth telling in *The Privilege Walk* are evidence of these traits, those elements core to who I am, that my mum would name as innate: I wore my dress backwards on purpose. However, the critique of the first wave reminds us that structural violence strains the ability for innate traits to prevail. This is evidenced in *My Story* as it took me to the end of the autoethnography and the end of this very thesis to acknowledge adequately the role of poverty in my resilience story. This critique brought us to the second wave which includes an awareness of interventions and outside forces, which is found in the teachings from my grandmother, the role of Indigenous friends and story, and the misfit teachers alluded to in *My Story*. However, the work of Ungar reminds us of the role of ecology: individuals do not find themselves in linear stories of resilience, nor do they find themselves in isolated and fixed states

of resilience. Ungar's work helps me to see that while I identify as 'resilient,' this is not a binary position, and it involves behaviours such as 'adaptation' which may or may not serve an individual: it may in actuality serve the status quo. This was a place of departure from the participants. The storytelling pedagogues often paused or expressed some hesitancy around the concept of resiliency and the naming of their own marginalisations (particularly if they are Caucasian or white-presenting), and drew my attention to the complexities surrounding the elitism of language existent in the definition. This is where culture comes in, and is demonstrated in not only my own stories, but in the stories of the participants in my study. I have to acknowledge here that when I offered the term 'resilient,' I had been immersed in the literature and autoethnography for a few years by that point, whereas the participants had not.

There is a complex interplay between insider and outsider status: by seeking knowledge and critiquing it, offering it back up to the participants whom I viewed as both resilient and anti-oppressive in their practices, I in fact added a layer of academia that was divisive. Bottrell and Ali's work around criticality and language is useful here and establishes the fourth wave of resilience study. This complexity and teacher reflexivity is clearly shown in the two stories, *The Invite Table* and *The Privilege Walk*: these accounts reveal how my own marginalisations and labels received impacted how I went on to enact pedagogies and insert anti-oppressive methods wherever I could – sometimes consciously, sometimes unknowingly.

Specifically, I can see and now name how inviting content, namely the stories and expressions of students who had been maligned by the status quo, is a direct result of my own eccentricity. Bottrell and Ali discuss the impact of labelling and the choices made through language which ultimately resist or reinforce systems of dominance. Often, I have been either innocent or ignorant (depending on who is doing the describing) of the dominant labels applied

to such students. For example, when the system saw a delinquent, I saw an artist; when the system saw a truant student, I saw an Indigenous girl returning to her land and culture; when the system forced curricular outcomes, I 'found another way' and have the graffiti in my room to show it. I can see now how this has been part of that constellation named above: this is both a conscious and unconscious push and pull on my part.

Bottrell and Ali's work, which grew out of and in conjunction with Ungar's, led to my discussion on terminology. Throughout my autoethnographic vignettes, I listed the labels I have been given: daydreamer, mischief maker, chatterbox, maverick, naughty, too big for my britches, on and on. As outlined in *In, Around, Through, and Off*, I never left these alone. Connecting with Bottrell and Ali, I have stayed with these behaviours, and sometimes I am viewed as a truth teller, sometimes a leader, sometimes as crazy, and very often defiant. One thread throughout all of these labels remains: my presence seems to elicit strong feelings and it is incumbent on the company I keep to decide whether this is for them or not.

Anti-oppressive pedagogical practice:

It is necessary to determine whether my history and my relationship to resilience is in alignment or diverges significantly from my participants, but here I encounter a difficulty and possibly a blindspot. I keep the doors to reflexivity open here and invite further study and reflection to the work. Referring again to what Tanaka captured T'Sou-ke artist Charlene George as naming, "good hands" - meaning, to move forward, "humbly, with skills it takes a lifetime to learn properly and an openness to the spirits of the place and the wonder of the unpredictable moment" (Chamberlain, 2003, p. 236 as cited in Tanaka, 2016, p. 8), I wonder how and if the misfit pedagogues I interviewed have answered the call of anti-oppressive pedagogy differently from my methods.

The two significant *in vivo* themes elicited and described in the results are enmeshed in my own journey as a misfit child and a misfit teacher: the highlighted gender differences and the risks to the educator, both of which are present as I write this thesis and attempt to take up space in the institutions of public school and academia. To be overt in one's resistances to and within power structures sets up a dynamic which only serves to perpetuate the hierarchy. A decision is ultimately made by those in positions of authority: categorise the activist storyteller as maladapted, oppositional, and defiant, or accept influence upon their own perceptions? Here is the terrain for which we currently hold no map: how to persist as an anti-oppressive educator contains a necessary confoundment. It appears holding a map for the terrain contradicts the authentic, reflexive, process-oriented (and thereby difficult to control and predict), nature of anti-oppressive, story-telling pedagogy.

Discussion conclusion

This discussion highlights narratives around gender in relation to resilience as well as significant risks to educators who enact and embody anti-oppressive pedagogy. Fears around disciplinary action, both formal and informal, are frequently named in relation to implementing approaches which welcome story and questioning, and which focus on slower, less predictable processes that authentic cultural exchange encompass. Being willing to resist or rebel appears in the accounts, with commentary on the necessity for compromise in the process. This compromise in itself is problematic in that it forces educators into positions of knowing and being not necessarily in alignment with their own cultural and personal experiences. In terms of reciprocal resilience, we are hearing how misfit educators were influenced by other misfits, and how this impacts the poetry with which they view and label and dignify so-called challenging students.

This research acts as witness to the gifts of Indigenous worldview and its inherent

influence on the enactment of reciprocal resilience. These processes speak to and highlight the importance of reflexivity in anti-oppressive work and the complexity surrounding the labelling of individuals who bravely witness, insert, and persist.

Further study

Anti-oppressive education settings can influence perceptions, of both the student and the teacher: their self-story, their identity formation, and, hopefully, their agentic resistances. How can co-created spaces act as resistance to the institutionalized distribution of knowledge? The exploration of the physical layout, aesthetic considerations, and the potential to enact further anti-oppressive pedagogy through such development, is worthy of its own inquiry, and was beyond the scope of this study. What power does the inclusion of student work and aesthetic product-making / storytelling have in influencing story-sharing in the classroom? And how can this process and product creation affect change in terms of reconciliation and decolonisation?

This is an area that warrants more thought and one I hope to research further. I remain curious asto how practical and aesthetic considerations in a group setting, such as a classroom, can support what I believe to be the anti-oppressive pedagogy a storytelling classroom invites. While the importance of diverse representation has been studied, it has often resulted in mass produced, glossy pictures and posters with quotes and imagery deemed as acceptable by "dominator" culture (hooks, 2000). If I were given the chance to take my research further, I would like to extend it to these aesthetic considerations.

Secondly, teachers are tasked with delivering personalised and 21st Century learning to a generation of students raised with high-speed technology. With this technology, leaders rise to the top quickly, self-initiators have places to retreat to outside of the control or influence of teachers and adults, and those wanting to coast can do so easily without understanding the true

cost of such passive behaviour. While many may boast otherwise, I make the claim that these classrooms are *not safe* for the challenged, at-risk, or marginalised student, or, by extension, the misfit teacher. I agree with researchers Merriweather, Guy, and Manglitz: those educators wishing to actively decolonise and work towards an anti-oppressive pedagogy must find ways to be "brave" as opposed to safe (2019). The implications of my research, however, extend to the areas of leadership if such brave classes are to exist. I would assert that a risk to teacher well-being is present currently in the contemporary classroom, resulting in some misfit pedagogues retreating out of necessity. The level of progress that a system will accept or integrate differs from the level of progress seen as necessary from marginalised members of the system[29]; currently, teachers are encountering myriad obstacles, both personally and professionally. Further research is warranted in this area.

[29] Credit given to my son, Nathaniel Reuben Hope Tucker, the baby in the belly when I collected recycling to save for a stroller. He walks his Mama's path and is taking this all the way to the top.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION

Times have been dark. I stated at the outset that this thesis would be a meta-narrative, one in which I endeavoured to study, capture, and name a phenomenon almost as though in "real time." The analogy of building an airplane while flying it has come to the front of my mind repeatedly. Perseverance, recollections of my past and examinations of my present, an attempt made at defining leadership, an ongoing process of questioning and pushing back on the pathologies imposed upon me - all of these have occurred over the five years it has taken me to write this thesis. When I set out, I sought to examine how storytelling could develop resiliency, in both the student and the teacher: a reciprocal process rooted in the foundations of Indigenous, anti- oppressive, and feminist paradigms. I wanted to better understand what occurs in the humanities classroom when storytelling practices are shared, across disciplines and geographical and socio-economic contexts. Initially, I aimed by gaze lovingly to the students. The work that needed to be done was to be found elsewhere, as I was forced to continually re-imagine the process and the product to find its authentic contribution. Artists often speak to this: real work is something channeled.

In regards to answers: I found some that I expected to find, and I found others that left me ravaged. As a reliable, critical friend reminded me, impertinent questions can often lead to pertinent answers. When I wrote my "Recipe for Resilience," it was as a memo of sorts; little did I understand at that point that not only would a global pandemic alter and shift our realities in ways no one, save the writers of dystopian fiction, could have predicted, but that I would travel through the two year journey of losing my father to cancer and would experience multiple waves of resistance to my work as a public school teacher. Attempting to teach in an anti-oppressive fashion while studying that process, all while experiencing forms of silencing, reprimands,

shunning, shaming, and disciplining from every angle became unbearable more than once. I kept returning to the line, "find another way." I returned over and over and over again to the women, the teachers, the prophets, the writers, the mystics, the martyrs, the fools who were seen dancing[30] to remind myself of what I knew to be true.

The process became fraught with irony as I encountered a system wanting to shorten my talk, construct my arguments, question my audacity. These came from students, parents, family members, the institution of academia, the school district, the Ministry of Education, the ever-present patriarchy. Twice, I became so overburdened that I bordered on demoralised, as I began to see and internalise the belief that *anti-oppressive pedagogy is not possible*. The thought that it may exist became a ludicrous one. Three times I have stepped back, watching the insidious dominator culture go further and further covert, infiltrating the territory I had held as sacred my entire life, that of education. And yet.

In one of my iterations of "finding another way," I had found myself teaching, very unexpectedly, two groups of young people who had ostensibly signed up for a creative writing class. What they didn't know, and neither did I, was that these two groups would influence and remind me of what I had set out to do in the first place: capture a phenomenon I tentatively had named reciprocal resilience. The two groups brought me back to the "Invite Table" described in my autoethnography. These two groups brought wonder and co-teaching. One student remarked one day, "We don't really know what this is, Mz. Hope, we don't know if this is Creative Writing, but we don't care. We are here for it!" I saw myself in them, and I saw myself as they

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[30] "And those who were seen dancing were thought to be insane by those who could not hear the music." - Friedrich Nietzsche

saw me - ah, there's the rub[31], as I witnessed, again, reciprocal resilience. Daily practices of "Having a connect," or the "Yoda's Head" activity, or the crazy experiments we conducted such as becoming musical instruments or pouring my coffee all over their journals, or hiding rocks around the school for no practical reason, became the mischief we all wanted to make. We broke rules and we wrote new ones. The encroaching, demoralising belief that anti-oppressive pedagogy is not possible in this public school system *is impossible to believe* when I acknowledge that Creative Writing, B and C blocks, Fall 2022, exist. If it were true, those classes wouldn't exist. But they do. So, what then to make of it all?

What has been considered "academic," and therefore as valued in our school system and viewed as "rigourous," is deeply rooted in the processes of analysis, persuasion, and evidence; these processes, it has been argued, have been exclusionary, hierarchal, patriarchal, and colonial (Ali, 2014; Beard, 2017; Bottrell, 2009). They are based on a competitive process of outdoing, an intellectual wrestle of show*man*ship; the emphasis has been on objectivity, as though replication is the only end to the puzzle of validity (Ali, 2014). Qualitative study is seen as "soft"; oral history not taken as proof; women's knowledge is seen as hysterical and domestic; the artists seen as romanticised creative genius bordering the insane. What we know, however, those of us who invite and witness storytelling, is that the rigour lies in the unpredictable and in the spontaneous; the rigour is in the deep emotional and psychological work that the story-share elicits in both the teller and the receiver; it takes energy and mental stamina to re-tell a story, especially if one is to recall challenges to resilience.

If we embrace the circuitous, the unpredictable, and the investigative approaches to

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[31] Thank you to Hamlet, thank you Shakespeare.

collective space creation and the effect these have on vulnerable populations, I believe we could see the extraordinary, the magical, and in fact, the deeply reflective process of story-sharing emerge in our classrooms. Story-sharing could bring the autonomy, the competence, and the relatedness of Bandura's work to the curriculum. If a teacher, a mentor, or significant other shares in the pain, shows they are capable of sitting with it in the moment, and sees its validity and its relatedness, the youth will see themselves being seen. This is not to say that we must retell our stories in such a way that we clean them up past recognition. However, referring to the idea that the word we choose in order to label something alters depending on our positions or our social locations, we can choose words to conjure and reconfigure. Thinking about work that problematizes this labelling, we can mentor students to see their own strengths (Ali, 2013; Bottrell, 2009). In my case, I was labelled a daydreamer and a stubborn, spirited girl, "too big for her britches." However, those qualities are the very things that got me through. How ironic, though, how meta-narrative it is, to know that phrases spoken of my own experience with adversity, such as this one, have landed me in trouble yet again, this time as a teacher, countless times. What has emerged without a shadow of a doubt in my five-year research journey is the public school system, as it is operating currently, is definitely not a "safe" one. Educators wrack up considerable personal and professional risk. I walk away from this course of study with a sense of confoundment.

One of my questions for the misfit educators in my study had them consider if they saw themselves as anti-oppressive educators and to evaluate why or why not this was the case. This question emerged as possibly the most entangled of them all. It seems that those who teach while holding space for complexities, disconfirming evidence, and multitudes, are aware that anti-oppressive pedagogy may be impossible within an oppressive system. We all seem to struggle

with the dilemma, do we continue and do what we can with it? Do we walk away and know we didn't add our little bit of stardust?

Returning to the original concept, that of reciprocal resilience. Did I find it? What is it? Considering that resilience is an experience one does not really seek, as in, one is resilient only because of challenges to an ideal state of equilibrium, we can ask, what is it good for?

Connecting back to the discussion of grit, which is primarily a state in which an individual persists in light of their own chosen goals, as opposed to goals of necessity, one can wonder, why would we ever want to be considered resilient? I would argue that yes, I have found a reciprocal resilience. I do believe, after writing my autoethnography and interviewing misfit teachers, that taking one's experiences of adversity into the stories shared in view of helping others does create a type of magical circle, one which casts new strength and perpetuates itself. The misfit teachers who taught the misfits who went on to bravely enter "the system" are remembered; almost all of my participants, myself included, have names, can describe in vivid detail one moment, with one teacher, which changed things - changed how they saw themselves and how they saw the world. Many of them even have a sentence or two memorised, which came from such a teacher. Many expressed a regret that they could not or did not go back to that teacher to confirm the teacher's truth and message. But those misfits live on in the teacher's gaze, the teacher's story, the teacher's rebellion.

I find that a simple answer has visited me in this dark time. I am not the originator of this answer, but it is still the one that is here as I attempt to conclude my thesis: the anti-oppressive pedagogy is not in the *content* of the course. It is in the *process* of the course. Further study will need to be done on whatever it is that is occurring in today's classrooms, lecture halls, and media platforms which prevents, silences, shuns, cancels, and censors not only the content, but the

pedagogues, particularly those misfit insurgents. I believe now that the answer is not in the "what" but in the "how." In one of my retreats from activism, I came to see that misogyny as a force, and colonial thought as an organising principle, both had found their way in and won. If truth tellers are silenced, how can we create and maintain brave classrooms? This becomes an impossibility. I have come to understand that it won't change in my lifetime. Yet, I cannot end it here. I wrote earlier that because of Freire, I had reclaimed the label "radical." I keep to this. I know to teach is to activate. The ludicrous thought that anti-oppressive education is possible is still ludicrous, *if* we think of it in terms of content. No, I cannot teach complicated histories, I cannot teach critical thought, I cannot bring in disrupting content. And I most definitely cannot be a female truth teller and stay safe. But I can open the door. I can teach with love. I can teach with responsiveness. I can see. I can listen. I can story-capture and story-tell. Perhaps above all, I can be and will remain, *resilient*.

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Appendix 1: Statistics

The following collection of statistics is intended to be representational of the types of challenges youth face in today's public school settings. This list is in no way meant to be comprehensive; rather, it shows the myriad obstacles and everyday realities facing youth, and by extension, teachers, in secondary classrooms. These numbers demonstrate the significant forces at play that enact the marginalisation of youth and create circumstances of intersecting adversities, which interact with those of their teachers. May we remember that some teachers were these students at one point, and that many of these described adversities are compounded and continue over a lifespan.

- **Indigenous students**: While the gap in rates of graduation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth is decreasing, 70% of Indigenous students graduate within sixyears compared to 88.7% for non-Indigenous students. The rate of graduation for Indigenous students living in Ministry care is 58%. The improvement in graduation rates noted in the past ten years is credited to the inclusion of more Indigenous content and pedagogical approach, as well as the implementation of the *94 Calls to Action* from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's report. https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2018EDUC0070-002383
- **Drug use**: According to Statistics Canada, 60% of illicit drug users in Canada are between 15 and 24; drug abuse is a leading cause of premature deaths and young people involved in drugs are likely to drop out of school. (https://canadiancentreforaddictions.org/
- **Self harm**: According to Statistics Canada, 1 in 4 youth hospitalizations due to injury are due to intentional self-harm: "There has been an increasing trend among youth in the

number of hospitalizations for intentional self-harm over the past 5 years, the bulk of which can be attributed to a 102% increase for girls since 2009–2010. For girls aged 10 to 17, hospitalisations for intentional self-harm has increased 67% since 2009–2010 (Canadian Institute for Health Information).

- **Homelessness**: Students experiencing homelessness still attempt to attend school, particularly in inner city schools. According to Paula Braitstein, associate professor of epidemiology at the University of Toronto's Dalla Lana School of Public Health and lead researcher of the first major global study on youth homelessness, "criminalizing youth or instituting policies that assume they are thieves, delinquents or drug addicts, won't help." While globally, poverty is the main reason youth experience homelessness, in Canada, family conflict (estimated at 48%) and abuse (estimated at 26%) are reported as the driving causes (JAMA report). 63% to 90% of youth experiencing homelessness do not graduate. https://www.homelesshub.ca/
- **Pregnancy**: Rates of teen pregnancy are more likely affected by and reflective of greater societal forces, such as marginalisation and socio-economic factors, combined with a lack of educational or employment opportunities, than the sexuality of the girls themselves (Bielski, Z. 2013). Current data is not available from Statistics Canada. Statistics Canada. (Table 13-10-0166-01 Teen pregnancy, by pregnancy outcomes, females aged 15 to 19 **DOI:** https://doi.org/10.25318/1310016601-eng)

- **Migrant, refugee, and newcomer youth**: Migrant, newcomer, and refugee youth in Canada face significant challenges in addition to adapting to a new culture and school system: stigma, poverty, and language barriers can contribute significantly to rates of mental illness (Dr. Kwame McKenzie, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health).

- **Mental illness**: "It is estimated that 10-20% of Canadian youth are affected by a mental illness or disorder – the single most disabling group of disorders worldwide. Today, approximately 5% of male youth and 12% of female youth, age 12 to 19, have experienced a major depressive episode" (Canadian Mental Health Association).
- **Literacy**: While the British Columbia Teachers Federation reports that graduation rates have increased by 5.7% in the past 15 years (https://bctf.ca/publications.aspx?id=48942), it is estimated that 40% of adults in BC "do not have the literacy skills they need to achieve their goals, to function and thrive in the modern economy, and to develop their knowledge and potential." High literacy rates are associated with excellent or very good health, while the opposite is true for those with low literacy: "Those with high literacy are more likely to vote, and more than twice as likely as those with low literacy to participate in community groups." http://www.literacybc.ca/
- **Abuse**: "One-third (33%) of Canadians aged 15 and older experienced some form of maltreatment during childhood. Child maltreatment includes physical and/or sexual abuse before the age of 15 by someone aged 18 or older, as well as witnessing violence by a parent or guardian against another adult." (*Juristat* report "Family violence in Canada: A statistical profile, 2015.")
- **Sexual abuse**: According to the Canadian Red Cross, "In British Columbia, more than one in three street or marginalized youth had been sexually exploited by men and women; males were as likely as females to be sexually exploited; 60 percent of sexually exploited youth are Aboriginal."
- **Racialisation**: "In a first-of-its-kind survey commissioned by the CBC with 4,000 youths aged 14 to 21, more than half of young people that identified as visible minorities say

they've been subjected to racist names or comments. One in eight said it happened more than five times." (https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/school-violence-racism-bullying-1.5328735)

- **Transgender / non-binary identities**: Transgender youth have a higher rate of reporting psychological distress, self-harm, major depressive episodes, and suicide (British Columbia Adolescent Health Survey and the Canadian Community Health Survey).
- **Learning disabilities**: According to Statistics Canada, "of all the children with disabilities in this country, more than half (59.8%) have a learning disability. Statistics Canada reports that 3.2% of Canadian children have a learning disability – that's the equivalent of one child in every school bus full of children"(https://www.ldac-acta.ca/prevalence-of-learning-disabilities/).
- Immigrant students and international students are also a part of our current class composition. While not necessarily marginalised as such, they have unique needs, particularly around social inclusion and language acquisition.
- Physically disabled and intellectually disabled (differentiated from learning disabilities) have been shifted from specialised programs to become a part of the regular school programming. BC's new Inclusive Education model, while purporting to benefit all students, to result in higher rates of empathy, and to develop a more equitable democracy, the writers of the report, *Implementing Inclusion in BC's Public Schools*, admit to positive "micro- & macroeconomic effects." Students with profound disabilities, such as breathing and feeding tubes, paralysis, toileting incapacities, etc. are now a regular part of the public school system. As a result, educational assistants are funneled away from supporting the students who would have received support with our past models, such as

those with ADHD, dysgraphia, dyslexia, etc. (Report on the June 14, 2017, Inclusive Education Summit https://inclusionbc.org)

- Additionally, students experiencing and/or recovering gender-based violence and discrimination are an accepted component to this composition.

As mentioned, these statistics are not comprehensive. Classrooms easily contain representations of most, if not all, of these marginalisations. Many of these marginalisations are intersected, resulting in compounded vulnerabilities, further increasing the risk of re-traumatisation, exposure to risky behaviour, and impeding progress in schools.

Reciprocal Resilience: Reflecting on a Storytelling Classroom

You are invited to participate in a study titled *Reciprocal Resilience: Reflecting on a Storytelling Classroom (OR* Anti-Oppressive Pedagogy: Developing "Reciprocal Resilience" through Storytelling in the Classroom) that is being conducted by Georgina Hope and Catherine McGregor.
Georgina is a graduate student in the department of Leadership studies, Community Engagement, with the University of Victoria. You may contact Georgina at ghope@sd61.bc.ca.
As a graduate student, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a Master of Arts in Leadership. It is being conducted under the supervision of [omit]. You may contact my supervisor at [omit].

Purpose and Objectives
The purpose of this study is to better understand educators' experiences with, and responses to, marginalisation in public school settings. It is my goal to reflect on teacher practices that foster resilience amongst students through the practice of story-sharing, and how these practices maybe informed by the educator's own life experiences. I am seeking to understand and communicate what teacher practices create space for student voice through the invitation of story, and how an educator's own story may impact the decisions they make as leaders in the contemporary classroom.

Importance of this Research
If the educator's aim is to decolonise, liberate, and empower, then a continual interrogation of pedagogy is required. A wealth of data exists on marginalised or at-risk students *while they are in school*. Data sought in this study is on those individuals who persist through post secondary and circle back to infiltrate educational systems and enact change. The data gathered may be used in such events and publications as professional development workshops for teachers and/orteacher education and educational program design.

Participants Selection
Participants will be teachers in school district 61 who volunteer to participate in the study. Volunteers will be screened to ensure they: 1. teach in secondary classrooms and integrate storytelling in their classrooms 2. specifically enact anti-oppressive pedagogy in daily practice and 3. utilise their own experiences with marginalisation throughout their teaching practices and are comfortable sharing.

What is involved
If you choose to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include a semi-structured written or verbal response* to questions about your experience as a youth and asa teacher. The time commitment for this study is expected to be approximately one hour. The interview will consist of answering approximately eight questions. You will be sent a google document to write your answers into. You can take the time you need. You may meet with me initially to go over any questions you may have.
You will complete the semi-structured interview in writing, via email, or if you prefer, you can be interviewed verbally* and recorded. Please be advised that if you choose to answer your

questions over a digital format, such as social media, or through an online survey, there is the possibility that this information about you may be accessed without your knowledge or consent. ***Please note: restrictions are in place due to COVID 19. If participants choose the verbal option, the semi-structured interview will take place over ZOOM and will be recorded.**

Inconvenience
The only anticipated inconveniences at this date include the time it takes to answer the questions thoughtfully and to review the post interview transcripts to ensure validity and accurate representation.

Risks
There are some potential risks to you by participating in this research. These risks are social, psychological, and/or emotional. They include the possibility of hard or difficult memories surfacing. I recognize that the nature of the questions in this study presuppose your experience with marginalisation and your practices as an anti-oppressive teacher. As a result, some questions may bring up memories that are challenging, or may result in a shift in perspective or understanding around those memories. This process can be cathartic, and it can also be exhausting.
It is my aim to mitigate these risks. As such, I offer the following:

1. You may stop the interview and take a break at any time
2. You may wish to resume at another time
3. You may also choose to not answer some questions
4. Assistance in seeking professional support such as through the school district's wellbeing program

The Victoria School District's Employee Assistance Program can be reached at this website: https://www.sd61.bc.ca/our-district/departments-services/human-resource-services/health-safety/

Benefits
The benefits you will enjoy as a result of participating in this research include, but are not limited to, the following: you may gain greater insight into your experiences as a youth; your contribution benefits society and future students; and you may gain satisfaction knowing you have contributed to the body of knowledge in Leadership studies and Educational Psychology.

Compensation
There is no financial compensation for your participation.

Voluntary Participation
Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If you withdraw from the study you data will only be used if you grant permission.

On-going Consent
Periodically, I will ask for your on-going consent. For example, you will be invited to meet with me initially to familiarize yourself with the process and to ask any questions. I will go over the consent form with you during our first meeting. Subsequently, on each occasion we meet, I will

remind you about the provisions of this consent, including your right to withdraw at any time, or to not answer any questions that you feel are too uncomfortable for you to respond to.
To summarise, your on-going consent is important and you are in charge; you will be given multiple opportunities to leave the study and you do not need to provide any rationale.

Anonymity
There is a certain degree of a loss of anonymity on your part if you choose to participate. Your answers can be kept anonymous. While I will anonymize the participants and the location of the study, it is possible that someone familiar with our school district could read parts of the text, particularly exemplary stories you share, which might enable them to identify you, and as such, I cannot guarantee absolute anonymity due to the nature of the research. Your stories may be included in a paper.

Confidentiality
I will do my best to keep your involvement and your data confidential; however, I will be writing about my research and I will be discussing my findings. I do not need to use your name.

Dissemination of Results
It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared in the following possible ways: participants will receive the results of the study; my writing may be published; the data will be included in my thesis which will be defended publicly; and my work may be used in a professional development workshop for teachers.

Disposal of Data
Data collected will be stored on my personal computer. Data from this study will be disposed of by deleting interview files and shredding of transcriptions.

Contacts
Individuals that may be contacted regarding this study include myself, Georgina Hope, as well as Catherine McGregor. Contact information is found at the beginning of this consent form.
In addition, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250 472 4545 or ethics@uvic.ca).

Confidentiality
Participant to provide initials, *only if you consent*:

- I consent to be identified by name/credited in the study:____
- I consent to have my responses attributed to me by name in the results:____

Future Use of Data
Participant to provide initials, *only if you consent*:

- I consent to the use of my data in future research:
  ____
- I **do not** consent to the use of data in future research: ______
- I consent to be contacted in the event my data is requested for futureresearch:_____

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study, that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers, and that you consent to participate in this research project.

__________________________ __________________________ __________________________

Name of participant *Signature* *Date*

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.

Interview questions

1. What brought you to teaching?
2. Do you tell stories? What role do they play in your life? Are they something you utilise in your teaching?
3. Do you see yourself as an anti-oppressive educator? Why or why not?
4. How would you describe your interactions with so-called “challenging” students?
5. How do you think you, yourself, were viewed as a child/student? What kinds of labels do you think were attached to you by authority figures, such as parents or teachers, whether positive or negative? Did YOU see yourself that way? What words would you have used to describe yourself?
6. Do you have any personal experience with marginalisation, adversity, or experiences that have challenged your resiliency? Share if you feel comfortable.
7. The definition of resilience has changed over time and is culturally determined, but it can be loosely understood as an individual’s ability to cope with, adapt to, and recover from adverse circumstances, a process which encompasses both individual traits and one’s engagement and location within the ecology of their environment. What is your definition? Do you consider yourself resilient?
8. Were there any adults in your life, as a child or student, who played a significant role in shaping how you now “show up” as an educator?
9. Do you feel you “fit in” well with your peers within the public school system, as an educator? How do you think you are viewed as an educator, by colleagues and students?
10. What role do you think resistance or rebellion plays in being an anti-oppressive educator?

At the end of the interview, ask if anything has been left out, and ask the interviewee if there is anything else they would like to say.

Table of coded themes:

Theory Generated Codes	In Vivo Codes	Considerations and Disconfirming data
Outside influences: mentors,interventions, and protective factors Questions: 1. What brought you toteaching? 8. Were there any adults in your life, as a child or student, who played a significant role in shaping how you now "show up" asan educator?	Unusual path to teaching Role of others: misfits helping misfits - link to visionary practices; often onekey person "snagged" them into teaching. Role of teachers: often one moment, one story; often a misfit	**Significant theme (1): almost all the women were late to teaching and were mothers already; each spoke to this playing a integral role in their decision to pursue teaching,to persist through the increased challenge; and in their enactment of pedagogy (see anti-oppressive below)** Visionary practices were a smaller emergence than I anticipated
Culture and spirituality of storytelling Questions: 2. Do you tell stories? What role do they play in your life? Are they something you utilise in your teaching?	Nature of storytelling pedagogy - link to physicality Role and impact of Indigenous worldview	Emergent theme not found inthe literature: **kinesthetic/ physicality of a storytelling class** **2) All three Indigenous participants talked aboutthis in depth; most non-Indigenous participants talked about the tremendous, and at times, life altering impact it has had on their own resilience and pedagogy; link to resistance and risks.**
Stories as helpers and linksto self-worth Questions:	Not a lot emerged here; interest from participants in how storytelling linked to labelling from the system. I.e..: the plodding white teen versus the resourceful runaway and how each gets	This is, however, a link to my autoethnography

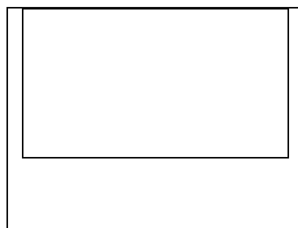
2. Do you tell stories? What role do they play in your life? Are they something you utilise in your teaching?	categorised in the system, particularly from the female participants	
Agency and the catharsis ofstorytelling Questions: 2. Do you tell stories? What role do they play in your life?Are they something you utilise in your teaching?	Impact of storytelling on pedagogy: story as motivator, story as reward; all lit up when they talk about it.	
Complexities of labelling Questions: 3. Do you see yourself as ananti-oppressive educator? Why or why not? 5. How do you think you, yourself, were viewed as a child/student? What kinds of labels do you think were attached to you by authority figures, such as parents or teachers, whether positive or negative? Did YOU see yourself that way? What words would you have used to describe yourself?	**3)** Anti-oppressive educator:two themes: **1: conflicted and reflexive** **2: the role of relationship (impossible without it); verycomplicated relationship, i.e. "benevolent slave holder" - Jan; furthered by intersectionality, i.e. "I AM oppressed."** Labels: child to now, storyteller and eccentric, etc.	Most intensely expressed byIndigenous females. Males (one white, one white passing) both expressed complexity through privilege **Disconfirming: only one participant, (white female, middle class background), expressed enthusiasm around embracing the label"anti-oppressive" - interestingly, she is the onlyteacher to have actually worked in a dictatorship type community, that of apartheid South Africa; mention the refusal to use "anonymous"** **3) Not all positive; ridicule to activist women; complex because to be labelled in the first**

		place is the privilege of being seen
Nature Nurture (Bio-Psycho-Social) : attainment of developmental markers; dispositions of sociability; close family bonds; local support; motivation and self regulation; self determination theory; attachment theory Questions: 4. How would you describeyour interactions with so-called "challenging"students?	Dignity of students; giving ajob, responsibility, trust Classroom management styles: no yelling, open doors,anarchy, etc.	
Behaviour modifications; performativity, and group dynamics; intrinsic motivations, helping andbelief in self-worth. Questions: 2,3,4,5,6,9,10.	A synthesis of responses	Several key responses tied to the significant, emergent themes
Visionary practices: (imagination, prospection); how youth "see" others "seeing" them: success, status, fun, belonging, helping; teacher enthusiasm and issues of representation Questions: 6. Do you have any personal experience	Not a lot came out of this in the interviews; some with the physicality of storytelling	

with marginalization, adversity, or experiences that have challenged your resiliency? Share if you feel comfortable. 7. The definition of resilience has changed over time and is culturally determined, but it can be loosely understood as an individual's ability to cope with, adapt to, and recover from adverse circumstances, a process which encompasses bot individual traits and one's engagement and location with the ecology of their environment. What is your definition? Do you consider yourself resilient?-		**(4) Resilience: some pushback, some questioning, some additionsto the definition** **Ie. Kindness**
Role of belonging Questions: 9. Do you feel you "fit in" well with your peers withinthe public school system, asan educator? How do you think you are viewed as an educator, by	Finding allies	

colleagues and students?		
Role of resistance 10. What role do you think resistance or rebellion playsin being an anti-oppressive educator?	**(5) Risks to anti oppressive teachers and disciplinary action**; fear of loss of job; moral dilemmas; lack of consequences for students Feminist notes Resistance: yes	**(5) Significant emergent theme here: big impact on decision making, especially for women. Truth telling big difference between the men and the women** **Different from Literature review because facilitators there were hired to work with homogenous, vulnerable populations, as opposed to teachers.** Difference between public and private school

Ethics Certificate



Office of Research Services | Human Research Ethics Board

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Certificate of Approval - Annual Renewal

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: **Catherine McGregor** (Supervisor) PRINCIPAL APPLICANT: **Georgina Hope** **Master's student** UVIC DEPARTMENT: **Educational Psychology and Leadership Studies EPLS**	**ETHICS PROTOCOL NUMBER20-0037** Expedited review - delegated ORIGINAL APPROVAL DATE:10-Aug-2021 APPROVED ON:15-Sep-2022 APPROVAL EXPIRY DATE:09-Aug-2023

PROJECT TITLE: **Reciprocal Resilience: Reflecting on a Storytelling Classroom (OR Anti-Oppressive Pedagogy: Developing "Reciprocal Resilience" through Storytelling in the Classroom**

RESEARCH TEAM MEMBERS: **None**

DECLARED PROJECT FUNDING: **None**

DOCUMENTS INCLUDED IN THIS APPROVAL:

Completed APPLICATION FORM - Request to Use Public School Students or Staff In Research.doc - 18-

Mar-2021 Georgina Hope First Contact Letter.docx - 18-Mar-2021

tcps2_core_certificate.pdf - 27-Apr-2021

Updated Google Participant Consent Form.docx - 17-Jul-2021

Conditions of approval

This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above term provided there is no change in the protocol.

Amendments

To make changes to the approved research procedure in your study, please submit "Amendments" or "Annual renewal with amendments" form. You must receive research ethics approval before proceeding with your amended protocol.

Renewals

Your ethics approval must be current for the period during which you are recruiting participants or collecting data. To renew your protocol, please submit a “Request for Renewal” form before the expiry date on your certificate. You will be sent an emailed reminder prompting you to renew your protocol about six weeks before your expiry date.

Project Closures

When you have completed all data collection activities and will have no further contact with participants, please notify the Human Research Ethics Board by submitting a “Notice of Project Completion” form.

Certification

This certifies that the UVic Human Research Ethics Board has examined this research protocol and concluded that, in all respects, the proposed research meets the appropriate standards of ethics as outlined by the University of Victoria's policies for research involving human participants.

Dr. Sandra GibbonsDr. Matthew Murphy

Chair, Human Research Ethics BoardVice-chair, Human Research Ethics Board

Certificate Issued On: 15-Sep-2022