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Student Leadership Opportunities for Making 'Peace' in Canada's Urban Schools: Contradictions in Practice

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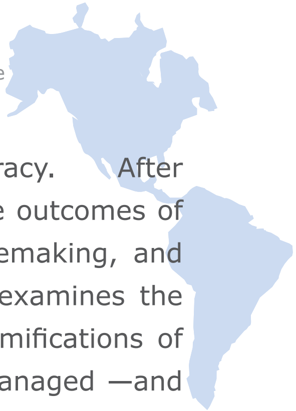
Abstract:

Qualitative research on the range of anti-violence and peacebuilding-related programming in three large, diverse school districts illuminated contrasting approaches to student participation: teachers and administrators empowered differing sub-sets of students as 'leaders' in differing ways, to help reduce violence and build peer conflict management capacity. The contrasting student roles that were implemented —monitors (enforcing rules), social skills leaders (addressing bullying), peer mediators (facilitating dispute resolution), student voice representatives (engaging in democratic consultation), and equity advocates (resisting bias and marginalization)— imply differing understandings of 'peace' and of citizenship. This paper probes the implications of these activities for diverse students' unequal opportunities to develop citizen agency and to build sustainable democratic peace.

The Safe and Inclusive Schools project studied how public schools may endeavor to address violence and foster citizenship learning for sustainable peace, by examining holistically the various intervention and prevention programs actually implemented in selected urban, resource-deprived, multicultural learning environments in Canada. In large urban school systems, people working in different organizational locations, informed by distinct perspectives, handle a spectrum of anti-violence and peacebuilding efforts. This paper shows the range of ways in which diverse student 'leaders' were deployed in these efforts to build 'peaceful' environments. We highlight the voices of educators, in three public school districts, who lead and implement this spectrum of student leadership initiatives.

After briefly reviewing the conceptual foundations for this study in scholarly literature on peace/conflict and democratic citizenship education, we describe the research method and data sources. The main body of the paper presents educators' qualitative descriptions and viewpoints regarding various types of student 'leadership' embedded in the 'peace' initiatives in their schools and districts. We compare the diverse and contradictory ways educators empowered (and impeded) various sub-groups of students to become active participants and leaders in resisting overt and systemic violence in their schools and communities, and examine the implications of their choices for diverse students' opportunities for democratic peacebuilding citizenship learning.

Anti-violence efforts constitute a powerful lived curriculum — reinforcement of 'appropriate' identities and behaviors through explicit lessons and implicit patterns of practice, language and silences, selection and exclusion



(Bush & Saltarelli, 2000). The various types of anti-violence work can be arranged on a rough continuum from '*peacekeeping*' security and safety intervention approaches, through '*peacemaking*' dispute resolution intervention approaches, to '*peacebuilding*,' approaches that work to repair social relationships and mitigate the underlying causes of violence and exploitation (Curle, 1971; I. Harris & Morrison, 2003; Lederach, 1995). Peace*keeping* focuses on the control needed to achieve 'negative' peace, or the absence of overt violence. Peace*making* is also intervention to reduce violence, but rather than emphasizing control of symptoms, it focuses on the dialogue needed to understand and address disagreements that contribute to conflict escalation. Peacebuilding is the most comprehensive strategy, focusing on long-range prevention as well as intervention, through institutional change to achieve 'positive' peace, meaning the presence of justice and structures for equitable, effective conflict management (Galtung, 1996). This study uses the term peacebuilding to refer to multi-dimensional approaches that include peacemaking as well as democratization and other justice initiatives.

Negative peace (achieved through peacekeeping and/or peacemaking) is a necessary, but by no means sufficient, condition for democracy. Protecting the safety of the vulnerable is an essential part of any peaceful community; yet over-reliance on peacekeeping through control would inhibit democratic participation. Dialogue to address disagreements and make decisions (peacemaking) and the redress of injustice (peacebuilding) are themselves important elements of democracy. Democracy is fundamentally a system for trying to handle conflicting values and interests equitably, inclusively, and effectively. Implicit and explicit practices of managing conflict, therefore, provide potential opportunities to learn and practice democracy. After summarizing prior research on the outcomes of school-based peacekeeping, peacemaking, and peacebuilding in turn, the paper examines the apparent democratic education ramifications of the diverse ways conflicts were managed —and by whom— in selected Canadian schools serving diverse populations.

Peacekeeping: Anti-violence initiatives that have been shown to be effective are multifaceted, explicit programs of instruction and practice that facilitate students' development of social and cognitive competence, respect for differences, inclusion of marginalized peers, and opportunities to be positively involved and to build strong relationships—*in contrast* to punitive approaches (Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, & Hawkins, 2002; Erickson & McGuire, 2004; Hazler & Carney, 2002; Scheckner, Rollin, Kaiser-Ulrey, & Wagner, 2002; Schwartz, 1999). However, as with any school change initiative, not all violence prevention initiatives actually implemented meet these ideals, or are able to sustain them (Crosse, Burr, Cantor, Hagen, & Hantman, 2002).

Peacemaking: Explicit conflict resolution education —whether extra-curricular or infused into classroom curriculum— can be effective in developing students' constructive conflict resolution skills and mutual respect, and thereby reducing violence, *if* adequately implemented and sustained (Johnson & Johnson, 1996, 2009; Jones, 2004). Conflict resolution education programs are at least as effective as other kinds of violence prevention programs (Skiba, 2000). The most widely researched type of conflict resolution education initiative is peer mediation. This student-led intervention to manage peer disputes as they arise also develops student participants' awareness and skills through guided practice (R. Harris, 2005). Peer mediators may

be small 'cadres' of student leaders, trained on a pull-out basis or, where resources allow, whole classes may receive mediator training, allowing more students to take turns carrying out this peacemaking leadership role (Johnson & Johnson, 1996; Jones, 1998). Other kinds of co-curricular and whole-class conflict resolution education also may be effective in reducing aggression, when included in comprehensive, long-range approaches that include explicit instruction, regular student practice, and teacher development (Garrard & Lipsey, 2007; Jones & Sanford, 2003; Stevahn, 2004). Students' opportunity to learn and practice conflict resolution through participation in such peacemaking initiatives (in contrast to peacekeeping, which focuses on controlling behavior rather than on guiding skill development) appears to facilitate their academic achievement (Bickmore, 2002; Johnson & Johnson, 2009). Thus peacemaking can broaden the democratic capacity of individuals and communities to handle conflict nonviolently.

Peacebuilding: Crucial to sustainable peacebuilding —and to democracy— is to develop and restore healthy relationships, by acting to repair or mitigate inequities and the harms people cause one another (McCluskey et al., 2008; Morrison, 2007). Strong, respectful relationships provide both a motivation and a resource for constructive conflict management (Claassen & Claassen, 2004; Gladden, 2002; Morrison, 2007). For example, student support practices that narrow achievement gaps between school systems' most- and least-successful students seem to be associated with lower levels of school violence (Akiba, LeTendre, Baker, & Goesling, 2002). Inclusive cooperative learning pedagogies can help to make school climates more peaceful (Aronson, 2000; Romo, 1997).

Another form of peacebuilding, closely associated with democracy, is well-facilitated, open and inclusive discussion of meaningful issues. School or classroom governance processes that include diverse and marginalized students in dialogue and deliberation have been associated with reduced aggression and improved inter-group relations (Alderson, 2000; Browning, Davis, & Resta, 2000; DeTurk, 2006; Kahne & Sporte, 2008; Wyness, 2009). Similarly, open discussions of conflictual social issues embedded in subject-matter pedagogy tend to improve students' skills for communication across difference, and their inclination to participate in classrooms and communities (Bolgatz, 2005; Hahn, 1998; Hess & Avery, 2008; Howard, 2004; Simon, 2001; Torney-Purta, Lehmann, Oswald, & Schultz, 2001). While peace*making* approaches may build students' capacities to participate in democratic dialogue and decision-making processes, peace*building* initiatives also address the other major axis of democracy — equity, in particular the opening of opportunities for diverse and marginalized people to engage, participate, and be heard in such processes, and thereby to build inclusive and just, as well as positively peaceful, communities.

Leadership by diverse students, as a core element of building peaceful schools: Above, we have distinguished three broad, complementary types of approaches to handling conflict and reducing violence in schools —peacekeeping, peacemaking, and peacebuilding— and summarized the ways each type of 'peace' initiative might contribute differently to democratic citizenship education. Next, we zero in on one particular element: the opportunities that each initiative may (or may not) provide for diverse students to exercise democratic agency, as leaders or co-leaders of the various 'peace' activities. We argue that empowerment of diverse student leadership

in conflict management is a key element of peacebuilding (as well as of democracy), because it may redress the disengagement and marginalization at the root of violence, and enable those young people to contribute to collective problem-solving.

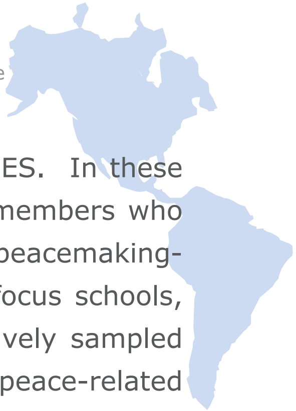
In their analysis of selected citizenship education case studies written by Scottish teachers, building upon the theories of Paulo Freire (1998), Ross, Munn and Brown (2007) present three criteria for deciding whether student participation constitutes 'democratic' citizenship. These criteria are, "1) whether children are initiators of activity... 2) whether [the active participation] lies close to the core business of schooling ... and 3) whether participation is understood in terms of emancipation ... or as a system of control" (p. 253). Ross and colleagues found such participation activities were usually absent from the core activities of schools.

Implementing democratically-oriented peacemaking and peacebuilding goals is most challenging where poor and visible minority students are clustered in under-resourced schools with less-experienced teachers and administrators (Jonathan Kozol, cited in Johnston, 2000), and in the context of curriculum standardization and high-stakes testing (Cuban, 2001; Herr & Anderson, 2003). It is especially difficult for marginalized youth to perform leadership roles in school, unless their participation and authority is clearly supported by adults (Bickmore, 2001). Thus, in addition to Ross and colleagues' three criteria, we have inserted a fourth criterion for assessing the 'democratic' nature of student participation activities: to what degree those participation opportunities are *inclusive of diverse* students. In what follows, we apply this framework to analyze the range of anti-violence and 'peace'-related initiatives implemented in three urban school districts.

Research Method and Data Sources

The research project from which this paper is drawn, Safe and Inclusive Schools, was a 4-year, qualitative examination of the complex links among student diversity, violence, behavior management, and implicit citizenship learning opportunities in schools. Its first stage was a broad examination of mandated curriculum and policy contexts for safe and inclusive schools across Canada, to map the changing environments in which anti-violence and peacebuilding practices are implemented (see Bickmore, 2004, 2005, 2006). The central activity of the research was the completion of comparative case studies, describing the range of anti-violence and peacebuilding-related programming implemented in three urban school districts serving diverse populations, and examining the viewpoints and concerns of the diverse administrators and teachers who carried out that programming. The research team conducted numerous interviews and collected relevant documents to capture the range of programs and perspectives within each school district and its social/political context.

In order to examine the intersections of conflict management approaches with student diversity, the current study focuses on three large, economically stressed public school districts in major Canadian cities as its case study sites, each with different racial and ethnic populations. We chose to study large school districts in order to maximize the diversity of perspectives embodied in the wide range of educator job profiles relevant to conflict management. The research goal was not to assess any particular



program, but to describe and analyze the variety of conflict management-related programming actually implemented (including a broad range of efforts usually studied in isolation from one another), to examine which students had access to these learning opportunities, and to explore educators’ rationales for those programming choices.

A total of 89 teacher, administrator, and student services participants were purposively selected; public documents and colleagues’ ‘snowball’ recommendations were used to identify adults in different roles and capacities who were leading any kind of classroom or school-wide peacekeeping, peacemaking, and/or peacebuilding programming. Thirty-two interviewees were centrally assigned (that is, they worked for the school district beyond an individual school); 57 (including 24 teachers) were based in a total of 23 schools. We sought interviewees representing the widest possible range of relevant program activities, ethnocultural and gender identities, organizational roles, and viewpoints, in order to uncover their underlying continuities and contradictions.

Board A is the central case in this study, in that the research team was granted more extensive access to relevant educator participants, including 22 teachers. In Board A only, in addition to the board-wide sample, district safe schools leadership identified and facilitated research access to *five ‘focus’ schools* – two secondary (AHS and BHS) and three elementary (CES, DES and EES). A fourth elementary school withdrew from the study early, when its principal was transferred. These particular schools were selected because they were located in comparable population areas (socio-economically stressed and ethnically diverse) yet had different conflict profiles: AHS and DES had significantly higher rates of violent incidents and suspensions than BHS, CES and EES. In these schools, we interviewed 34 staff members who were involved in anti-violence and peacemaking-related activities. Beyond these focus schools, other Board A interviews (purposively sampled to identify leaders of various peace-related programming initiatives across the district) included 13 centrally-assigned and four school-based program leaders. There were a total of 51 interviewees in Board A and interviews were conducted in 2005.

The Board B and C comparison cases include board-wide purposive samples of key informants (leaders engaged in various peacekeeping, peacemaking, and peacebuilding-related programming), but no focus schools. In Board B, the 16 interviewees (in 2006) included eight centrally-assigned personnel and eight based in elementary through high schools (a comparable proportion of school-based staff to that in Board A). In Board C, the smallest of the three districts, the 22 interviewees (in 2006) comprised a larger proportion of district staff: 11 centrally-assigned and 11 elementary through high school personnel.

In Board A, the largest district, safe schools leaders and school-based educators facilitated broad access to potential participants. Board C, the smallest district, facilitated broad access to centrally-assigned and school-based administrators, but not to teachers (except two who joined interviews with their principals). One hundred percent of the Boards A and C personnel who were invited to participate consented to interviews. In Board B, the research was not facilitated as enthusiastically by district leaders; five centrally-assigned individuals whom we contacted declined to participate or to nominate other potential participants. With this sampling design, data are illustrative, not generalizable or representative.

Interviews with school-based educators (all adults) were conducted at their schools. While this study did not include formal school or classroom observations, in several instances interviewees took researchers on tours of their schools, and/or pointed out particularly relevant displays or classroom activities. These informal observations provided contextual background that helped us to interpret interview and documentary evidence. Our focus was on the diverse perspectives of the adults who were responsible for initiating and facilitating anti-violence and 'peace'-related programming.

Interviews were voluntary, confidential, and open-ended, usually lasting about 35-50 minutes. Semi-structured interviews invited participants (a) to describe their experience of policies and programs they considered relevant to peacemaking and conflict intervention or prevention, and (b) to offer their concerns and views about the character and implementation of such practices. Pseudonym codes indicate interviewees' general role (teacher = T, school-based administrator = P, student support = SW, district administrator = A), and their location at a school (elementary = ES, intermediate = MS, high = HS, or combination) or central board office location. Interviewees' genders are indicated (f or m), but ethnocultural identities had to be masked to ensure anonymity. Programs and schools also were assigned pseudonyms.

Our analysis categorized the range of peace-related programming implemented in various schools and districts, and explored the potential implications of each type of activity for building sustainably peaceful schools, and for participating students' opportunities to learn democratic citizenship. In keeping with a grounded theory approach, the case studies proceeded in stages, and each round of data collection and interpretation was used to refine and inform future data collection and analysis (Charmaz, 2000). Each phase of data analysis began with the conceptual framework articulated above, attempting to distinguish among peacekeeping, peacemaking, and peacebuilding activities and to examine the broader democratic citizenship education questions such as who was included and excluded (along lines of social status, ethnicity, gender, and so forth), and what kinds of agency seemed to be enabled or impeded by the social relations patterns of each activity. This study did not attempt to assess the anti-violence *consequences* of various programming, but did attempt to make sense of the *opportunities* to learn that were embedded in each type of practice.

This paper addresses one emergent theme derived from this constructivist approach, that is the ways the different approaches to conflict management invited (and discouraged) agency and leadership by diverse students. To answer this question and probe ramifications for the lived curriculum of democratic citizenship in each school and district, the analysis of data resulted in the categorization of learning activities into different types of 'democratic' student participation, using the four criteria named above. While the larger study compared the ranges of anti-violence activities and infrastructure in the three school districts (Bickmore, 2007, 2010a, 2010b), this paper focuses on illustrating the patterns of student leadership embodied in different types of peace-related activities, drawing examples from interview data across all three district cases.

Findings

Interviewees described a wide range of contrasting student activities, engaging different types of students as 'leaders' and embodying different conceptions of 'peace' — from peacekeeping that would tend to stabilize

the status quo, to potentially transformative democratic peacebuilding. We categorized these into four broad types, summarized in Table 1 and presented below: 1) peer monitoring and social skills leadership in playgrounds, 2) peer mediation services, 3) student governance and designated helper roles, and 4) affinity, support, and action groups. For each type of student activity, we describe students' roles as initiators or leaders, which students were included (diversity), the relationship of the activity to core curriculum (in particular, how participants were trained, adult staff's roles, and interviewees' perceptions of program sustainability), and what these findings might mean for democratic and 'peace' education (emancipatory and/or control agendas).

Table 1. Types of Student Activities

	Board A	Board B	Board C
Peer monitoring and social skills leadership in playgrounds	**CES Peer Monitors** PK, exclusive, adult-initiated, behavior models and monitors, infrastructural support – program sustained 8 years so far	**Social Skills Anti-Bullying Leaders - Elementary** PK-PM, exclusive, adult-initiated, behavior models and monitors, peer classroom ed component, some infrastructural support – voluntary teacher time	
Formal peer mediation services	**AHS Leadership & Peer Support Course** PM-PB, exclusive, adult-initiated, monitoring, modeling and mediating, timetabled course/credit but minimal teacher training/support	**Peer Mediation Programs - Elementary** PM-PB, inclusive and exclusive – 'negative' leaders included, adult-initiated, monitoring, modeling, reporting, mediating, peer classroom education, informal curriculum, infrastructural support – but voluntary teacher time	**Peer Mediation Programs - Elementary-Middle-High** PM-PB, inclusive, adult-initiated, peer classroom education, infrastructural support – board resources an d training, within existing timetables and job descriptions
Student governance & designated leader roles	**Student Input in School/ Classroom Governance - Elementary** PB, inclusive and exclusive, adult initiated, helping, representation, self accountability, formal curriculum – contingent on teacher **BHS Student Council** PB, inclusive, student-managed, decision-making, representation, relationship building, responsibility for managing school clubs. Infrastructure-classroom space, timetabled meetings, teacher advisors	**Student Leadership Teams – Elementary & Middle** PB, exclusive, adult-initiated, decision-making, facilitation, representation, helpers, infrastructural support -timetabled school meetings, annual activity, training facilities, teacher advisors **Student Consultation in School Governance - High School** PB, inclusive, adult-initiated, share perspectives, representation, participate in decision-making and problem-solving. Impact on formal curriculum. Infrastructural support – teacher release time, timetabled	**Student Governance Initiatives, including Student Voice Committee, shared curriculum governance initiative, drama group** PB, inclusive, adult-initiated, representation, student voice, input in curricular decision-making and planning, peer social skills education. Informal and formal curriculum. Infrastructural support – teacher release time, professional development, academic credit

	Board A	Board B	Board C
Affinity, support and action groups	**CES Equity Club** PB, inclusive, adult initiated, social justice education, peer classroom education, informal, not sustained when advisor on leave. **BHS Muslim Prayer and Awareness Group** PM-PB, inclusive, student-initiated, relationship-building, dialogue, support, anti-discrimination education. School supported. **AHS Gay Straight Alliance** PM-PB, inclusive, student-initiated, relationship-building, dialogue, support, anti-discrimination education, adult-imposed conditions. **School Safety Clubs - High Schools** PM-PB, inclusive, adult-initiated, relationship-building, action projects, problem-solving, infrastructure- course credit, human resources (police liaison officers and teacher advisors) **Race Relations Student Leadership Camps** PM-PB, exclusive, adult-initiated, relationship-building, action projects, peer education, informal – periodical, contingent on scarce resource support		**Gay-Straight Alliance** PM-PB, inclusive, student-initiated, relationship- building, anti-discrimination education, support, dialogue, interschool networking, awareness, organization. Infrastructural support – school-wide coordination and support **Inter-School Equity Leadership Camps** PB, exclusive, adult initiated, equity education, leadership skills learning, [peer] conflict resolution education, inter-school networking, informal curriculum. Infrastructural support – teacher committees, physical space but disconnected from formal curriculum, teacher volunteer time.

Peacekeeping: Peer Monitoring and Social Skills Leadership

The majority of aggression among students in schools occurs in unstructured settings such as playgrounds and lunchrooms (Craig, Pepler, & Atlas, 2000; Olweus, 1997). In response, monitoring of children’s playground behaviors is commonly regarded as an important component of safe schools programming and social skill development (Colvin, Sugai, Good, & Lee, 1997; Cunningham, 1998; Mishna, Scarcello, Pepler, & Wiener, 2005; Pellegrini & Davis, 1993). In several Board A and B schools, students enacted these peer monitoring and social skill advising roles in playgrounds and other informal spaces (in Board B, some student leaders also presented classroom lessons on pro-social behaviors). Peer monitors were designated students charged with the responsibility to model pro-social behavior, to intervene in disruptive peer conflict and bullying situations, and to report larger problems to adult supervisors. With its emphasis on intervention to achieve safety and order by minimizing conflict disruptions and problem behaviors, this type of activity reflects primarily the peacekeeping end of the anti-violence continuum.

To different degrees in various schools, such leadership roles disproportionately empowered relatively successful and compliant students, thus reinforcing the status hierarchy. For example, staff at focus school CES chose, from the school’s oldest grade, an “exclusive” group of about 24 students (including a mix of boys, girls, and various ethnocultural identities) to become peer monitors. The teacher-advisor described the selection criteria:

> I can think of two or three that are not A students ... [but] they are seen by their teachers and peers as kind and responsible...[as] positive behavior role models. We don’t have any negative leaders in [monitors]. We’d be more likely to choose a quiet kid with potential or who leads in a different way, rather than a kid who leads in a negative way. (BrdA.T3f)[1]

CES peer monitors served on duty in pairs at assigned stations in the schoolyard, before school, at lunch, and during recess. They helped to guide safe behavior around play equipment, to recover lost balls, to respond to peer concerns, and to greet visitors. Their responsibility was limited to addressing “little, little things”:

> You know, ‘he won’t be my friend,’ or ‘she pushed me,’ ‘they won’t let me play with them.’ ...The [monitor] might come [to the teacher on duty] and say, ‘so-and-so is fighting,’ or ‘there’s a bullying situation going on over there,’ and the teachers take care of it...They will go get the ice and band-aids if someone falls, so we’re not taking a teacher out of the yard. (BrdA.CES.Pf)

Similarly, elementary Social Skills Leaders in Board B (two elementary schools and a middle school we visited) served on duty in pairs on the playground, met as a group with advisors, and operated as “all-around helpers – for example, helping a small child get their snack open and helping to manage playground toys such as rubber balls” and as peer advisors who would “ ... intervene, collect the facts, make a judgment, and then go from there to come up with a resolution [such as] saying sorry, ... agreeing to leave each other alone, give each other distance” (BrdB.P5.ESm). Thus, these were generally high-status students playing a classic peacekeeping role: helping adult staff to keep peers safe and under control. Although program guidelines stipulated balanced representation, at one school where we were shown a display of the Social Skill Leaders’ pictures, girls and white students were disproportionately represented (BrdB.P5.ESm).

In Board B, several interviews suggested a shift in prevailing approaches toward this peer monitoring and mentoring and away from facilitation of autonomous negotiation between student disputants themselves (peer mediation). One school had recently added the social skills leaders program, and two others had recently switched from peer mediation. A teacher advisor explained that in the past, mediators had been “trying to resolve people’s problems,” whereas the new social skills leaders were “avoiding” conflicts (BrdB.P5.ESm; also BrdB.T2.EMSf; BrdB.SafeSc1m). These adult school leaders apparently considered control-oriented peacekeeping approaches to be more efficient

than dialogue-oriented peacemaking, but more in-depth research would be needed to understand their reasoning and its consequences. By enacting culturally familiar patterns of top-down arbitration in cooperation with adult supervisors, social skills monitors were empowered to address power-imbalanced bullying episodes, in addition to the simpler disputes that could have been negotiated autonomously by peers.

Each peer social skills leader or monitor program had one or two teacher advisors who coordinated programs, conducted initial trainings (outside of regular classes) based on packaged materials, and met regularly with the student leaders to debrief and facilitate their development of skill and confidence. Training activities emphasized communication skills such as “I messages,” cooperative teamwork, problem solving, and creating and debriefing “role plays [of] situations that we know [monitors] would have to solve” (BrdA.CES.T3f).

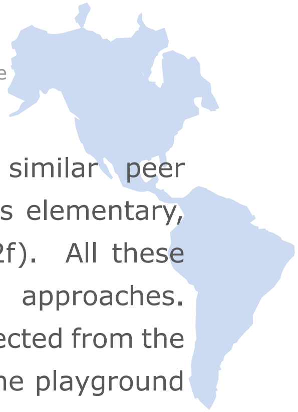
These programs required voluntary contributions of time beyond teachers’ (and student leaders’) prescribed responsibilities, rather than being part of the schools’ regular course schedule. One teacher we interviewed, by exception, chose to give the social skills leadership training to her entire classes; while this did not create formal leadership roles for more students, it did provide all students with peacemaking education, integrated within the regularly-scheduled language arts and social studies curricula.

The students chosen to serve as peer monitors had opportunities to learn peacemaking-related skills and values through regular practice and feedback in their leadership groups. Social learning theory (Bandura, 1986) would predict that, where these student leaders were held in high esteem by peers, some other students might have learned something informally, by observing and imitating these valued models. Such communication skills are presumably a necessary (though clearly not sufficient) precondition for students’ eventual development into autonomous, non-violent citizen actors (Lane-Garon & Richardson, 2003).

Peacemaking: Peer Conflict Mediation

School peer mediation initiatives generally include (a) curriculum-based programs, designed to teach all students about interpersonal conflict management and alternatives to violence (social skills, empathy and bias awareness, anger management, attitudes about conflict, active listening and paraphrasing, reframing, collaborative problem-solving and role playing) or (b) cadre programs, that provide a sub-set of student leaders with training and responsibility to facilitate peer dispute resolution. Cadre peer mediation is analogous to the peer monitoring above, except that it emphasizes horizontal peacemaking negotiation more than telling peers what to do. Cadre approaches are much more common than curriculum infusion approaches, presumably because these require fewer resources, less staff training, and less curricular change to implement. Both types of peer mediation programs, adequately implemented, have been shown to reduce aggressive behavior (and associated school exclusions) and to develop participants’ reasoning, social skills, and inclination to handle conflict constructively and nonviolently (Bickmore, 2002; Burrell, Zirbel, & Allen, 2003; R. Harris, 2005; Heydenberk & Heydenberk, 2005; Johnson & Johnson, 1996; Jones, 2004).

All the schools in this study that had peer mediation (some in each district) were cadre programs. However, one focus high school, for the first time during the year Board A interviews



were conducted (2005), enrolled their 20 student mediators (mostly girls, recommended by teachers based on leadership potential) in a one-term Leadership Course (LC1) for credit. The course taught communication skills and bullying awareness, brought in outside trainers to teach a peer mediation process, and encouraged participants to report and discuss aggression at the school (BrdA.AHS.T1f).

LC1 student leaders did not always mediate. They were encouraged to fulfill informal peer advising roles, to assist with peacekeeping (monitoring in the cafeteria and at school dances), or to make a few violence prevention presentations in younger grades. About half of the LC1 students had facilitated (with a partner), once or twice, formal peer conflict mediation sessions following prescribed steps:

> Everyone is given a turn to say their piece. The two students [disputants] have to come up with three ideas of how to resolve their conflict and they have to pick one. They write down what that is, and each sign the form agreeing to resolve the conflict through these actions or understandings. Then, they know not to talk about it (BrdA.AHS.GTf).

Mediations were ostensibly voluntary and confidential, but if students did not quickly agree to resolve their conflict, they were referred to a disciplinarian. Recently a vice principal had stormed in to one session, saying, ‘These kids will be suspended if they don’t solve this right now!’ As the advisor put it, wryly, “They have an incentive to get along” (BrdA.AHS.GTf).

In Board B, virtually all elementary and elementary-middle schools had peer mediation and/or other student peacemaking intervention (peer mentor or social skills leader) programs (BrdB.T2.EMSf). Board C had similar peer mediation programs in a few of its elementary, middle and high schools (BrdC.A2f). All these initiatives followed similar cadre approaches. Elementary student mediators, selected from the schools’ older grades, served on the playground at recess. In the middle and high schools, adult staff and occasionally students initiated requests for mediation. One middle-high school had students “mediating [occasionally] in an informal sense,” without a duty schedule or referrals (BrdC.P1.MHSf). In another Board C middle-high and a high school, as in LC1 at AHS, student support staff coordinated referrals for mediation. Peer mediators typically met with advisors at least monthly for on-going education, sometimes including a literacy (journaling) component (BrdC.P1.MHSf). As one program advisor described:

> We train a number of [high school students] to work with and mediate personality sort of things with the middle school kids. For violence and so forth we don’t use them, but for other kinds of conflicts, peer mediators will meet with the students and give them the tools to [negotiate and problem-solve]. ... It’s volunteer. They have the opportunity to talk it out. (BrdC.P6.MHSm)

This principal’s “give them the tools” comment indicates that he saw peer mediation as a learning opportunity, emphasizing emancipation at least as much as control.

The guidance counselor who coordinated the peer mediation initiative at AHS described LC1 students as positive leaders: “We pay money for this training. They need to be mature enough to handle peer mediation, uphold confidentiality ... have good relationships with their peers” (BrdA.AHS.GTf). The teacher who led the LC1

classes, in contrast, said she also included some "alternative" leaders, who had been suspended or had poor grades: "They have the coolness factor. When those kids see their peers talking sense to them ... they're more open to their peers' authority than to adults" (BrdA.AHS.T1f). This difference in perspectives about the same program illustrates the tension between peacekeeping-oriented philosophies, in which student leaders were expected to be models of compliant behavior, and coexisting democratic peacemaking-oriented philosophies, in which more diverse populations of students were empowered to share authority and to interpret the program in their own ways.

The same difference among implemented program philosophies was evident between schools in Board B. Program guidelines were to include "a full mix of kids – geographic, ethnic, academic" (BrdB.SafeSc2), but each school interpreted those criteria differently. In all three districts, more girls than boys volunteered for these roles. Two Board B elementary schools invited both peer and staff nominations of potential mediators, and one principal made a concerted effort to support an inclusive leadership cadre:

> We also choose a couple of students who [staff] feel would benefit from the training and the leadership opportunity, that are going to need a lot of our support.... The less academically strong students, we intentionally hand pick for peer mediation or [social skills leaders]. (BrdB.P3.ESf)

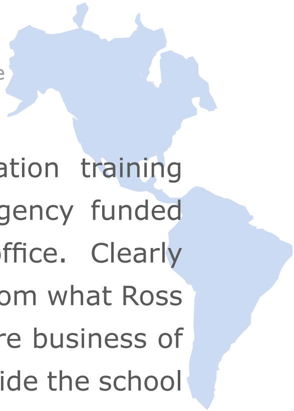
Similarly in Board C's mediation programs, the leadership opportunity was open to all students, without grade-point minimums, except that staff sometimes screened out students they considered bullies or who had been suspended for fighting (BrdC.A1A2f; BrdC.P6.MHSm).

In another elementary school in Board B, however, the principal limited the selection decision to staff, and added criteria that made the cadre more exclusive:

> Mediators get fired if they are throwing snowballs or acting up. ... [Those selected are] able to keep a secret, able to understand the principles they are going to be taught, to be honest, to be able to explain to parents that they can't share what happened [confidentiality]... I've seen some [peer mediators] who are bright but not well-behaved; I won't do that here. (BrdB.P2.ESm)

Clearly these programs empowered different populations of students. Diverse, inclusive peer mediation leadership cadres, in contrast to narrow cadres of 'good students,' have been shown to engage a wide spectrum of students in facilitated dialogue, and consequently to more effectively reduce violence (Bickmore, 2001; Day-Vines, Day-Hairston, Carruthers, Wall, & Lupton-Smith, 1996).

As with the peer monitors and social skills leaders, the students who received the most instruction and practice were the mediators themselves. However, the students who participated in peer conflict resolution dialogue or classroom activities facilitated by the mediators also would have had some opportunities to learn. Robert Harris's (2005) research shows that student disputants can be expected to learn skills and dispositions from the modeling and guided practice that are built into peer mediation.



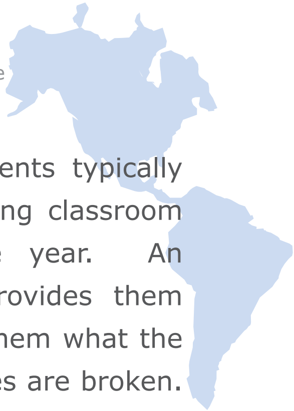
In all three districts, some peer mediator cadres had opportunities for leadership beyond mediation, such as making presentations in younger classes, or occasionally visiting other schools – to serve as mediators, to demonstrate how mediation worked, to lead other peacemaking education activities (such as anti-bullying in a grade three class), and to assist in training new mediators annually. In one school, the majority of the student body had used the services of peer mediators, reducing the demand for principal discipline after recess (BrdB.T1.ESf). Diverse mediators there also carried out a wide range of responsibilities such as making presentations in every classroom about conflict resolution communication, leading cooperative games at school community days, and organizing charity fundraising events. However, due to increasing testing pressure, mediators’ availability at that school had recently been scaled back—from multiple recess periods to only one period (BrdB.T1.ESf). Thus, while some peer mediator leadership activity touched large populations of students inside and beyond classrooms, and/or explicitly incorporated academic skills such as literacy, often this activity remained marginal to the core curriculum, rendering the initiatives vulnerable to cutbacks.

The assignment of academic credit (course time and staffing) had begun to fit LC1 peer peacemaking leadership into “the fabric of the school” (BrdA.AHS.SWf). Board C’s high school program coordinator had an open time period available daily for mediation sessions. However, setting up mediation sessions was still labor intensive: for each dispute, the adult coordinator identified a time when the student disputants and two peer mediators were available, found a meeting space, kept records, and conducted follow-up with administrators, mediators, and participants.

In AHS, the actual mediation training was carried out by an outside agency funded by the district’s safe schools office. Clearly distinguishing this program here from what Ross and colleagues (2007) call the “core business of schooling,” the adult facilitators inside the school received no special training or release time for program implementation. In contrast, in Boards B and C, central safe schools office provided (and funded) program resources and occasional peer mediation training for school staff members, who then led student leader trainings at their own schools, sometimes assisted by experienced student mediators (BrdC.A1A2f). This built adult expertise (thus, institutional expectation) to facilitate peer peacemaking leadership within existing school staffs.

In one elementary school, the principal described a leadership role similar to that of peer monitors, involving little actual mediation: “They do occasionally mediate, but mostly they’re role modeling. They’re just out there, visible on the playground, interacting with students on the schoolyard,” and presenting peacemaking skits to school assemblies (BrdB.P3.ESf). The principal with the narrowly selective leadership cadre said he referred conflicts only to the four students he considered strong mediators, “capable of insisting on particular rules and behavior, and controlling the mediation” (BrdB.P2.ESm). Again, these examples illustrate contrasting, coexisting approaches to making ‘peace’ —whether to empower a few ‘strong‘ students or a more diverse group of leaders, and also to what degree student leaders are required to reinforce the hierarchical order (“insisting” on rules), and/or to facilitate autonomous problem-solving by diverse students in diverse ways.

A high school program leader reflectedthat student self-determination opportunities were



often under-valued, so that he continually had to remind administrators to involve student mediators.

> If kids are fighting, and if you say a kid’s not supposed to fight in school, and you don’t have a peer mediation program, how are you supposed to restore a relationship between students? It doesn’t seem to be obvious to some administrators. ... Sometimes we send kids home for violence, and when they return that’s the time we get them to sit down and they need to work it out. (BdC.SW2.HSm)

Clearly, such a skilled, committed and influential program coordinator was essential, to make autonomous student peacemaking leadership viable in hierarchical schools.

Peacebuilding through Dialogue? Student Governance and Helper Roles

When schools provide opportunities for students to practice democratic dialogue directly—for example through student councils and organizations, staff-student committees, and governance consultations—participants can be expected to develop skills and motivation for democratic participation beyond school walls (Torney-Purta & Barber, 2005). If students practice goal-setting, teamwork, organization, communication, problem-solving, decision-making, and representing student voices, this entails peacebuilding (democratization), rather than merely preserving the status quo by settling disruptions. Interviewees from some schools in each district reported various types of student governance roles that enabled different populations of students to participate, and offered narrower or broader opportunities to learn peacebuilding engagement.

In all three districts, students typically were invited to assist in developing classroom rules at the beginning of the year. An interviewee explained: “This provides them with responsibility. We also ask them what the consequences should be if the rules are broken. The students decide” (BrdA.DES.T1T2T3mf). Student input in developing codes of conduct may illustrate some shift in conventional power dynamics between students and adults in schools, providing opportunities for students to develop awareness of the consequences of their own behavior, and to practice citizenship-related conflict management behaviors such as making their voices heard and making collaborative decisions. Because they were conducted in regular classrooms, such class decision-making opportunities were available to broad populations, rather than only to selected leadership cadres. At the same time, such processes would not necessarily equalize opportunities (related to social status, language proficiency, and so forth) to actually initiate dissent or be heard.

Student governance mechanisms were required in all secondary schools in the three districts, although some were much more active and empowered than others. In Board A, the BHS focus school had an unusually large and vibrant student governance structure, coordinated by a student executive committee (14 girls and 3 boys that year). Although there were no official barriers to participation and the executive group included “all colors of the rainbow” (BrdA.BHS.T4m), the vast majority were high-status students – academically successful, economically stable enough to not need to work many hours at after-school jobs (the responsibility involved a heavy workload), and popular enough to be elected by peers.

This BHS student council executive was the “hub” of a wide array of autonomous student organizations and clubs and “the voice of the school” (BrdA.BHS.T4m). They managed a substantial budget, coordinated fundraising, and managed the creation, funding, and oversight of dozens of student groups, to ensure open access and non-competition among them. Student organizations supported by this infrastructure included identity support groups such as a Tamil students’ club, action groups such as an anti-racism organization, and service initiatives such as the school yearbook. Further, the student council executives were responsible for “taking the pulse of the school through weekly caucus meetings open to all students,” making presentations on parent night, hosting school visitors, coordinating school-wide community-building events such as an international day, and contributing input on school policies such as a new rule prohibiting non-religious headgear (BrdA.BHS.T4m). In this diverse school population, they continually faced the challenge of making such activities inclusive and responsive to all students. According to the teacher advisor, this year’s student council executive had discussed diversity and equity concerns such as:

> What can you do for the ESL group that really doesn’t understand the Canadian school system? What do you do for the Islamic girls who are not allowed to stay and participate after school? (BrdA.BHS.T4m)

This suggests that these student leaders had opportunities to practice recognizing, negotiating, and addressing competing interests on behalf of diverse peers. In contravention of the usual adult control of ‘student-directed’ activities, these (high-status) student leaders sometimes told their advisor, “No, sir, we can handle this ourselves,” indicating some power to include adults at their own discretion (Cotmore, 2004; Fielding, 2004). Through their open meetings and network of autonomous student organizations, this student executive seemed to make available substantial opportunities for democratic agency and relationship-building to a wider circle of BHS students. The sustainability of this student leadership was facilitated by infrastructural support such as weekly scheduling of caucus and executive meetings in the school timetable and classroom space, and the assignment of teacher advisors.

A Board B elementary-middle school charged a diverse team of eight students in the oldest grade (nominated by staff and peers) with “running the school” (BrdB.P4.EMSf). Each spring, the school organized a daylong leadership camp for the entire grade eight population. However, this principal chose not to call this leadership group a student council nor to hold elections, to emphasize inclusivity rather than a “popularity contest:”

> You would be amazed at how leaders show up – they may be the least popular [students]. When [the students] are educated that leadership means that the people they choose need to be reliable, because they will be organizing the dances and so on, then they select the students they trust with that responsibility. (BrdB.P4.EMSf)

This leadership group met weekly with teacher advisors and monthly with the principal, to discuss student concerns and suggestions and to plan a spring school-wide event. They also served as occasional helpers and hosts for school visitors.

A common approach in various schools was to empower small groups of about 15-20 student leaders from the oldest grade. Although in one of the Board B schools where we interviewed this was referred to as "student governance" (BrdB.P3.ESf), these students acted as helpers and occasionally peer educators (without evident opportunity for autonomous initiative or governance input) – for example welcoming school visitors, distributing playground equipment, setting up chairs and equipment for meetings, or leading drug awareness activities. Designated leaders were selected by staff and were usually successful students who could keep up with academic work when pulled from class to fulfill responsibilities. Similarly, focus school DES in Board A had a "leadership" group of older students, "meant to represent the voice of the student body" but that was selected by adults based on criteria of relative academic success and compliance (BrdA.DES.T1T2T3mf). Their responsibilities included helping roles similar to those above in Board B, and a few potentially peer-representative activities such as writing for the school newsletter and planning a school-wide community-building activity (a dance). For the few students who became student leaders, these roles could contribute to their own development of self-confidence and communication skills. However, the role offered few or no opportunities for hearing diverse peer viewpoints or educating peers.

These and other schools in all three districts also held monthly school-wide meetings, sometimes hosted by each class in turn (e.g. BrdC.P1.MHSf, BrdC.P4P5T1.ESmf). The host class (and sometimes social skills leaders and peer mediators) gave presentations to peers, such as skits on social conflict themes. The principals saw these meetings as providing continuing opportunities for some student voice, planning dialogue, and social skills lessons, accessible to all students during regularly-scheduled school time (BrdB.P5.ESm).

To engage more students than the usual small leadership groups or councils, in more substantive discussion than would be possible in school-wide meetings, one Board B high school held half-day events with 60-70 students at a time, in which small focus groups of mixed students and staff met "to talk about students' concerns" as part of the board-mandated school improvement planning process (BrdB.P6.HSf). Some student participants self-nominated and staff nominated others, attempting to maximize representation of diverse school populations.

> They talk about, 'what are we doing well, what do we need to work on?' … It has really worked incredibly well to raise issues we need to talk about and to build strong trusting relationships (BrdB.P6.HSf).

Also in this school, a committee of staff and students worked together to locate and distribute resources on democratic classrooms and teaching for social justice. The principal supported the effort by providing release time for a teacher coordinator to work with this committee. Thus, student participation in governance (as a form of conflict management) was incorporated in this high school's core agenda, creating space for potential democratic peacebuilding transformation.

Other schools implemented various small "student voice" initiatives. For example in one Board C high school, a voluntary student drama and community action group made presentations and occasionally assisted with "running whatever in the school" (BrdC.P3.HSm). As in Board A's LC1, participating students who invested enough hours were eligible to receive academic credit, which enabled allocation of on-load teaching time for adult advisors.

The various examples above illustrate different approaches to the dilemmas of democratic participation. Governance activities empowering small groups of motivated students may provide concentrated opportunities for peacebuilding-related leadership. However, in cadre leadership approaches, participation is typically complicated by privilege: “It always seems to be the same kids who get involved … in everything” (BrdC.CC2f). Curriculum infusion of governance activities, in contrast, requires allocation of regular learning time and teaching staff, and can engage wider populations of students. School-wide assemblies may involve broad populations at the expense of deep discussion of difficult issues. Hybrid initiatives such as focus group processes or networks of student organizations are attempts to achieve some of the strengths of both cadre and school-wide approaches, but often remain on the margins of what Ross and colleagues call the “core business of schooling” embodied in timetables and staffing allocations. Democratic governance initiatives hold the potential to contribute to emancipatory peacebuilding, if they find ways to break down barriers and facilitate conflict dialogue between status groups. While some of the student governance initiatives identified in this research show considerable promise for building such bridges, others seem relatively shallow and conflict avoidant, and thus cannot be assumed to contribute much to peacebuilding.

Peacebuilding through Equity? Affinity, Support, and Action Groups

Students’ sense of connection to their school communities may impact their academic success and decrease disruptive behaviors (Calabrese & Poe, 1990). A key avenue for increasing students’ connection to school is participation in extracurricular activities, including student-facilitated clubs and associations in which students can express and advocate for their identities and passions. When such affinity, support, and action group activities are diverse and broadly accessible in schools, they may support democratic peacebuilding by exposing students to diverse identities and conflicting perspectives, affording them practice with dialogue and relationship-building, and opening up opportunities to support self-determination and resist bias, from interpersonal to global levels. Interviewees in Boards A and C described a range of this type of leadership activity in their schools.

Most of the high schools we visited in Boards A and C had some support and/or advocacy student groups. There were substantially more such groups at focus school BHS, in proportion to school size, than at AHS. Future research could investigate whether (as Gladden’s theory, cited above, would predict) such equity and engagement infrastructure could help to create more nonviolent school climates, such as that found at BHS. Affinity groups often engaged in some advocacy, asserting the positive value of particular identities and creating safe spaces for members to gather. At BHS, for example, some female Muslim students wearing the *hijab* had suffered some harassment by peers following the 9/11/2001 terrorism incident in the USA. As a result, a group of Muslim students had submitted a proposal to their student government (which supported them) to create a regular Muslim prayer meeting in the school (BrdA.BHS.T4m). This group hosted a few special events to introduce Islam to their school community, thereby asserting the positive meaning of their religious identities and helping to change their school’s atmosphere. Although there

were many successful identity-based student organizations at BHS, attempts by the BHS staff equity committee to start a *broad-based* (mixed-identity) student equity committee had been unsuccessful. One teacher participant believed that students viewed mixed-group multicultural equity action as "not cool" (BrdA.BHS.T5f).

Unlike at BHS, the AHS student council was neither active nor empowered to make decisions about student groups. When a student tried to initiate a Gay-Straight Alliance, the school principal allowed the school social worker to start a weekly discussion group, but required a more generic title and mission ("fitting in") rather than explicitly naming this identity/ equity issue. As the social worker explained: "The administration of the school was quite nervous about using the word gay – [they were] worried about [conservative religious] parents' response and about the safety of the students" (BrdA.AHS.SWf). Thus, AHS administrators responded to a student's concern that the school was not a safe space for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students —what *could* have been an opportunity for student-initiated peacebuilding leadership—by disallowing explicit self-organization or advocacy and, instead, implementing a therapeutic approach.

In Board C high schools, in contrast, there were various student action groups including a Gay-Straight Alliance in one school we visited (BrdC.SW1.HSf). Unlike at AHS, the school administrator here had supported the group's formation and the anti-homophobia campaigns it had organized over the past three years. For example, an annual 'Day of Silence' campaign organized by these student leaders attracted approximately 300 direct student participants, increasing annually. In prior years, a related inter-school action group had helped to influence the development of a district-wide human rights and anti-homophobia policy, which then served to protect the existence of such student-initiated peacebuilding leadership action.

Student social action groups were rarer at the elementary level, but at CES, one teacher initiated and led an equity club that discussed issues including global justice, gender equity, and civic action. Participants were diverse students in grades five and six, recommended by their teachers because they showed leadership potential in ways they considered both 'positive' (compliant, academically successful) and 'negative' (peer-influential, but disruptive of the learning environment). This teacher reflected that students perceived as negative leaders often had a particularly strong sense of justice, which made them good candidates for such an action group (BrdA.CES.T3f). In addition to regularly-scheduled discussion and activity meetings, these students attended an inter-school conference on issues such as bullying, homophobia, sexism, and racism. Later, participants had some opportunities to try to influence peers, by writing an article for the school newspaper. However, this initiative was marginal and vulnerable, in that this teacher volunteered her time and was the only staff involved.

Several interviewees described occasional interschool multiculturalism and race relations leadership camps and conferences (mostly for middle and secondary students in Board A, for all levels in Board C). Usually, these involved a day or weekend away for a few selected students with diverse academic achievement levels, nominated by teachers based on interest, demographic representation, and leadership potential. Student teams were expected to lead follow-up activities for peers at their own schools, often addressing peacebuilding equity themes (BrdC.A2f). Participating students had opportunities to discuss and plan activities with peers, in workshops facilitated by board staff (BrdC.CC1f). Teachers who had sent students to these camps noted that they often exhibited boosted self-esteem and school performance (BrdA.BHST1T2f; BrdA.AHS.SWf). As one principal remarked:

> It's an opportunity for students from different schools to collaborate and ask each other, 'What are some of the things you do in your school in terms of human rights or peace to have a large impact on the programs that occur at [your] school?' [Then] when they'd come back, they'd be leaders. (BrdC.P8.HSm)

For example, students who had participated in a recent leadership camp subsequently facilitated a refugee camp simulation at their school, which an interviewee felt had had a "huge impact" on their peers (BrdC.A4m). In this way, at least some of these student leaders, in addition to themselves practicing peacebuilding leadership skills, had opportunities to influence their peers' peacebuilding awareness.

However, in the past these special learning opportunities were larger, more frequent, and more oriented toward social action leadership development, beyond self-esteem. At the time of the interviews, schools usually sent up to one student per grade and one teacher from each school, whereas in the past, some of these conferences involved hundreds of students (BrdC.P8.HSm). The district administrations' rationale for these cutbacks was that the learning goals of these camps were now embedded in the curriculum. However, one interviewee argued that, even if curriculum mandates to infuse multiculturalism and anti-racism were widely implemented, the intensive pull-out programs to "build the leadership culture" among students were being lost (BrdA.BHS.T1f).

Most Board A high schools had another form of student social action, school safety clubs, formally supported by the district's administration and funded by the police service. Their members were called upon for occasional helper roles, such as monitoring at school events. Participating students met monthly with teacher advisors and often community police officers, and could credit their participation hours toward a provincial graduation requirement to do community service. With assistance from the police liaisons, each club performed a safety audit, surveyed school community members about school safety concerns, and organized school events on an annual theme. The year before interviews at BHS, the students chose racial profiling by police as their theme, resulting in some fervent dialogue at school forums. In the current year, they focused on preventing theft. A central Board A safe schools leader argued that participation in such clubs could help students to develop leadership and agency, as well as teaching nonviolent norms.

> There are aspects of the program that are problematic but the concept is great. Young people are taking initiative and making their schools safe. It's less top-down. It has to be an internalized process for managing your own behavior – not something that's imposed on you. (BdA.SafeSchls1m)

Due to institutional encouragement and funding, the number of clubs was growing exponentially in this board. It was one of very few student organizations existing at AHS at the time of the interviews (BdA.AHS.P2f).

The BHS safety club’s teacher advisor said that, as with most voluntary co-curricular activities, most participants (approximately equal numbers of ethnoculturally diverse males and females) were “academically inclined and active in other clubs,” but that a few were average or struggling students who were not active elsewhere (BdA.BHS.T2f). She said participating students came to “feel more comfortable approaching the police if they need them, [or] reporting issues, conflicts, problems, and fears [to school administrators], because of the police [participation in the club]” (BdA.BHS.T2T3f). Active student safety club members gained experience handling initiatives such as needs assessments and event planning, and occasionally had opportunities to help repair mutually suspicious relationships between youth (especially visible minorities) and adults including police officers. However, like the vast majority of such active student participation opportunities, clubs functioned as extra-curricular activity, which meant they were vulnerable to being discontinued and disconnected from core curriculum and related staffing support.

Discussion

Despite official curriculum requirements pertaining to peacemaking and peacebuilding, on-going opportunities for active student participation, governance, or leadership in peacebuilding learning seemed to be quite rare (with a few shining exceptions) in the regularized programming of the schools and districts in this study. Essentially by definition, active student leadership roles are a departure from normal student roles and core (staffed and regularly scheduled) curriculum. Such standardized school programming may be even more difficult to change in resource-starved urban and working-class school environments (Anyon, 1997; Cuban, 1993).

Did (at least some of) the roles actually implemented for student participation in the schools in these districts really constitute active citizenship for peacebuilding? Did these student leaders facilitate their peers’ development of capacity for future peacebuilding citizenship? Our findings resonate with those of Ross, Munn and Brown (2007), who found very little mention of child initiation or decision making (especially in younger grades), observed participation in activities that were usually marginalized from the core activities of schools, and encountered almost no discourse of emancipation or democratization.

Our study found remarkable between-school variation among the peace-related student leadership opportunities. While Board B and C provided more evident central support for student governance, equity and advocacy activity, and peer peacemaking (mediation) leadership than Board A, the within-district differences were even more evident than between-district differences. Future research is needed to probe the reasons for school leaders’ divergent understandings and strategies for achieving ‘peace.’

There were potential opportunities for student leadership embedded in each approach to conflict management — peacekeeping, peacemaking, and peacebuilding— although these opportunities differed in character (how much student autonomy, voice, and initiative were encouraged) and in inclusivity (how many, and which, students were empowered to contribute their leadership to these efforts). In most schools we visited, student leadership opportunities for most ‘peace’ initiatives were disproportionately available to relatively small and high-status populations of students. The interests of marginalized students could not be assumed to be well-represented by these student ‘representatives.’ However, a few schools

(mostly older grade levels) had developed student participation structures and selection mechanisms that did create alternate spaces for the representation of diverse identities and interests, through affinity and advocacy groups, and thereby ensured that a wider range of students would have opportunities to develop civic capacity, voice their views, and contribute to alleviating systemic and interpersonal violence in their communities.

In many instances, students who had *already* exhibited certain social skills and capacity to use their voices (in ways recognized as positive by the dominant culture) were the ones selected by adults for peace-related leadership roles. Student leaders in these schools were most often used to extend adults' peacekeeping control – monitoring peers, without creating space for dialogic learning or democratic input, especially among marginalized or rebellious students whose voices are disproportionately silenced. However, some shining exceptions — especially at some Boards B and C schools, where central safe schools staff provided guidelines and resources to encourage staff to include diverse students in leadership opportunities — demonstrated that a much wider range of students were entirely capable of performing peacemaking and peacebuilding leadership roles. While it is crucial to maintain safety (what Galtung calls 'negative peace') in schools, programming that might legitimize unequal status could negatively affect development of more equitable sustainable ('positive') peace.

In nearly all elementary schools and some middle and high schools, student 'leaders' tended to carry three main types of responsibilities: assisting with monitoring peer behavior or routine tasks such as set-up of equipment, (less often) communicating information and input from and to their peers, and (least often) developing ideas and making decisions such as facilitating workshops or planning special events. The first two sets of activities would provide minimal opportunities for students to take initiative and/or make decisions (especially if their views were dissenting) to help shape peacebuilding activities. Instead, these students' contributions seemed to reinforce the existing implicit curricula of order in their schools, within boundaries set by adults. Students were far more often empowered to reinforce the controlled functioning of the schools than to change them or foster emancipation.

Across these three school districts and across this wide range of 'peace'-related student leadership activities, obstacles to diverse students' fuller participation included timetabling, caps on enrollment (staffing availability), and criteria such as academic proficiency and compliant behavior that explicitly limited some students' participation. Further, students with jobs and other responsibilities outside of school, language minorities, and students whose parents had low educational attainment typically had fewer and narrower opportunities to practice democratic peace-building citizenship and leadership. Under these conditions, activity intended to advance 'peace' and 'democracy' might actually exacerbate existing social, cultural, and economic divisions among diverse students.

Interviewees in all three districts — especially in Board C, which sustained more human infrastructure (relative to district size) to help school staff to support diverse students' peacebuilding education— have pointed to many spaces of possibility for democratic peacemaking and peacebuilding, within these complex realities. However, infusion of such expectations into core school activities (thus, regular staff responsibilities) could have paradoxical effects. On one hand, bringing peacemaking and peacebuilding learning goals in from the margins

of the co-curriculum might be predicted to make this body of knowledge, skills, and experiences available to a much wider spectrum of students, by making regularized staffing, teaching resources and infrastructure available to all students rather than a few designated 'leaders.' On the other hand, due to the still-prevalent passive student role in 'regular' curriculum, such infusion into core curriculum could reduce the active 'leadership' opportunities in which students could actually take initiative, practice skills, make decisions, and actively contribute to changing their environments.

This research does not uncover an ideal picture of democratic peacekeeping, peacemaking and peacebuilding participation and education, implemented as recommended in the theoretical literature. However, it does provide specific descriptions of, and an analytical framework for comparing, a wide range of actual conflict management practices that have been implemented in actual, challenging public school environments. Equally important, it contrasts the opportunities for involvement, democratic learning, and agency by diverse students that may be embedded in this range of programming. Clearly, when given the opportunity, diverse students can make valuable citizenship contributions to building peace, in their schools and beyond.

Endnotes

1 Please see above for explanation of pseudonym codes. For example, this interviewee was a female teacher ('T3') in Board A (elementary school CES).

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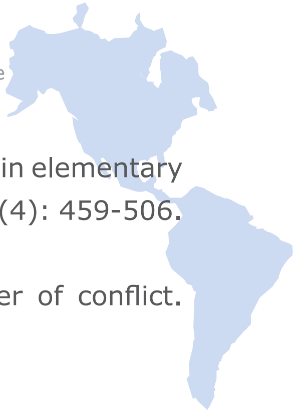

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