



# JOURNAL ON EDUCATION IN EMERGENCIES

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edited by Michelle J. Bellino and James H. Williams

*Emily Dunlop*

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*Youth in Postwar Guatemala: Education and Civic Identity in Transition*

by Michelle J. Bellino

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# EDITORIAL NOTE

## EDITORIAL BOARD

We are delighted to present the fourth issue of the *Journal on Education in Emergencies (JEiE)*. The five research articles and one field note featured in this issue coalesce around two main themes: refugee education and education administration in postconflict societies. As this issue goes to press in August 2018, the Syrian conflict has created 5.6 million refugees—the most of any current conflict—of which Turkey has absorbed 63 percent, Lebanon 17 percent, and Jordan 12 percent (UNHCR 2018). All three governments have worked to incorporate refugee children into their strained national education systems or, in some cases, into complementary education programs, which are often stretched thin and under-resourced. Yet the roughly 1.2 million Syrian refugees taken in by Lebanon constitute a higher percentage of the country’s pre-conflict population (4 million) than that of its two neighbors.

Previewing our upcoming special issue on refugees and education, the first two articles in this issue explore key challenges faced by children and youth in Lebanon. These articles focus on students’ experiences of belonging and exclusion in Lebanese classrooms and in one complementary education program. In “Fifi the Punishing Cat and Other Civic Lessons from a Lebanese Public Kindergarten School,” Thea Renda Abu El-Haj, Garene Kaloustian, Sally Wesley Bonet, and Samira Chatila provide an ethnographic account of the experiences of Palestinian refugees, some of whom have been displaced twice, and of Syrian refugees as they encounter their Lebanese peers and the teachers who treat them as outsiders. Drawing on three years of observation at Amal Al-Bilad, a kindergarten-only public school in Beirut, the authors show how “children, even those as young as three to five, are developing embodied messages about their public place as citizen-subjects: about belonging and/or exclusion; about how they are expected to relate to power and authority; and about how to act within and on their social world” (p. 13). For example, the authors argue that practices such as downplaying student-produced knowledge, closely following a scripted curriculum, restricting children’s play and chatter, and requiring stillness and silence inculcate in refugee students a deference to authority that emphasizes their status as outsiders. However, in other notable examples, Abu El-Haj and colleagues show how the students carve out a space to “play with, make fun of, and at times actively

reject rigid authority” (p. 15). The authors argue that the implicit and affective civic education afforded students in conflict and postconflict contexts early in life shapes their understanding of how they relate to those with whom they may disagree or differ.

In “Pathways to Resilience in Risk-Laden Environments: A Case Study of Syrian Refugee Education in Lebanon,” Oula Abu-Amsha and Jill Armstrong explore how refugee students’ social ecology provides a framework within which to navigate risks and assets as they pursue education in a new host country. The authors argue that whether Syrian refugee students choose to remain in the Lebanese formal education system or to leave it, the decision may represent an act of education resilience, which they interpret as “the different ways risks and assets affect individuals . . . by analyzing individuals’ interactions and processes within their interconnected ecological systems over time” (p. 49). To understand more about how Syrian students navigate their new environment, the authors conducted focus groups with students who attend Jusoor School, an NGO education center that offers the Lebanese curriculum to Syrian refugee students who have left the formal education system, along with homework help, extracurricular activities, and psychosocial support for the Syrian students who are enrolled in mainstream Lebanese schools. The authors find that, whether children stay in or leave the formal education system in Lebanon, an interwoven set of circumstances and norms determine the cost families are willing to pay to educate their children—financial, psychological, or in terms of future opportunity. Abu-Amsha and Armstrong suggest that, “for some Syrian refugee students, remaining in Lebanese schools is not considered a meaningful, healthy choice” (p. 66). However, programs like those offered at Jusoor School, which provide alternate education and continuity of learning between periods of enrollment in formal systems and help students prepare to reenter the formal system, may be best placed to help families make decisions about their children’s education that are productive and promote well-being.

The next several research articles in this issue focus on efforts to build peace through education within contexts of structural division after conflict. We highlight this work in a special sub-section called “Education Administration in Postconflict Societies: Challenges and Opportunities.” This group of articles seeks to understand mechanisms for managing the linguistic, ethnic, and religious divisions that manifest in the education systems of conflict-affected and postconflict states, including legal instruments and newly created policies.

In the first article in this group, “Mapping the Relationship between Education Reform and Power-Sharing in and after Intrastate Peace Agreements: A Multi-Methods Study,” Giuditta Fontana presents a comparative analysis of the education reform provisions included in peace agreements that distribute power in postconflict governments to formerly warring groups differently. Fontana triangulates data from the Political Agreements in Internal Conflicts dataset with 48 interviews conducted with key education informants from Northern Ireland, Lebanon, and Macedonia and textual analyses of the Good Friday, Taif, and Ohrid agreements. She finds that peace agreements that include power-sharing after a civil war are also more likely to include provisions regarding the reform of the country’s education system. Moreover, agreements that incorporate power-sharing in more than one social sector (political, military, legislative, civil service, economic) are more likely to include pluralistic than syncretistic (assimilationist) education provisions. Fontana notes, however, that “peace agreements reflect the aggregation of the diverse interests of previously warring groups rather than their genuine synthesis” (p. 98). The interview data contribute rich detail on how power-sharing arrangements in the peace agreements of Northern Ireland, Lebanon, and Macedonia, along with each country’s political context, influenced the implementation of education reforms.

The next article, “Developing Social Cohesion through Schools in Northern Ireland and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia: A Study of Policy Transfer,” compares the policy of shared education in two postconflict countries. Rebecca Loader, Joanne Hughes, Violeta Petroska-Beshka, and Ana Tomovska Misoska examine the process of adapting, transplanting, and delivering principles established in Northern Ireland’s shared education initiative to Macedonia’s Interethnic Integration in Education Program in order to gain a better understanding of how education policy transfer affects intergroup contact and reconciliation. The authors find that several differences in the two contexts resulted in a different look and feel for the shared education that emerged in Macedonia and Northern Ireland: Macedonia’s mother-tongue instruction policy versus the common language shared by Northern Ireland’s confessional groups; a sweeping national rollout model in Macedonia versus a slower, piloted implementation model in Northern Ireland; an emphasis on social integration in academic subjects (Northern Ireland) versus more targeted social integration programming (Macedonia). Teachers’ anxiety about and avoidance of difficult conversations about the past were common in shared education programs in both countries. The authors note, for example, that “while multicultural workshops sought to explore pupils’ diverse cultural backgrounds and enhance their interactions, the highly structured sessions left little opportunity to discuss

potentially more contentious issues such as discrimination and social injustice” (p. 130). This piece offers lessons for policy-makers working on collaborative efforts that are grounded in policy transfer best practice.

In “The Politics of Education in Iraq: The Influence of Territorial Dispute and Ethno-Politics on Schooling in Kirkuk,” Kelsey Shanks examines the politics of educational content, delivery, and administration in the city of Kirkuk, where ethnic division between Iraqi Kurds and Turkmen coincides with tension between Baghdad and the regional centers of power in northern Iraq. Shanks conducted focus group discussions and interviews with an ethnically diverse cross-section of education policy-makers and stakeholders in Kirkuk. She complemented these interviews with data from news and social media to correlate the general ethno-political climate with the competition for control of education in the region portrayed in the interviews. Shanks illuminates this contest by showing what happens when a school wants to hold a cultural event such as a holiday celebration, which is inevitably seen as “part of a political agenda . . . Therefore, innocent festivals with no political intentions are frowned upon by those trying to insulate education from wider political influence” (p. 156). In fact, Shanks finds that contestation among ethnic groups is a central characteristic in all stages of the design and implementation of formal education in Kirkuk, which has important implications for security and government legitimacy in the region. Shanks recommends additional training for educators in the region in order to foster cultural appreciation and inclusivity rather than division, and to shield students from the fragility caused by ethnic tensions.

In the field note for this issue, “The Borderless Higher Education for Refugees Project: Enabling Refugee and Local Kenyan Students in Dadaab to Transition to University Education,” Wenona Giles describes the project as an innovative higher education delivery model made available to a predominantly Somali population in the Dadaab refugee camp and to students in the town of Dadaab through a partnership between two Kenyan universities and two Canadian universities. The program is staged over four phases, each of which culminates in a credential. Students may pursue a teaching certificate or a bachelor’s degree in one of four disciplines. The teaching certificate has been particularly important for the camp because, as Giles writes, “the Kenyan government did not or could not direct much to the camps in the way of educational resources, thus most teachers in the camps were graduates of the camp high schools and had no university degrees or teaching credentials” (p. 169). While the refugee students complete online and onsite coursework alongside Canadian and Kenyan students, additional supports are available to the refugee students and Kenyan students. Giles describes the



success of some of the program's first graduates, as well as some of the pitfalls students have experienced: mistrust of the program, particularly of instructors, due to a perceived lack of accountability or familiarity with similar models; lack of preparation for higher education; and disparities in how women in the camps were able to experience higher education due to the unsafe conditions for which the Dadaab camp is well known. The piece is instructive for higher education providers in search of a model that enables students whose length of participation in higher education is uncertain or whose participation may be disrupted to receive meaningful credentials.

Four book reviews provide a look at recent works in education in emergencies scholarship. The first is Emily Dunlop's review of *(Re)Constructing Memory: Education, Identity, and Conflict*, edited by Michelle J. Bellino and James H. Williams (2017, Sense Publishers). The volume examines how history textbooks and the teaching of conflict shape collective memory of conflict. Dunlop outlines the book's progression from an exploration of how national narratives are inscribed in official texts to how former colonies understand themselves amid (their own and international) narratives of colonialism, imperialism, and nation-building, including how the stories students receive preclude or enable integration, and how these themes manifest in schools and in interactions between teachers and students. On this final point, Dunlop reminds the education in emergencies community that "multiple processes that lead to both peace and conflict occur simultaneously in classrooms around the world" (p. 187).

In his review of *Child Migration and Human Rights in a Global Age* (2014, Princeton University Press), Jordan Naidoo underlines author Jacqueline Bhabha's appeal for a rights-based reevaluation of how the international community can more effectively defend child migrants—many of whom are trafficked, forced to fight as child soldiers, coerced into an early exit from school, and exploited for their labor—from harm as they contend with the legal hurdles associated with finding asylum or other relief. Naidoo highlights Bhabha's recommendation for the effective "use of technology to target, expose, and monitor potential dangers" to both prevent trafficking and deliver support to survivors of trafficking (p. 189). In the third book review, Tina Robiolle lays out the guiding questions answered by the 17 contributing authors to Clara Ramírez-Barat and Roger Duthie's edited volume, *Transitional Justice and Education: Learning Peace* (2016, Social Science Research Council). Robiolle looks at the authors' perspectives on how transitional justice practices fit into education reforms that seek to reintegrate groups after conflict and build peace, and what role education systems play in turning away from a culture of impunity toward a more human rights-aware and democratic

culture. Her reflection on “instances where the non-formal education sector complemented the formal sector in the transitional justice process” (p. 192) provides a view of the creative innovations that anchor the book.

Finally, Diana Rodríguez-Gómez reviews Michelle J. Bellino’s book, *Youth in Postwar Guatemala: Education and Civic Identity in Transition* (2017, Rutgers University Press). The book, for which Bellino conducted 14 months of ethnographic fieldwork in two urban schools and two rural schools, reports the intergenerational, contested, and still evolving nature of the collective memory of Guatemala’s armed conflict. The book also theorizes that the motivation for violence exists at the nexus between personal agency and social systems and structures. This sentiment is captured by Bellino’s concept of “wait citizenship,” which Rodríguez-Gómez says “describes the condition young people must navigate when relating to a state that obliges them to prioritize the development of their autonomy over their ability to show solidarity with others” (p. 194).

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## EDITORIAL NOTE

Tove Irene Dahl, Sarah Dryden-Peterson, Emily Dunlop, Erin Godfrey, Halla-Bjork Holmarsdottir, Amy Kapit, Naomi Levy, Cathryn Magno, Romain Malejacq, Jody Lynn McBrien, Mary Mendenhall, Joel Middleton, Naomi Moland, Christine Monaghan, Jacqueline Mosselson, Carol Anne Mutch, Mario Novelli, Julia Paulson, Tejendra Pherali, Oren Pizmony-Levy, Beth Lewis Samuelson, Edward Seidman, Kelsey Shanks, Robin Shields, Kishore Shrestha, Cristine Smith, Carol Anne Spreen, Christopher Talbot, Nina Weisenhorn, Michael Wessells, Wendy Wheaton, James H. Williams, and Hirokazu Yoshikawa.

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### EAA

The Education Above All Foundation, through its advocacy program Protecting Education in Insecurity and Conflict, is pleased to partner with the NYU editorial team and the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies to produce the *Journal on Education in Emergencies*. Our partnership will help build communities of practice and provide thought leadership, including research, analysis, and knowledge generation, in the critical and emerging area of education in emergencies.

# FIFI THE PUNISHING CAT AND OTHER CIVIC LESSONS FROM A LEBANESE PUBLIC KINDERGARTEN SCHOOL

THEA RENDA ABU EL-HAJ, GARENE KALOUSTIAN, SALLY WESLEY BONET,  
AND SAMIRA CHATILA

## ABSTRACT

*Across the world, education is tasked with rebuilding societies torn apart by violent conflict and riven by economic injustice. In this article, we focus on kindergarten education in the vulnerable, conflict-ridden Lebanese context. However, rather than analyzing the academic learning offered to the children, we consider the affective civic education they are getting through the everyday practices in their classrooms and schools and explore their agency within this social world. By affective civic education we mean the ways that children, even those as young as three to five, are developing embodied messages about their public place as citizen-subjects: about belonging and/or exclusion; about how they are expected to relate to power and authority; and about how to act within and on their social world. Thus, we analyze how children are educated into the affective, lived dimensions of citizenship and belonging.*

## INTRODUCTION

It's late October 2015. I (Abu El-Haj) am balanced on a tiny red chair in a small, crowded kindergarten classroom in a public school in Beirut, which our research team has dubbed Amal Al-Bilad, or "hope of the nation." On this day, my eye is repeatedly drawn to one of 26 children, a Palestinian boy I call Malik, who is a recent arrival from a Palestinian refugee camp in the Syrian capital of Damascus.<sup>1</sup> This child of generational displacements is nothing if not a symbol for what psychologists like to call resilience. With a smile that spans his entire face and

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1 All names have been changed for confidentiality.

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huge black eyes that see everything, Malik participates passionately in every classroom routine, every morning's repetitive recitation of the days of the week and the months of the year, every song, belted out with gusto. Less than one month into his first-ever year of school, Malik is already participating in literacy practices in two languages. One of the languages is English, which neither he nor his classmates hear outside of their daily lessons. When I return to visit months after my October trip, Malik is right by my side making sure I know what is going on. He never misses a beat; he meets the rote, monotonous routines of each school day that leave many children distracted, bored, or angry with enthusiasm and zest. Unfortunately, Malik's enthusiasm for the classroom and for learning goes, for the most part, unrecognized. In the context of this overcrowded classroom with one teacher and a scripted, fast-paced academic curriculum, he is frequently disciplined and yelled at for all kinds of behaviors: calling out answers, moving around in his seat, talking and playing with his peers.

In many ways, Malik and his peers are the poster children driving international educational policy-making in general and early childhood education in particular. Across the world, education is tasked with rebuilding societies torn apart by violent conflict and riven by economic injustice. In this article, we focus on kindergarten education in the vulnerable, conflict-ridden Lebanese context. However, rather than analyzing the academic learning offered to the children, we consider the embedded, affective civic education they are getting through the everyday practices of their classrooms and schools. We also explore children's agency in this social world. We show how, well before they are taught a formal civic education curriculum, children as young as three to five years of age are learning affective civic lessons about their public place as citizen-subjects: about belonging and/or exclusion; about how they are expected to relate to power and authority; and about how to act within and on their social world. Thus, we analyze how even very young children are educated into the affective, lived dimensions of citizenship and belonging—dimensions that have been shown to affect youths' civic and political perspective and practices (Abu El-Haj 2015; Levinson 2012; Rubin 2007).

We ask these questions relative to the most vulnerable children in Lebanon—Lebanese, Syrian, and Palestinian children who face daily the insecurities of poverty, displacement, and political violence. We draw on longitudinal ethnographic research conducted in one public early childhood school to illuminate critical disjunctures between the optimistic goals of official policy in emergency and (post)conflict contexts that emphasize education for the development of social cohesion and active citizenship for all, and the embedded, affective civic lessons

that children as young as kindergarten age are being taught through the quotidian practices of classroom routines and curriculum. We show how these everyday practices educated children into marginalized civic positions by emphasizing obedience to external authority (including authority over knowledge) and creating shame around their poverty. However, we also show that young children do not simply adopt the expected affective registers. They play with, make fun of, and at times actively reject rigid authority. We conclude by arguing that analyzing the inherent civic education embedded in all early childhood classrooms is critical to understanding education in contexts riven by historic and contemporary conflict. Moreover, in concert with critical early childhood scholars, we conceptualize the importance of play as necessary space within which children do civic action.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL CONCERNS**

### **EDUCATION IN EMERGENCIES**

The burgeoning research literature on education in emergencies is one lens that frames our understanding of the relationship between current educational reform efforts in Lebanon and its recent civil war, cycles of ongoing conflict, and the influx of a large number of Syrian refugees. Traced to a relatively new commitment on the part of humanitarian organizations, there is growing consensus about the imperative and benefits of centering on educational access and quality as key components of responses to conflict and humanitarian crises (Burde et al. 2017; Cahill 2010; Davies and Talbot 2008; Kirk and Cassity 2007; Tawil and Harley 2004). These components are outlined in the Minimum Standards of the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (2010).

Scholars in the field of education in emergencies have described the short- and long-term benefits of schooling for children living in areas affected by disaster and conflict, including providing them with a sense of normalcy and a nurturing environment; assisting them with socialization; helping them to cope with trauma; and creating hope for a better future (Nicolai and Triplehorn 2003; Martone 2007; Winthrop and Kirk 2008). Research also implies that education is particularly important for children who have been affected by violent conflict (Boothby 2008; Boothby, Crawford, and Halperin 2006). Although there is good reason to support a commitment to increasing access to and the quality of education for children and youth living in conflict-affected regions, Burde and her colleagues' (2017) recent comprehensive review of the literature illustrates that the picture is more complex than that and that more research is needed along several dimensions.

For our purposes in this article, there are two dimensions of particular import to the Lebanese context.

First, there is the critical question of the relationship between access to education and conflict. Research has shown that a lack of or unequal access to education, as well as education that is segregated along sectarian, ethnic, or ideological lines, can contribute to conflict (Davies 2006; Kirk 2011; Salmon 2004). This was certainly the case in Lebanon, where, prior to the Lebanese Civil War, education, like other aspects of the country's society and political system, was largely separated along confessional and national (Lebanese and Palestinian) lines (Farha 2012). Educational achievement was also stratified along sectarian lines—divisions that also reflected different economic levels. Without claiming a causal link between inequitable educational access and (educational) opportunities, educational disparities at the very least reflected the injustices that tore the country apart for 15 years. In the aftermath of the civil war, access to equal educational opportunity became a key component of the Lebanese recovery efforts, including government support for developing a strong public education system in the ensuing years (Abou Assali 2012; Farha 2012; Frayha 2012; Shuayb 2012). Although support for public education declined in the late 1990s at the same time the system of private schools grew (Farha 2012), in the past decade the commitment to public education was reinvigorated by an infusion of external funding from the European Union, World Bank, USAID, and United Nations agencies. One force behind the support that foreign states and supranational organizations have given to educational reform in Lebanon developed in the aftermath of 9/11, within problematic securitization discourses that focus on education as a means to bolster “fragile” or “failing” states (Burde et al. 2017; Menashy and Dryden-Peterson 2015).

The second dimension of education in emergencies that is particularly relevant to the Lebanese context is the relationship between specific educational practices and conflict. The research literature on education in emergencies suggests that curriculum content and pedagogical practices in classrooms and schools may contribute to social division and exclusion, but that they also have the potential to mitigate intergroup conflict (Burde et al. 2017). In postconflict states, the question of how to repair the social divisions that predate and are exacerbated by the wounds of war is often viewed, in large part, as an educational endeavor (Freedman et al. 2008; Levine and Bishai 2010; Quaynor 2011; Rubin 2016; Tawil and Harley 2004). Within the school context, this task of bringing together a populace divided by war is typically relegated to formal citizenship education. While there is some positive evidence about the impact of peace education and critical approaches to the teaching of history for students from diverse communities (Bajaj



and Hantzopoulos 2016; Burde et al. 2017), research continues to demonstrate the complexity and contradictions of leveraging formal education as a means to promote peace and justice across social groups (see, for example, Murphy, Pettis, and Wray 2016; Freedman et al. 2008; Rubin 2016). In the aftermath of the civil war, Lebanon committed to creating a new curriculum to promote social cohesion, not only by increasing access to education but also through developing citizenship education to promote national unity. Unfortunately, the efforts to recraft citizenship education in the service of social cohesion has proven an elusive goal (Akar 2012; Bahou 2015; Shuayb 2012). The goals of reimagining citizenship education for social cohesion are undercut by several factors, including a school system that remains largely informally segregated by sect because of both residential patterns and large numbers of sectarian private schools, but also by educational practices that cling to didactic and authoritarian pedagogies that do not encourage students to develop the critical skills needed to challenge social divisions.<sup>2</sup>

Our research is informed by and, in turn, makes a distinct contribution to the literature on education in emergencies by analyzing through longitudinal ethnographic work how, in response to repeated cycles of violent conflict, Lebanon's efforts to reform education in state schools unfolded in real time, on the ground, in one school.

### EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Over the past few decades, there has been increasing international attention given to the critical importance of early childhood education as a foundational component of child welfare, particularly in contexts of poverty, conflict, and crisis (OECD 2015). The primary research on early childhood education has been forward-looking, evaluated in relation to school readiness and to future academic and even economic success (Barnett 2008). Research has shown that high-quality early childhood education takes an integrated approach to children's cognitive and social development (Sheridan et al. 2009; Pramling and Samuelsson 2011), which have been shown to contribute to improved social behaviors and emotional wellbeing, as well as cognitive learning (Burchinal et al. 2000; Curby, Grimm, and Pianta 2010). Children who enter elementary school with positive profiles of social-emotional development have been shown to succeed both academically and socially (Birch and Ladd 1997; Howes and Smith 1995; Ladd, Birch, and

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<sup>2</sup> Although it is beyond the scope of this article, we want to note our agreement with Shuayb's (2012) critique of the normative definitions of social cohesion that tend to promote neoliberal educational agendas that fail to redress deeper structural inequalities at the root of the civil conflict.

Buhs 1999). However, despite these findings about the importance of attending to young children’s social and emotional development, the entrenched approach to early childhood public education in Lebanon is predominantly academic and oriented toward providing equal educational opportunity in the hopes of building a bright economic future for all children. In this article, we do not consider early childhood education as a future-looking enterprise (see also, Adair, Colegrove, and McManus 2017); rather, as we argue next, we attend to early childhood education as an inherent civic education.

### EDUCATING “CITIZENS”

We frame our understanding of citizenship and civic education within an anthropological perspective that focuses on the everyday experiences through which individuals develop a sense of belonging, as well as civic and political identities and practices (Abu El-Haj 2015; Bonet 2018; Levinson 2012; Rubin 2007). Citizenship, as lived experience, entails much more than one’s juridical status. It references the ways that, amid unequal social structures, individuals and their communities are differentially positioned to access rights, experience a sense of belonging, and engage in civic and political life. This perspective illuminates the fact that a large part of civic education happens outside the formal content, and context, of schooling—for example, in public spaces where experiences with civic and political institutions shape people’s civic understanding, identities, and practices (Abu El-Haj 2015; Rubin 2007). Much recent research has documented the fact that, in societies with deep structural inequality, young people from differentially positioned communities are educated to have very different kinds of relationships with civic and political life through their everyday experiences in their schools and communities (Abu El-Haj 2015; Dyrness 2012; Levinson 2012; Rubin 2007). Critically, these experiences entail affective dimensions through which individuals embody understandings of public life and their place within in it. Developing a sense of belonging or exclusion, empowerment or disempowerment, trust or distrust in relation to one’s social environment all affect how young people grow up to act within and on the civic and political spheres.

In concert with a small group of early childhood researchers (Adair et al. 2016; Nicholson, Shimpi, and Rabin 2014; Subramanian 2015), we explore kindergarten as a public space within which children are not only developing as individuals but also experiencing civic life and doing civic action. Adair and her colleagues focus on the collective action of children, specifically on their play, “not [as] the development of civic action, but the actual doing of civic action” (Adair et al. 2016, 2). Civic action, they suggest, includes “compromising, making collective

decisions, identifying as a group, welcoming diversity, and sharing concern” (2). Adair and her colleagues document the civic actions that children create on their own terms through play and show how the institutional space of classrooms affords or constrains these actions. In this article, we have a different primary focus in relation to the institutional spaces in which the children at Amal Al-Bilad spend their day. We turn our attention primarily to the curricular and pedagogical practices children encounter, and explore classrooms as sites that produce embodied, affective experiences of civic life. We analyze the everyday civic education, hidden in plain sight, through which children are learning their “place” in society.

### THE LEBANESE CONTEXT

A small country, Lebanon is continually rocked by political crises and war. The country has never completely recovered from a civil war that began in 1975 and ended in 1990 with the Taif Agreement (signed in 1989). A nearly 20-year Israeli occupation of southern part of Lebanon ended in 2000; however, Israeli aggression continued, and an invasion by Israeli forces in 2006 resulted in massive carnage and a crippled infrastructure. The Lebanese government also faces continual challenges to its stability, perhaps the most dramatic being the assassination of Prime Minister Rafik Hariri in 2005. This led to large demonstrations that ended with the withdrawal of the Syrian army, which had been in Lebanon since 1976.<sup>3</sup> Since 1948, a large Palestinian population has remained in Lebanon, stateless and without basic rights, including citizenship and, until very recently, the right to work in most jobs. Since 2011, the civil war in Syria has overwhelmed Lebanon’s fragile public sector with nearly 980,000 registered Syrian refugees and an estimated 200,000 unregistered (approximately 20 percent of Lebanon’s population, UNHCR, 2018c), giving Lebanon the highest per-capita proportion of refugees worldwide (UNHCR, 2018a). This puts immense pressure on all of Lebanon’s state institutions, including its public schools.

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<sup>3</sup> The Syrian army came to Lebanon in 1976 as part of a pan-Arab peacekeeping force in order to separate tensions between the belligerents of the Lebanese Civil War (i.e., PLO, Lebanese Leftist movement and the Lebanese Front). All of the Arab contingents withdrew with the exception of the Syrian army. Ever since, Syria has had a prominent role in Lebanon, one that became even more apparent following the Taif Agreement in 1989. Syria had the first and final word in Lebanese politics, including extending the term served by two presidents through the amendment of the Lebanese Constitution. In September 2014, Syria forced an extension of the term of President Lahoud against the will of most of the political actors. As a result, the UN Security Council issued Resolution 1559 in which all foreign forces were requested to leave Lebanon, which served as a clear message to Syria. In February 2015, following the assassination of former Prime Minister Hariri, a large portion of the Lebanese population accused Syria and organized massive demonstrations against the Syrian military presence in Lebanon. This led to a final withdrawal of the Syrian troops in April 2005.

This is the precarious context within which educational policy-making seeks to strengthen public-sector schools. Public schools in Lebanon serve only about 30 percent of school-age children (Center for Educational Research and Development 2017), who are the most economically vulnerable (Bahou 2015; Maadad and Rodwell 2017). The majority of children in Lebanon attend private schools, some of which are subsidized by charitable (often sectarian) institutions. A little over half of the Syrian refugee children aged 6-14 attend Lebanese public schools (UNHCR 2018b).

Educational policy discourse in Lebanon, which echoes the internationalist aims for education in postconflict societies, reverberates with lofty goals for individual students and for the country, including a reinvigorated public school system that will create citizens empowered to participate on an equal footing in the economic, civic, and political realms of the state. Lebanon's commitment to education as a key institution for rebuilding the nation's war-torn fabric is reflected in myriad documents, including the Taif Agreement, which emphasized the role of schools in promoting social cohesion (Shuayb 2012, 2015); in curricular initiatives drafted by Lebanon's Ministry of Education and Higher Education in 1997, that were aimed at fostering a nonsectarian, Lebanese Arab national identity through a national civics curriculum (Akar 2012); and in recent reform initiatives, such as the 2007 National Education Strategy (NES) and its latest iteration, the 2015 Reaching All Children through Education, which promise to deliver quality education to public school students at all levels (Ministry of Education and Higher Education 2017).

The NES promised a reformed public education delivered “on the basis of equal opportunity”—its first principle—and aimed at creating social integration and active citizens—its third principle. Moreover, the NES identified early childhood education as a key intervention in its overall educational reform strategy. At the kindergarten level, the principle of equal opportunity for all translated into a new bilingual, academically focused curriculum that offered children from low socioeconomic backgrounds the same rich bilingual literacy program to which their wealthier peers had access. As we illustrate below, this academic focus structured almost all of the daily routines and interactions that took place in the classrooms, crowding out attention to the social and emotional development of young children that is central to the standards and goals of quality early childhood education.

## RESEARCH METHODS, CONTEXT, AND ANALYSIS

Our research project grew from questions and concerns that Kaloustian, a Lebanese citizen and a professor at a university in Beirut, developed as she conducted a study in 2012 that examined the overall quality of the early childhood learning environment in 15 public kindergarten schools serving three- to five-year-olds across all the governorates in Lebanon. This research coincided with the mass migration of Syrian families, which exacerbated the existing problems of overcrowded public kindergartens already struggling to provide high-quality programs. Kaloustian employed two assessment tools in her research: the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale-Revised, which evaluates the overall quality of the learning environment, and the Classroom Assessment Scoring System, which analyzes the quality of teacher-student interactions. Her findings consistently yielded low scores on the overall quality of the early learning environment on both scales. In a second study, conducted in 2017, Kaloustian found similar outcomes in 68 representative schools across the country. Kaloustian's 2012 research showed that, across all schools, academic learning takes precedence over the social and emotional dimensions of early childhood education. It also revealed the huge demands placed on preschool children's structured academic performance, rather than giving value to play as part of their learning experience.

As a means of understanding further what it meant for the most vulnerable children in Lebanon to be educated in contexts that did not attend to their social and emotional development, particularly those fleeing the civil war in Syria, Kaloustian reached out to Abu El-Haj (a U.S.-based Palestinian American professor who grew up in Lebanon and other areas of the Middle East) and Bonet (an Egyptian American graduate student at the start of the project, who grew up mostly in Cairo), both ethnographers, to design a collaborative project. We set out to document and analyze in careful detail over time the everyday realities of classroom practice for the children and their teachers in a typical public school, our aim being to shed light on what happens as optimistic policy reforms actually unfold on the ground. Moreover, given the Lebanese (post)conflict context in general and the Syrian refugee crisis in particular, we decided that one of our key foci would be the implicit civic education the children were receiving—that is, the affective dimensions of citizenship. Because Lebanon decided to create double-shift schools that isolate Syrian children from their Lebanese peers beginning in first grade, kindergarten remains the one integrated space within public education, and as such is an important site within which to ask questions about citizenship and belonging.

We conducted our research at Amal Al-Bilad, a public coeducational kindergarten school.<sup>4</sup> Located in the southern section of the city, the school draws children from the surrounding neighborhood, a predominantly Muslim area that includes both Sunni and Shi'a communities. The school is also in the vicinity of Palestinian refugee camps, but the vast majority of Palestinian children registered as refugees in Lebanon attend UNRWA schools. According to the principal, the few Palestinians that did attend Amal Al-Bilad went back into the UNRWA schools upon the arrival of the Syrian refugees. The Syrian civil war led to a large enrollment of refugee children, including Palestinian refugees from Syria, that ranged from 30 percent to 50 percent of the schools' population, depending on the year. In addition, and again with some variation from year to year, approximately 25 percent of the Lebanese students live in a nearby charitable institution because their parents cannot afford their upkeep. The children live there during the school week, receiving regular meals, health care, and education; the majority return to their families on the weekends.

Amal Al-Bilad, like other public schools, primarily serves children whose families live in poverty and are unable to afford the fees for private institutions. Although school-level poverty statistics are unavailable, according to a recent report by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (2017), 28 percent of the Lebanese population lives under the poverty line, as do 49 percent of the refugees residing in Lebanon. Families of the children at Amal Al-Bilad tend to work in low-income service jobs at such places as local bakeries and the racetrack, or as delivery drivers; many hold several jobs to make ends meet. As a public kindergarten school, Amal Al-Bilad is tasked with the care of 300 (plus or minus in any given year) three-, four-, and five-year-old children whose lives are severely circumscribed by the fallout of wars, political conflicts, and the social and economic injustices that characterize vulnerable states like Lebanon. It is critical to note that, because of the Lebanese government's decision to create second-shift schools for Syrian refugee children's primary and secondary education, and because Palestinian refugee children who have historically resided in Lebanon have been largely segregated in UNRWA schools, Amal Al-Bilad offers a rare look into a public education system that serves children across national groups.

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<sup>4</sup> In general, there were few distinctions between the education of boys and girls. An analysis of the occasions in which subtle social distinctions were made, such as the use of pink or blue hand towels, is beyond the scope of this article.

We chose Amal Al-Bilad as our focal school for two primary reasons. Kaloustian's initial 2012 study illustrated that the school was representative of kindergartens across Lebanon in critical relevant dimensions: the population of children it served, the characteristics of its teaching force, and its curriculum and pedagogy.<sup>5</sup> However, it also was one of a few and one of the largest kindergarten-only schools in Beirut, and as such we were able to conduct participant observation across many classrooms. Amal Al-Bilad has a total of 13 classrooms, including three KG1s (for 3-year-olds), five KG2s (for 4-year-olds), and five KG3s (for 5-year-olds). The school year generally runs from mid-September until mid-May, and schools are open Monday through Thursday, and on Saturday from 8 A.M. to 1 P.M.<sup>6</sup>

In Lebanon, teachers in the early childhood classrooms come from a range of educational backgrounds, typically holding bachelor's degrees from the Lebanese University or teaching diplomas from the Dar al-Mu'alemeen (Teachers' Academy) or smaller technical institutes. Teachers' jobs are either contractual or tenured. Of all early childhood teachers around the country, 85 percent are contractual, which means they are paid per teaching session; if they miss a day they do not get paid. Salaries are dispersed twice per year. Contractual teachers get paid \$12 U.S. per class session and average \$1200 U.S. per month. Tenured teachers get paid around \$1600 U.S. per month. Unlike the contractual teachers, tenured teachers get paid every month, even if they miss days of work. With the exception of the tenured principal, all of Amal Al-Bilad's teachers are contractual and they are quite experienced: all the KG2 and KG3 teachers have worked at the school ten or more years, and all the KG1 teachers have at least five years in the system. Moreover, of the seven teachers whose classes we attended regularly, four held a bachelor's degree in psychology or early childhood education, and one held a master's degree in sociology.

We engaged in ethnographic research at Amal Al-Bilad from May 2014 to May 2017, simultaneously conducting interviews with a broad range of people—ministry officials, principals at other schools, curriculum writers, professional development team members—and collecting documents—official curriculum, assessments of the reform efforts, and so forth. We conducted an initial set of

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5 Although the school does not serve children with physical or low-incidence disabilities, it does officially claim an inclusion model for children with diverse learning needs. Unfortunately, the school has no resources to identify these children or to differentiate instruction, and inclusion thus is a source of conflict between the principal's commitment to inclusion and her teachers, who feel unable to support the learning needs of all the children in their classrooms.

6 In 2015-2016, the demand for early childhood education among Syrian refugees had grown to such a degree that the ministry of education created a second shift that ran from 1:30-6 pm, but it served only Syrian children. We have been unsuccessful as yet in gaining permission to observe this second school shift, due to the principal's concerns about the quality of education delivered.



interviews and one day of observation in May 2014. In March 2015, Abu El-Haj and Bonet made a second trip to Beirut, during which time they, Kaloustian, and her team of three Lebanese graduate assistants, began five full days of intensive participant observation at the school. Beginning with this visit and continuing through May 2017, our local team (Kaloustian, Chatila, and two other graduate assistants) conducted twice-weekly observations in the classrooms of seven teachers in the school for approximately 12 weeks of each school year. Abu El-Haj and Bonet made subsequent one- to two-week visits to collect data during those years; during those trips, they and other members of the team conducted full days of participant observation. As ethnographers, our observations were focused on capturing all aspects of classroom life in vivid detail, including the physical and emotional environment, particulars of lessons conducted, specific dialogue and interactions between teachers and students, and between students and students, and so forth. At different points in the research process, we focused on particular questions that emerged from the iterative data analysis; for example, we paid close attention to the specific mechanisms through which teachers asserted authority, the messages children were receiving about poverty, and so forth. We also chose focal students from a range of positions in their classrooms, such as children from institutions, teachers' classroom favorites, "troublemakers," etc.

Throughout the data-collection process, both the Beirut and the U.S.-based research teams conducted preliminary data analysis, which we used to inform future data collection in an iterative fashion. In the spring of 2017, we analyzed our completed dataset and generated codes through an iterative process. We used the collaboration-enhancing web application Dedoose to organize our large dataset and code data; most data were coded by two team members. We held regular team meetings via Skype to discuss emerging themes, refine codes, and collectively analyze data as we developed our findings. In this article, we share the data that pertain to the theme of civic education.

## **EVERYDAY CIVIC EDUCATION AND ITS DISCONTENTS**

Although the new educational reform policy in Lebanon calls for active citizenship as one of its critical goals, our analysis shows that the kindergarten children were being schooled into a very different kind of embodied citizenship. Rather than learning, for example, how to ask questions, negotiate with others, share in collective endeavors, and develop a sense of belonging and inclusion—all critical components of engaged civic practice—these children were being educated into affective regimes of absolute obedience to authority and shame about their social



position as children living in poverty. In what follows, we show first how children's relationship to authority was created through three mechanisms: mundane official classroom routines and a scripted curriculum; denial of children's knowledge about the world; and an affective climate of fear and punishment for deviations from the demands of authority. We then turn our attention to the constant messages of shame they were getting about their social position. Finally, we illustrate briefly the ways that some children disrupted the embedded civic education on offer to them.

While our descriptions reflect the curriculum, routines, and affective climate that were pervasive across all of the classrooms we observed, we offer a word of caution against reading our observations as evidence of incompetent, uncaring, or even cruel teachers. In fact, we found the teachers on the whole to be extremely committed to the children and their jobs. They were faithfully delivering the scripted curriculum and following classroom-management practices as they had been taught to do. Moreover, while the screaming, fear, and shame used as disciplinary tools were endemic across the school, we also saw more loving interactions throughout our time there. We saw teachers share their snacks with children who did not have one, and we saw moments of intimacy and care, like hugging children as they entered the classroom, comforting students when they got hurt on the playground, remarking on a new article of clothing, a haircut or hairstyle, and giving children compliments. Thus, while we focus here on the overwhelming trends across all classrooms, we caution against reading this as a condemnation of the teachers. We take up the implications for teacher education in our discussion section.

### RELATIONSHIPS TO AUTHORITY

#### CLASSROOM ROUTINES AND CURRICULUM: CHANTING, SILENCE, STILLNESS, AND WORK

*Arabic class in Ms. Rasha's KG 3. It's first thing on a March morning and the children are seated quietly around their round tables. Ms. Rasha, walks to the back of the classroom, points to the weather bulletin board and asks the children, (in Arabic) "What is the weather today?" They all say in unison. "Rainy" (mumtir). Then the teacher asks them, "What else?" Some children say, "Cloudy" (gha'im). Then the teacher asks, "What else?" and the children say, "Cold" (barrid). She tells them they did a good job, and then asks them to recite the days of the week. Most of the children recite the wrong day of the week. The teacher*

*then says, “OK, well let’s sing the days of the week.” The children begin singing the days of the week. Many of them sing them incorrectly, so the teacher leads them in a second round of the song, and sings it with them a third time. The teacher then asks how many months there are in the year, and some children call out “Five!” and others call out “Seven”, and one child, a small girl with pigtails calls out “Twelve!” The teacher says, “Yes, there are twelve months. What are the names of the months?” The children start reciting the months of the year as the teacher points to the names of the month on the bulletin board. Then the teacher asks, “What was the date yesterday?” The children start calling out all sorts of numbers “17!” “11!” “15!” and then the teacher says, “Friday was the 20th. So what is today?” The children again begin calling out random numbers, but one child says, “21!” The teacher says, “Yes, 21. Today is Saturday, 21 of Athar (March, in Arabic).” Then the teacher holds up some flash cards of numbers and the children begin reading the numbers she holds.*

In every class we observed, twice a day, once in English and once in Arabic, the children at Amal Al-Bilad recited a version of the routine as observed here by Bonet. And, as was the case on this day in March, when the routines were quite familiar to all, a few of the children could correctly perform the expected recitation but most could not. No matter the children’s level of understanding (about the order of the days of the week, months of the year, date, or weather), the lessons went on.

This daily ritual—one found in many preschools across the world—was immediately followed by an Arabic or English literacy and numeracy lesson. Children spent two hours a day in Arabic class and another two in English class (or, in two cases, French class<sup>7</sup>) being instructed in how to read and write in two languages. Except for the opening ritual chants and the occasions when a few children were called to the board to demonstrate some aspect of the lesson, students were expected to sit silently while listening to the teacher deliver the curriculum. Each formal lesson was followed by a writing activity, also expected to be conducted in silence. New material was introduced each day, as dictated by the official curriculum. A few children appeared to follow along with the content delivered, but the majority had little or no idea what was happening. Our field notes reflect the strict adherence to the curricular texts; from one year to the next,

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7 For the sake of ethnographic immersion, we did not observe the French section.

the same lessons appear in our notes during the same weeks. No matter who the children were in any given year or any given class, the curriculum marched on.

Between the morning Arabic or English lessons, the children had a break that lasted around half an hour, during which time they were expected to eat a snack silently at their tables, taking care not to drop any crumbs on the floor. When the weather permitted, children who finished their snack could walk around, but not run or play, on the small balconies attached to each classroom while they waited to line up for a brief recess in the school gym. Each recess period saw half of the school's students (i.e., there were two shifts) running and screaming wildly around a gym that was devoid of any play equipment. This was the only time of the day the children were free from the demand to be silent and work. It was a period of playful abandon, but also of much conflict among the children.

Hour after hour, day after day, year after year, these young children were asked to sit straight in their chairs, chant (or pretend to chant) rote lists, and to keep their eyes on the board while the teacher was instructing them (whether or not they could understand what she was saying). Children were expected to perform whatever the teacher demanded. Like puppets controlled by the puppetmaster, they were to be silent or to speak on command, to absorb “lessons” and not ask questions, and to control their bodies at all times. Many “failed” at this performance, but nevertheless the official curriculum taught young children to embody a particular relationship to institutional authority—one that demands strict obedience to the regime, no questions asked, no understanding required.

#### DENIAL OF WHAT CHILDREN KNOW

We observed again and again the ways these children were being implicitly taught to distrust their own knowledge and authority. In one typical example, Ms. Nada, an English teacher, gathered the class around her on the carpet and took out a picture book. She held up the closed book and pointed to the picture of a turtle on the cover. One child said in Arabic, “*Biyimshi ‘al-ard*” (“It walks on the ground”)—a reflection of the English lesson they had just finished in which the teacher had been telling them that airplanes “fly in the air” and cars “ride on the road.” Ms. Nada responded in English, “No, it is the cover.” Next she opened the book to the title page that showed a picture of a duck and asked the children, “What is this?” Immediately another boy called out in Arabic, “*battuta*” (“little duck”). “No,” said Ms. Nada, “This is the image.” These two examples illustrate moments in which the children’s understanding (in the first case, evidence of his understanding of the preceding English lesson) went not only unnoticed

but rejected. It would be easy to dismiss this as just a harmless mistake on the teacher's part. In fact, she was following the lesson plan she had been given that was imported directly from the United States and reflected "balanced literacy" practices.

However, we argue that it is critical to pay attention to the hidden lessons children are learning when, again and again, they face such denial of what they know. Our data provide a cumulative record of children being told that their experiences of reality were not true. For example, we documented numerous instances of a teacher asking the children in both English and Arabic classes, "What is the weather?" and when the children correctly identified the weather conditions outside, they were told "No, it is . . .," followed by whatever the season required the weather to be: the cloudy skies the children observed in spring were called sunny because that's what the lessons on spring dictated.

Even in the context of a lesson explicitly designed to teach children to name emotions, the children receive confusing messages. The following are from Chatila's field notes:

*[After Ms. Tayseer] finished introducing the party hat and the party-themed song, she blew an actual balloon and went to Ahmad and asked him in English: "If I blow this 'balon' (using the French word for 'balloon') and give it to you, how do you feel?" Ahmad said: "happy." Then, she moved toward Ali and asked him: "if I blow this 'balon' and tell you this is not for you, how do you feel?" Ali, with a big smile on his face, answered: "happy." She then says: "No! If I say this is not for you. This is for Layla, how do you feel?" Ali insisted: "Happy." Ms. Tayseer then asked: "I say this 'balon' will be for Layla, how do you feel, happy or sad? (She asks in a way that gives him a hint as to what the right answer should be, which is sad.) Ali finally answered, "Sad." She then moves to another child, Jad, and asks him: "If I tell you you're a hero how do you feel?" Jad stared for a few seconds at her and then said "happy." "No!" she exclaimed. "You're a hero! You feel proud! What mean proud? Proud yaani fakhoor (translation: means proud)."*

At the most basic level, this example illustrates a lesson in emotional vocabulary poorly executed. However, it is important to note that the issue here was not that the children did not understand the English words. From previous observations, it was clear to Chatila that the children knew the meaning of the English words happy and sad. However, children were once again also learning that it is not their feeling but a correct answer that is required here. In Jad's hesitation—his pause as he stares at the teacher trying to puzzle out what it is she wants from him— we see that he has learned to seek authoritative answers elsewhere. Perhaps Jad, who is told he is a hero, would have felt happy rather than proud. However, the teacher's strict adherence to her lesson, meant lost opportunities for any exploration of real feelings the children might have experienced. Thus, through a scripted curriculum delivered faithfully by their teachers, children were persistently, if subtly, being educated to distrust their knowledge and experiences—and to rely instead on truth claims being made by authority figures.

#### PUNISHMENT, SHAME, AND FEAR

Finally, the children's relationship to institutional authority was developed through an affective environment in which they experienced teachers yelling at, threatening, and shaming them every day; one teacher was even observed hitting them. Teachers routinely screamed at children for not following the letter of the law. Many different behaviors could elicit yelling: whispering or talking to a peer, fidgeting, playing with a toy, dropping crumbs from their snack on the floor . . . the list goes on.

Teachers often yelled at children, "*Azabooni al-yom*" ("You gave me a hard time today"), claimed they had given the teacher a headache, or suggested that the children's behavior might make the teacher sick. For example, Ms. Dima (an Arabic teacher) stopped class one day, shouting, "My ears are hurting. Do you want me to get sick tonight when I go home?" Embedded in these admonitions is the expectation that children must focus on the needs of the teacher over their own needs. One particularly painful incident involved a black cat puppet, Fifi, who became the shaming voice for Ms. Dima. Our research team had never seen any stuffed toys or puppets—a staple of many early childhood classrooms—at the school. When one of us (Abu El-Haj) entered Ms. Dima's class in the spring of 2016, she was excited to be introduced to Fifi, who sat on the teacher's desk. At the end of the class period, Ms. Dima took up Fifi and asked the children if they wanted to know what the cat had observed that day. They were rapt and eager to hear Fifi's observations. Holding Fifi up to her ear, Ms. Dima "listened" as Fifi "reported" what she had seen. One could have heard the proverbial pin

drop as the children awaited her report. Ms. Dima then told them that Fifi was upset by how unruly they had been and how they bothered Ms. Dima all day. Fifi threatened to leave them and spend her time with their partner section of kindergarten. The children cried out that they didn't want Fifi to leave them. Even this puppet, often considered an instrument for storytelling and play, became a tool for shaming and disciplining the children. Moreover, Fifi's commentary did not at all match what Abu El-Haj had observed to be a highly regulated and typically routine day in Ms. Dima's classroom.

In another incident, Ms. Faiza (one of the English teachers) threatened her class that she would call the Children's Police ("shurtit al-atfaal") if they did not behave. As it turns out, there are mobile apps for parents to ring up the "children's police" with programmed threats for various "bad" behaviors. For example, in one scenario that our team called up on a phone, a deep ominous voice threatens to jail and beat a child for refusing to go to sleep. Children in Ms. Faiza's class appeared to know about this program. Although Ms. Faiza threatening her young charges with a call to the children's police was an anomaly, using fear and shame as a disciplinary technique was not. In all of the classrooms we observed, screaming, threats, and shame were routine modes of controlling (or attempting to control) children's behavior.

#### MESSAGES ABOUT POVERTY

Children at Amal Al-Bilad were also receiving an education about social class, in particular about poverty being a consequence of "poor family environments" rather than an outcome of structural oppression. As described above, the school served a population of children that, for the most part, lives in poverty.

There were many ways in which the children's poverty was highlighted and stigmatized. Teachers routinely commented within earshot of the children about their families and their environment ("bi'a"), as the following field notes of Abu El-Haj illustrate:

*Sally and I arrive after school has started so the door is locked. Sally reaches easily inside the gate to turn the key and let ourselves in. Ms. Jameela (an administrator) greets us with her usual quick smile. There is a little girl, dark hair in ponytails, pink coat, sitting on the floor sobbing and screaming inconsolably. Ms. Jameela and one of the aides are trying to calm her down. As she hold the child, Ms Jameela tells us that she is one of the*

*children from the mu'assisa (charitable institution) and that she spends the weekends with her parents, and now is inconsolable because she has to go back to the mu'assisa for the week. Ms. Jameela asks us, "shoo ha'l im?" (What kind of mother is this?)*

Teachers frequently had particularly harsh words for the parents of the children who lived in the mu'assisa. They wondered why parents, especially mothers, would "keep having babies" if they do not want to care for them. However, the judgments teachers made about poverty were not limited to the children living in the mu'assisa. Teachers and administrators routinely told us stories—both within and beyond earshot of the children—about the children's "bad environments." Educators complained about myriad conditions: a child being allowed to "run free in the streets" while his parents worked at the racetrack; a child who witnessed parents having sex as they watched pornography while the child was separated from them only by a curtain; a mother blamed for her daughter's lice infestation. The examples fill our notes. We do not deny that many of the children attending Amal Al-Bilad were living in conditions of deep familial, social, and economic distress. However, we want to highlight that, from the perspective of the educators, the burden of poverty rested with the poor choices parents made and the "bad environments" in which their children lived, rather than with an economic structure riven by injustice and inequality.

Our essential point is that the children were being taught explicitly and implicitly that their conditions were shameful and a consequence of their familial and local environments.

Unfortunately, as illustrated in the example above, teachers often communicated particularly harsh judgments in front of the children about their parents. However, they also did so in more subtle ways. One area in which shame about poverty was communicated daily was around the children's snack. Although children were supposed to bring in sandwiches for their mid-morning meal, many brought in large quantities of cheap snacks, such as chocolate or jam-filled croissants, cookies, and candy—snacks that were filling, if not ideally nutritious. In response, in classroom after classroom, teachers publicly called out children who did not have what they considered to be a nutritious snack. Typically, a teacher would tell a child in front of the whole class, to remind their mother that she needed to send in a sandwich. However, we also often heard teachers harshly threaten to, or actually take away, children's cookies or candy, telling them that the food was unhealthy and dangerous to consume. (Despite the nearly daily messages about the evils of cakes and candy, with one exception, the only food the school



ever provided for children for special celebrations consisted of sweet juice drinks and cakes.)

At times, the children from the mu'assisa seemed particularly marked. For example, during the first few months of one school year they wore special name tags on their school uniforms. None of the other children wore name tags. As a result, in every classroom a visitor could easily pick out all of the children living in the mu'assisa.

Children also got shaming messages around their hygiene and health. In one particularly distressing incident, a child who was ill and threw up was isolated on a chair, rather than being held or comforted, while his teacher shouted across the balcony to her colleague that he had wet himself (which he had not) and called in a custodian to disinfect the whole classroom. As all this activity was going on around the boy, his teacher relayed his history to one of us (Abu El-Haj), telling us that this boy's mother had died, his father had remarried, and, except for the rare occasions when he goes to his grandmother's, he is often left in the mu'assisa on weekends. The children at Amal Al-Bilad were getting clear, if implicit, instruction about their social position of poverty. Poverty was shameful and was a consequence of bad decisions for which their parents were to blame.

Our findings illustrate that children at Amal Al-Bilad were receiving an embedded, affective civic education teaching them critical lessons about their social position on the margins of society, and about relationships to knowledge and authority that did not support them to learn the kinds of civic actions necessary to participate fully as agents in the shared practices of public life.

#### CHILDREN AS AGENTS

Children of course take up these civic lessons in a variety of ways. There were many children who spent their days silently sitting in their chairs, at times trying to follow the rules, at others appearing to zone out. A small number of children, typically girls, became teachers' aides, eagerly volunteering to hand out or collect materials and papers, always first to demonstrate their new knowledge on the board. Some children became reinforcing agents by aligning with the teacher's regime and calling out their peers for infractions against her authority. Others rejected the authoritarian regime "offside," flying under the radar as they played with their friends or, in a clever twist, used songs and games they had learned in class to break out from the rigid routines. A handful of children rejected the social position that was on offer to them.



It was not unusual to hear children police their peers, admonishing them to listen to their teacher and follow her instructions. Children frequently repeated the teacher's instructions, commanding their friends to do what the teacher asked. As children do in many settings, students often called out individuals publicly if they were not following the rules. A majority of the instances in which children admonished other children's behavior and reinforced the teacher's authority appeared to be genuine expressions of a desire for order and rule-following. However, on occasion we observed children acting the part of a rule-enforcer, as a kind of cover for breaking those rules. The following is an example from Abu El-Haj's field notes:

*Selma has huge eyes that appear continually alert and wide open to all that is going on, fair, curly hair pulled up in a high ponytail. She spends this time while Ms. Karima is testing children individually at the front desk, finding ways to amuse herself. At first, she is chatting sotto voce with Hamad [the child seated next to her]. At one point, she turns her attention to a child at another table, loudly informing Ms. Karima that this child has put papers on a table [a forbidden action]. Although both Selma and Hamad are whispering, or playing hand games quietly, it is only Hamad that Ms. Karima calls out several times. After he turns to a boy at the table behind him and begins to hug and wrestle with him, Ms. Karima calls Hamad in a loud voice and moves him up to the table near her desk. After Ms. Karima has moved Hamad, Selma has to find another source of amusement. One is to continually, but very quietly tip her chair backwards until she falls over, and then pick herself up off the ground. She begins chatting now with another boy sitting next to her, who I find out later is her cousin. She also amuses herself by clapping. She then pretends to punch her cousin. As Ms. Karima calls out to admonish various children for their behavior, Selma says loudly, "Pay attention to the teacher," and then starts pinching her neighbor. Ms. Karima's voice is getting louder and louder throughout this time period, but she never notices Selma.*

This observation occurred over 20 minutes, during which time Ms. Karima was conducting individual reading assessments of each child in the class. The other children were expected to wait silently at their tables with no activity to keep them busy. Many children, like Selma and Hamad, could not sustain this inactivity and silence and they found other ways to amuse themselves. Ms. Karima

frequently raised her voice to yell at a child to stop doing whatever it was they were doing. Selma, however, was adept at tattling on other children and mimicking the teacher's authority while simultaneously keeping her play out of sight of Ms. Karima. Across classrooms, children created various means to make space along the margins within which to take breaks from the rigid obedience demanded of them. In a sense, children created alternate worlds when the teacher's attention was elsewhere.

Another way the children created an alternate world alongside the sanctioned school culture was by using curricular content to break out and play. Bonet's notes reflect one such instance:

*The children come back inside the classroom [from the balcony] and sit at their desks silently waiting to go to the gym. Suddenly, in unison, they begin to sing their song about Mother's Day, quickly resorting to screaming it out.*

On numerous occasions we observed children break into singing songs or reciting poems they had been taught, as a way to interrupt the monotony of silence they were expected to maintain while they waited through endless periods of what our team came to call "dead time." At times the teachers would try to restore order and silence, but more often they would allow these outbursts to continue in a tacit nod to children's need for self-expression.

In every class there were children who impressed us with their refusal to bow to the institutional regime, insisting on creating space within which they could learn and play on their own terms. Farah was one such child. This excerpt is from Bonet's field notes taken in an English class:

*Ms. Mona stands in front of the class and asks, "What is today?"*

*Different children respond loudly, "Thursday! Wednesday! Friday!"*

*The teacher says loudly, "Yesterday was Friday. So today is....?"*

*Farah says loudly, "Saturday!" The teacher says, "Yes. It is Saturday. Clap for Farah." The children clap for Farah. At this, Farah immediately runs to the calendar and begs, "Can I do the calendar Miss?" Without waiting for an answer, she begins*

*grabbing at the numbers of the calendar. The teacher tells Farah to return to her desk. Instead Farah continues to talk to the teacher about the calendar, while the teacher is trying to go over the fact that today is Saturday with the rest of the class. Finally, the teacher grabs her by her shirt sleeve and leads her back to her seat.*

However, Farah does not leave it at that. Later in the lesson she asserts herself again, this time practicing her school knowledge while subverting the order of this classroom in which children are expected to speak only English. Here is another excerpt from Bonet's field notes:

*The teacher goes to her desk to get something when Farah stands up and begins to sing the Mother's Day song in Arabic—a song she and her peers had learned in their Arabic class. The teacher looks up and says, "No Farah." Farah smiles and then sits down. A few seconds later, Farah begins to sing again in Arabic the "Winter" song she had learned in Arabic class. She sings loudly, and makes the gestures which go along with the words that tell about building a snowman. The teacher looks up again and says, "Farah, stop." Farah smiles again, and in a few seconds, begins singing the Mother's Day song again. The teacher looks up again and this time shouts, "NO! Don't sing in Arabic! This is not the time for singing in Arabic, Farah!" Farah is quiet for a few seconds, and then sings a fourth time. The teacher suddenly stands up and heads quickly for Farah's direction. She grabs hold of Farah's arm, and begins dragging her towards the door. Farah goes limp and pulls herself towards her chair, and says, in Arabic, "Okay, Miss! I'll be quiet. I promise!"*

Farah was carrying on a one-child campaign to create a space in which learning and joy were entwined. Unlike so many of her peers, she actually seemed to be learning the academic curriculum on offer, but she refused again and again to be constrained by the institutional practices that refused her a right to move, play, and sing in her own language.

## DISCUSSION

Citizenship, broadly understood outside the constraints of juridical status, is an embodied practice of belonging to and acting upon one's society that develops from the experiences individuals have with and within public institutions and spaces (Abu El-Haj 2015; Benei 2008; Levinson 2011; Levinson 2012; Rubin 2007). Recognizing citizenship as an embodied experience means understanding that there are affective dimensions to one's understanding of, and relationship to, the practices of public life: for example, feeling a sense of belonging or exclusion, trust in or fear of authority, shame or pride in one's community are all constitutive of how one acts within and upon their society. Schools are one of, if not the, critical institutions within which children and youth learn these embodied practices of citizenship. As such, in postconflict societies that aim to strengthen democratic citizenship, education reform that promotes civic education for social cohesion and active citizenship is of utmost importance. Unfortunately, education reform directives focus primarily on formal civic education that typically begins in middle or high school, and even then, as is the case in Lebanon, it often falls short of the goals (Akar 2012; Bahou 2015; Shuayb 2012). What this focus on formal civic education misses is the fact that children in schools are, as we have shown, already getting a civic education. Moreover, although some research has shown that young children do get more explicit formal civic education that schools them into the passions of nationalism (Benei 2008), we suggest the need to also attend to the more foundational, if implicit, affective civic lessons embedded in the routine practices of everyday life in classrooms (Graham 2017; Jackson 1968). It is here that children learn the "rules" for relationships, interactions, and the practices of public life (Adair et al. 2016). As we have shown, instead of developing the kinds of practices needed to create a robust, collective, active, and democratic social life in a diverse public context, children at Amal Al-Bilad were getting a civic education in marginalized forms of citizenship that demanded unquestioning obedience to authority in terms of knowledge delivered and discipline expected, and reinforced continually shaming messages about poverty.

Of course, the students in our study demonstrated various ways of being agentic within their restrictive environments, including creating and sustaining shadow worlds in which illicit play was hidden from their teachers, breaking the expected codes for talk, movement, and silence. We are, however, wary of overestimating the ability of these moves by the children to create alternatives to the authoritarian classroom environment. Children's actions might have brought life and joy into their classroom—as well as additional punishment—but more importantly they brought play to the space within which children do civic action (Adair et al. 2016).

However, due to the extremely structured and rigid classroom environment, these moments were stolen ones. In their comparative analysis, Adair and her colleagues argue that contexts that assume play is key for learning and integrate play throughout the day are those that foster collective action, concern, and leadership skills among children. At Amal Al-Bilad, some students rejected the crushing emphasis on an academic and disciplinary curriculum by stealthily creating play space; however, this cannot be assumed to give students the same capacity for civic action as play that is built into the curriculum. Screaming a song at the top of one's lungs in one's native language or playing with a friend behind the teacher's back might break the authoritarian rule of the classroom, bring some relief, and add an element of play, but it cannot substitute for a curriculum that recognizes play not only as children's fundamental means of learning but also as their space for doing civic action (Adair et al. 2017). Moreover, we emphasize the need to pay attention to the affective dimensions of citizenship into which young children are being educated through the everyday practices of their classrooms.

Our research has two critical implications for education in emergencies. First, focusing on children's play as civic action and the early childhood classroom as a space in which children are getting an embedded, affective civic education, we suggest that the conundrum of how to create sustainable and peaceful forms of shared public life in societies riven by inequality and conflict must be addressed well before children begin to receive formal civic education. From the earliest years, schools are the primary space within which children learn to be public, social actors. Well before formal civic education begins, children have learned much about social relations, their place in society, empowerment and disempowerment, collective action, and more. It is in these spaces that the lofty goals of social cohesion, integration, and active citizenship—goals driving educational policy-making in vulnerable, (post)conflict societies—are made and unmade. In a country that has largely segregated stateless Palestinian children in UNRWA schools for more than 60 years and has recently created separate shifts for Lebanese and Syrian children in the state schools beginning in first grade, Amal Al-Bilad, similar to other kindergartens, was the rare public space in which Lebanese, Syrian, and Palestinian children were being educated together. As such, it could have been a space in which young children from these different communities learned to work, play, share, negotiate, and take collective action—to be full participants in their worlds together. Instead, as we have shown, it was one in which the most vulnerable children in Lebanon were learning civic lessons that stressed obedience to authority, disempowerment, distrust in their own knowledge, and shame about their social position. We suggest that if we are serious about the mandate to educate children and youth for a future beyond civic

conflict and fracture, we must begin by restructuring the earliest public spaces in which they live and learn. Early childhood classrooms must be transformed into spaces for learning a sense of belonging, trust, and efficacy, and for centering play and the opportunities it affords for civic action—civic action understood not only as practice for future action but as inherent in children’s social play.

A second implication of this research is that, to develop these kinds of classrooms, there can be no end run around robust forms of teacher education in (post)conflict contexts. As we cautioned earlier, it would be a mistake to view the teachers at Amal Al-Bilad as bad teachers who simply do not know what is best for children. In fact, these teachers were doing exactly what they were being asked to do—to deliver a scripted academic curriculum to the children. Teachers were judged on the silence and orderliness of their classrooms. In fact, teachers frequently lamented that they were unable to meet the health, safety, and emotional needs of the children and worried about their inability to care for these dimensions of children’s lives. And, although teachers did not use our language of civic education to describe their work, they were keenly aware that early childhood education would ideally provide children with a foundation within which to learn to share and collaborate with their peers. Teachers often expressed concerns about aggressive interactions between children, and they pointed to the limited resources of the school (no nurse or counselors, an insufficient play area with no equipment) and the lack of professional development around a range of critical issues, from teaching large numbers of children, to using the games and manipulatives UNICEF had provided for the school (which remained wrapped in plastic), to addressing the needs of children who experienced trauma. If teachers are to fundamentally change the kind of civic education offered their students, they must have ongoing opportunities for inquiry and reflection about children as learners and social actors. There are no quick professional development fixes for this kind of transformation. It requires transforming the vision of teaching at all levels of the system from one of content delivery to one of creating sustainable pedagogical practices that draw on and enhance children’s strengths and capacities as learners and social actors, particularly for children living in societies riven with conflict.

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# PATHWAYS TO RESILIENCE IN RISK-LADEN ENVIRONMENTS: A CASE STUDY OF SYRIAN REFUGEE EDUCATION IN LEBANON

OULA ABU-AMSHA AND JILL ARMSTRONG

## ABSTRACT

*Resilience is most often understood as the ability to achieve well-being in the face of significant adversity. It is both a dynamic process and an outcome that can be pursued by individuals and communities alike. Despite becoming an increasingly popular topic in policy fields such as education, development, and refugee studies, there is limited research into the promotion of resilience within refugee education. This qualitative study, which examines the experiences of Syrian refugee children who are attending a non-formal education center in Lebanon, seeks to understand the role education plays in fostering pathways to resilience in the children's lives. Half of the students in the study had chosen to drop out of the Lebanese formal schools they attended. This study argues that the students who chose to drop out felt that the risks they faced while attending Lebanese schools were not worth the rewards, thus they sought different pathways to resilience. Many chose to attend non-formal schools like the one involved in this study, which supported the students in finding pathways to resilience. The insights gained from studying these schools could help to improve education for Syrian refugees in Lebanon, including how to provide safe, affordable, productive, and culturally relevant education choices for more children and their families, and to support more refugee children and youth in choosing education as a pathway to resilience.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Since 2011, nearly five million refugees from Syria have fled the country and are now living in Turkey, Jordan, Iraq, Egypt, Lebanon, and other countries. During the early years of the civil war, more than 1.2 million refugees registered with the UNHCR in Lebanon, itself a small country of only 4.5 million inhabitants; many more refugees remain unregistered (Watkins and Zyck 2014). Approximately 30 percent of these refugees are school-age children and youth (Watkins and Zyck 2014, 3). Access to quality education has been touted by researchers and policy-makers as a source of normality during a crisis, and as a valuable component of successful and sustainable peace and development. However, despite efforts to increase refugee students' access to schools in Lebanon, including implementing a double-shift school day, only 158,000 (20 percent) of the Syrian refugee children living in Lebanon have been able to secure spots in Lebanese public schools (Deane 2016; UNHCR 2015); moreover, many of those enrolled have struggled to remain in the classroom (Deane 2016).

Existing deficits in Lebanon's public education system, combined with significant funding shortages and allegations of discrimination and unfair treatment of refugee students, have created a challenging education environment (Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies [INEE] 2014; Watkins and Zyck 2014). Efforts to improve the quality of education in Lebanon will benefit from focusing on improving education resilience—that is, the specific ways education systems can support the needs of vulnerable learners, especially in contexts of adversity (Reyes 2013). This process involves examining the risks Syrian students face as a result of the adverse conditions they live in, particularly the risks they experience when attending Lebanese schools. This process also requires understanding the assets students can access through their families, communities, and schools that can help them access resources and navigate pathways to resilience (Reyes 2013). The education community's response to this process involves addressing students' learning needs and their socioemotional well-being while providing protection from physical or psychological harm in a context of adversity (Reyes 2013, 31).

This research study specifically explores the experiences of a group of Syrian refugee students who attend a non-formal education center in Lebanon. The study looks at that center's practices in order to determine how it has responded to the risks its students are facing, and how it has designed its programming to help the Syrian students find pathways to resilience.

Resilience is an increasingly popular topic in Western education literature (see Tough 2016; Dweck 2006; Yeager and Dweck 2012; Duckworth 2016). It has been defined by these U.S. authors as an individual's capacity to achieve in school and beyond in a context of adversity. Only limited scholarship on resilience is available in the field of refugee education. Indicators of resilience among refugee students may include attending classes, achieving academically, managing their behavior while in school, and integrating with classmates; however, these behaviors are not the only way resilience can manifest. Resilience is culturally and contextually based and thus can be developed via a variety of pathways.

The social-ecological theory of resilience recognizes that many elements of the complex environment surrounding an individual in both the present and the past—including family, school, community, and culture—are equally involved in developing resilience, as are inherent individual traits (Ungar 2012). These elements help people develop resilience by creating opportunities to choose the “psychological, social, cultural, and physical resources that build and sustain their well-being” (Ungar 2012, 17). The values, morals, and cultural beliefs of an individual's social ecology help determine the meaningfulness of those opportunities. Thus, if a refugee student chooses to focus on school as a path to resilience and to make education a meaningful, beneficial, and healthy choice, they will need solid educational opportunities and significant support from their family, school, community, and culture.

Using participatory research methods, this study examines the experiences of Syrian refugee children attending a non-formal education center in Beirut. By uncovering the risks these refugee students face, as well as the assets accessible to them through the school and elsewhere, the study illuminates the complex influence of family, school, community, and culture on students who are navigating pathways to resilience. We define “assets” as positive individual characteristics such as self-regulation and cognitive skills, and as elements within their environment, such as supportive social networks and neighborhood characteristics (Schoon 2006). Risks, in contrast, are the negative elements that result from an external threat, such as a conflict, natural disaster, or public health crisis (INEE 2010, 122). In this study, the particular influence of experiences in pre-conflict Syria, especially family lifestyle and culture, played a multifaceted role in determining whether staying in a formal school was understood as a beneficial choice that supported the development of resilience within these children. Importantly, this study was carried out by a Syrian researcher whose access to the population and contextual knowledge of Syrian culture enabled her to conduct a deep and rich

analysis of data that could have been overlooked or misunderstood by another research team.

This article begins with a review of the literature, followed by a discussion of the context, including the complex risks faced by Syrian refugee students who are attempting to get an education in Lebanon, and the methods employed in the research. It then presents findings that show how a non-formal education center is attempting to mitigate the risks and assist students on their pathway to resilience. It concludes with suggestions on how to improve the quality and relevance of education for Syrian refugee children.

### **SOCIAL-ECOLOGICAL THEORY OF RESILIENCE: UNCOVERING CONTEXTUAL RISKS AND ASSETS**

Resilience is a process of adapting well and achieving success in the face of adversity, trauma, violent threats, or other significant sources of stress (Ungar 2012; Lipsitt and Demick 2012). Although refugees often face significant adversity, only limited research has been conducted on social-ecological theories of developing resilience through refugee education. Studies on resilience have focused primarily on individuals' resilient traits or have analyzed refugees in Western host countries (Anderson 2004; de Heer et al. 2016; Dryden-Peterson 2015; Lenette, Brough, and Cox 2012; Masten 2001; Sleijpen et al. 2016; Weine et al. 2014). However, a focus on individual resilience does not recognize the important role environment plays in developing resilient behaviors and providing essential supports (Bronstein, Montgomery, and Ott 2013). More complex theories of resilience, which are being used increasingly in refugee studies (Anderson et al. 2004; Betancourt et al. 2013; Dryden-Peterson, Dahya, and Adelman 2017; Sleijpen et al. 2017), are beginning to recognize resilience as a dynamic process that involves various spheres of influence and support—families, schools, communities, and cultures (Lerner 2006; Luthar 2003; Olsson et al. 2003; Rutter 1987; Ungar 2008, 2010, 2011; Schoon 2006; Tol, Song, and Jordans 2013).

The evolution from focusing on individual resilience to focusing on dynamic, environmentally contextualized resilience was influenced by Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 2005) ecological human development paradigm. Bronfenbrenner's theories emphasized the influence on human development of multiple interconnected systems: the microsystem (peers, family, teachers); the mesosystem (interactions between microsystem actors); the exosystem (societal structures and institutions, such as government or neighborhoods); the macrosystem (cultural, political,



historical influences); and the chronosystem (the influence of time and timing) (Bronfenbrenner 1979; Betancourt and Khan 2008; Dryden-Peterson et al. 2017; Ungar 2012). Social-ecological studies of resilience aim to understand the different ways risks and assets affect individuals and help to mitigate negative consequences by analyzing individuals' interactions and processes within their interconnected ecological systems over time.

Bronfenbrenner's discussion of the macrosystem and chronosystem is of particular importance to this study. The macrosystem's influence on creating meaning for individuals affects how they understand risks and access assets. The influence of the chronosystem, such as the age of an individual when a traumatic event occurs, the time of life in which significant experiences occur, or the "cumulative effects of an entire sequence of developmental transitions over an extended period of time" (Ungar 2012, 147), is also important to consider when trying to understand how an individual recognizes a pathway to resilience. The following definition provides a useful framework for investigating resilience:

In the context of exposure to significant adversity, resilience is both the capacity of individuals to navigate their way to the psychological, social, cultural, and physical resources that sustain their well-being and their capacity to individually and collectively negotiate for these resources to be provided and experienced in culturally meaningful ways. (Ungar 2008, 225)

Thus, pathways to resilience may not always look the same, as the meaning of success, health, and happiness varies greatly from individual to individual. Behaviors believed to be positive or to promote resilience in certain contexts can differ or even contradict established beliefs in other contexts (Ungar 2012). Attending school, for example, is often considered a resilient behavior, but if attending school subjects a student to emotional or physical abuse, or if the school promotes a curriculum that challenges the cultural and religious beliefs of a student's family or community, quitting school could be the more resilient choice in terms of the impact on that student's overall well-being.

This study uses a social-ecological model of resilience to consider the argument that fostering resilience in refugee children is a complex and contextually based process that considers the interconnected effects that individuals, families, schools, communities, and cultures have on those children. The interactions within each of these spheres, the various risks and assets present in each context, the effects of past experiences, and concern for the future together create conditions in

which the pathway to resilience requires individuals to navigate to different sets of supports that are based on their unique needs.

### **RISKS AND ASSETS WITHIN REFUGEE EDUCATION**

A poor educational experience can increase the risks children face and raise major barriers to developing resilient behaviors. The specific challenges and drawbacks of refugee education in both camp settings and urban refugee situations have been well documented (Dryden-Peterson 2011). These studies have shown that refugee children have limited and often disrupted educational opportunities; face language barriers in trying to access education; receive poor-quality instruction in overcrowded, under-resourced classrooms; have high dropout rates; and encounter discrimination in school settings from both teachers and administrators (Dryden-Peterson 2011; Jones and Rutter 1998; UNHCR 2013). Refugee students also face challenges to learning, such as cultural disorientation, frequent relocation, and gaps in foundational skills (Yau 1996). One concern about the risks and challenges refugee students face is that they can become sources of resentment or conflict; this has been called one of the “two faces of education” (Bush and Saltarelli 2000). The other “face” is the positive, resilience-promoting aspect of education, which can boost self-esteem, encourage community participation, and enable children to build on their existing skills, knowledge, and abilities. Studies have indicated the importance of assets such as caring teachers, respectful relationships, peer support, and a welcoming, safe school environment (Cefai 2008; Gizir and Aydin 2009). Other factors are also important, such as spirituality and religion, ethno-cultural identity, and cultural beliefs about education (Zakharia 2013; Ungar and Liebenberg 2013). Schools also can promote resilience by protecting students from physical danger and exploitation; helping students strengthen their coping mechanisms; and mitigating psychosocial trauma by creating a sense of normalcy, stability, structure, and hope for the future (Tebbe 2009).

The value of different assets in supporting the development of individuals’ resilience can vary greatly, depending on the strength of each sphere of influence (Panter-Brick et al. 2017; World Bank Group 2016). For example, a study of Syrian refugee youth interviewed in Jordan stressed the “paramount” importance of family in accessing resources, whether “social, emotional, or political,” including emotional support, assistance with marriage, and employment or business opportunities (Panter-Brick et al. 2017, 14). These youth also were motivated by having positive relationships within their community, having role models, feeling secure, believing in education, and looking forward to a better future. Efforts to

support students' pathways to resilience should recognize the influences that are important to particular populations.

### **RISKS AND ASSETS OF SYRIAN REFUGEE EDUCATION IN LEBANON**

Numerous studies and reports have discussed the challenges of providing quality education for Syrian refugee students in Lebanon, including access, affordability, language, certification, curriculum, deficits in teacher training, as well as a lack of support in dealing with psychosocial trauma and discrimination by fellow students, teachers, and administrators (Ahmadzadeh et al. 2014; Culbertson and Constant 2015; Deane 2016; INEE 2014; Shuayb, Makkouk, and Tuttunji 2014; UNESCO 2013; Watkins and Zyck 2014). In the early years of the exodus, only about 20 percent of Syrian refugee children were enrolled in primary schools in Lebanon and as few as 2 percent were attending secondary schools (Shuayb et al. 2014). In 2016, five years into the crisis, despite great efforts by UNHCR and its partners, barely 50 percent of school-age Syrian refugee children in Lebanon were enrolled in some type of education (Human Rights Watch 2016). Many refugee families in Lebanon struggle with the cost of sending their children to public school, which includes uniforms and books, exam fees, and bus fares, as schools rarely provide transportation (INEE 2014; Sirin and Rogers-Sirin 2015; Shuayb et al. 2014). The cost of private school is nearly impossible for most Syrian refugee families to afford.

One of the biggest challenges for Syrian refugee students who do attend schools in Lebanon is the language of instruction (Culbertson and Constant 2015; Deane 2016; Shuayb et al. 2014; UNICEF 2015). Many Syrian students report struggling with the English or French language requirement, which contributes to dropout rates of up to 70 percent and a failure rate twice that of the Lebanese average (Shuayb et al. 2014). One explanation for students' difficulty with the requirement has to do with when and how language learning is introduced in the two education systems. Lebanese students receive English and French lessons beginning in lower primary school, and the languages are integrated more each year into core subjects like math and science; Syrian curricula, in contrast, treat French and English as supplemental foreign languages.

There is robust evidence for the importance of a supportive learning environment and good peer-to-peer learning relationships, thus the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) recommends that classrooms, curricula, schools, and communities provide psychosocial support for refugee students and teachers (INEE 2010; Burde et al. 2015). However, the majority of reports on Syrian

refugee education in Lebanon show not only that teachers have not been trained in providing psychosocial support for children but that they are often the source of the discrimination and bullying Syrian students experience, including verbal abuse, corporal punishment, and humiliation (Deane 2016; INEE 2014; Watkins and Zyck 2014; Shuayb et al. 2014).

Many non-formal education programs in Lebanon have become important assets to Syrian refugee children by providing English-language courses, remedial education, technical-vocational training, homework support, psychosocial support, and activities such as art, sports, and drama (Shuayb et al. 2014). Although non-formal education programs are not accredited and cannot offer a baccalaureate, many of these programs, including those run by Syrian, Lebanese, and international NGOs, reportedly have been important education providers for Syrian refugee children (Deane 2016; UNICEF 2015). Instability in the region, which causes the frequent opening and closing of schools, makes it difficult to measure the precise rates, but some non-formal schools are staffed by Syrian teachers, use the Arabic language, and follow the Syrian curriculum. Others focus on transitioning students into the formal Lebanese school system or offer accelerated learning programs to provide students with essential employment skills.

## **METHODS AND SAMPLE**

This qualitative study arose in response to the increasing challenges of educating Syrian refugee children and youth, both in Lebanon and around the globe. It was designed to uncover the particular obstacles these children face in developing resilience through education, and to discover the assets and opportunities that promote resilience (see Abu-Amsha 2014). The focus groups that were formed to be part of a transformative process of problem-solving within the Syrian community also provided rich observational data. Additional interviews were conducted with teachers and volunteers in order to deepen understanding and clarify some of the observations shared by the focus group participants, who also helped to identify key themes for further exploration.

### JUSOOR'S NON-FORMAL REFUGEE EDUCATION PROGRAM

Jusoor is an NGO established by globally dispersed members of the Syrian diaspora in 2012. Since 2013, Jusoor has operated an education program for Syrian refugees in Lebanon (Jusoor 2017). The program includes a non-formal education center opened in mid-2013 in Beirut, as well as a tent school and a brick-and-mortar school in the Bekaa Valley, a rural region of Lebanon. This study focuses on the experiences of Syrian students and volunteers in the Beirut center, hereafter referred to as Jusoor School.

Non-formal education programs that include community involvement and language support have been identified as important assets for Syrian refugee children in promoting resilient behaviors. During the 2013-2014 school year, Syrian volunteers at Jusoor School provided Syrian refugee children (up to age 14) with non-formal education and after-school support.<sup>1</sup> The primary objective of the school is to prepare students to integrate into Lebanese public and private schools. The Arabic word “*jusoor*,” which means “bridges,” reflects this objective. The students are placed in four different levels according to their cognitive capacities, rather than their age. They are given a meal at lunchtime, and they also receive psychosocial support through the arts, sports, and mentorship. Four days per week, the school runs learning programs in accordance with the Lebanese Arabic curriculum, which includes Arabic, math, art, science, and sports. It also provides English-language and peace education programs.

Students who are already studying in Lebanese schools attend Jusoor School on Fridays, where they participate in extracurricular activities and get help with homework. At the beginning of the school year under study, Jusoor staff had arranged financial aid and tuition waivers that enabled many of the refugee children to attend Lebanese public and private schools. However, many of these students ended up leaving the Lebanese system within less than one semester. They either returned to the Jusoor School or abandoned their education.

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<sup>1</sup> Jusoor has since changed its education strategy and now focuses on hiring teachers in addition to volunteer staff. Jusoor now employs 46 Syrian teachers in its three schools, which have a total enrollment of 1,700 students (Jusoor 2017).

### PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH

The coordinators and volunteers at Jusoor School were greatly involved in the design of this research study, and in the collection and analysis of data. Involving the school community in the research put greater emphasis on local knowledge and perspectives, which were intrinsic to uncovering the challenges faced by the Syrian refugee children; it also put the power of the research process in the hands of the community (Cornwall and Jewkes 1995; Mertens 2009). A local advisory committee (LAC) was established to support this community participation. The four members of the LAC—Jusoor School’s education advisor and three Syrian volunteers—had considerable experience working with the refugee children and in-depth knowledge of the context. The LAC played an essential role throughout the study. To ensure that the questions asked were both relevant and appropriate, the interview protocols were discussed with the LAC, and those related to the children’s focus groups (see below) were piloted with two 12-year-old children studying at Jusoor School.<sup>2</sup> The LAC and additional volunteers, including experts from the World Bank, were also involved in the analysis of the data collected. The findings resulting from the semi-structured interviews and focus groups were presented to and discussed with volunteers from Jusoor School in order to stimulate recommendations within the wider education community.

### SAMPLE

With the assistance of the coordinator at Jusoor School, two focus groups of Syrian children were purposively selected, each including 12 students ages 8-12. Two groups were created in order to capture the diverse education experiences within the refugee community. One group contained students who were attending Lebanese schools and participating in Jusoor School programs that provided homework help and extracurricular activities. The other group contained children who had dropped out of Lebanese schools and were only participating in programs at Jusoor School. Including students who had successfully transitioned and those who had not was not intended to be a binary comparison but to reflect our intentional effort to find what Sanders and Munford refer to as “confirming and disconfirming cases that help to understand the circumstances under which troubled young people could find themselves able to strive and thrive and [those] under which they could be crushed” (2009, 83).

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2 See Abu-Amsha (2014) for the full interview protocol and questions.

The first selection criteria for the student focus groups was participation in a Jusoor School program. Beyond that, the groups were largely selected by the coordinator, based on her knowledge of each child's maturity level and ability to articulate what were likely to be difficult aspects of their lived experiences. Since some of the children were as young as eight, the Jusoor coordinator and Abu-Amsha sought to include children who would be willing to communicate during the focus group sessions and be able to answer questions about their educational experiences. By focusing on these criteria, the gender dynamics of both focus groups became unbalanced. The group of students attending Lebanese schools included ten girls and two boys, whereas the focus group of children who had dropped out of those schools contained ten boys and two girls.

A third focus group was composed of nearly every Jusoor School educator, including seven teachers and volunteers, primarily women, of different ages and experience. Three other interviews were conducted, with two Lebanese educators (a school coordinator and a staff member) and with a Syrian teacher working in a private school that catered to Syrian students in Beirut. Neither the Lebanese educators nor the Syrian teacher worked with the students who attended Jusoor School; however, the interviews provided valuable perspectives to compare with the focus group findings.

Finally, discussions were conducted with the Norwegian Refugee Council and REACH, an international humanitarian assessment and information management initiative, with local Syro-Lebanese NGO Basmeh & Zeitouneh (meaning "a smile and an olive"), and with several parents of Syrian children who were contacts of Abu-Amsha. These additional discussions were insightful, and they gave Abu-Amsha a supportive community of practice to refer back to and helped to motivate the study.

### **ACCESS AND POSITIONALITY**

Cultural competence has been defined as "a disposition that is required to understand how to approach communities in a respectful way, to invite participation and support that participation" (Mertens 2009, 231). It encompasses the attitudes and behaviors of cultural sensitivity and cultural awareness, but also the strategies and resources required to translate these skills into policy and practice that are representative of, and respectful of, the needs and rights of vulnerable communities.



Abu-Amsha is a relocated Syrian academic who first experienced the education system in Lebanon as a parent of school-age children. That this study was undertaken by a Syrian researcher facilitated access to the sample population and supported the data analysis and interpretation. Abu-Amsha's shared cultural understanding with the community allowed her to identify crucial cultural nuances that signal resilience among this population that another researcher may not have recognized. Some of the risks identified existed in Syria before the crisis and had been experienced by vulnerable communities, including those who were now refugees in Lebanon. Moreover, as a compatriot who had also been displaced, Abu-Amsha was able to have repeated contact with the Syrian stakeholders (children, parents, and school volunteers) and was able to work closely with the Syrian volunteers to validate the findings at the community level and to generate appropriate and meaningful recommendations.

Finally, all researchers need to consider sources of personal bias and prejudice. Reflecting on one's own class, culture, and gender is essential. Certain nuances may be reduced and others heightened when conducting research within one's own community. Moreover, the Syrian refugee population is far from homogeneous, and the children and volunteers at Jusoor School came from diverse backgrounds, which also differed from Abu-Amsha's background.<sup>3</sup> Abu-Amsha managed possible bias through critical self-awareness, by relying on participatory methodology to question assumptions and interpretations of the data, and by strongly emphasizing community validation of the data. This was achieved through the LAC and ongoing discussions with Jusoor School stakeholders, who were not only able to support the data analysis but also to use the results to provide useful recommendations.

### DATA COLLECTION

All of the focus groups, interviews, and subsequent debriefings, and the initial coding with the LAC, were conducted during the 2013-2014 school year, in Arabic. The three focus groups were held at Jusoor School. The school coordinator and an external Syrian young person took notes during all the focus group sessions. The presence of these observers did not appear to impede the responses of the children or the volunteers. The school coordinator's presence was important, as she had already built a trusting relationship with the children, their parents, and the community. Her participation also greatly facilitated the data analysis and interpretation by clarifying data and providing insightful reflections.

<sup>3</sup> Due to the sensitive nature of the conflict and the subsequent concern for privacy of the refugees and the purposefully non-political image of Jusoor, questions on political or religious affiliations were not asked.



The additional semi-structured interviews with a Lebanese school coordinator and staff member were also recorded and analyzed. These interviews were held at a public school in a nearby suburb of Beirut. Since the beginning of the Syrian crisis, the student population of this school had become largely composed of Syrian refugees. In the afternoon, the school staff ran a non-formal education program funded by UNICEF for out-of-school Syrian children.<sup>4</sup> The interview location thus offered the opportunity to observe two educational environments for Syrian refugee students, which the researchers could use to triangulate the data from the focus groups.

Abu-Amsha's contacts helped facilitate an interview with a Syrian teacher who taught at a private school opened especially for Syrians living in Beirut. The interview was recorded and analyzed, and it contributed to understanding of the broader context within which Syrian children seek an education.

## DATA ANALYSIS

The data were analyzed using a systematic, open-ended initial coding approach (Saldana 2009). Abu-Amsha transcribed the recorded interviews and focus group sessions and conducted an initial round of coding in the original Arabic. The preliminary coding of the qualitative data contained in the transcripts enabled her to identify a list of risks, assets, and opportunities across different levels of the social ecology, including individual, social (family, community), and education settings (Ungar, Ghazinour, and Richter 2013). In order to understand the context as related to the different social-ecological spheres, an individual unit of analysis was used to connect the interview subjects' specific past experiences to their present conditions. These data provided rich information about behavioral and relational risks, and about the difficulties refugee students in Lebanon experienced due to the educational foundations they had built in Syria.

To prepare for a second round of coding, Abu-Amsha translated the interview and focus group transcripts and the coding categories into English. During a secondary categorization of codes, it became clear that developing resilience is not a reaction to one adverse event but a dynamic process that is developed and adapted over a lifetime (Ungar 2012). A third level of analysis was conducted to synthesize the data into a broader conceptual story.

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<sup>4</sup> The situation at this Lebanese public school has changed since the study was conducted. Syrian students are now encouraged to attend second-shift classes.

## FINDINGS

Resilience is developed as a response to risk and adversity, but the way individuals understand and seek to become resilient depends on the context of their current experience, the influence of their social-ecological environment, and the influence of the chronosystem—that is, the timing of positive and negative events in one’s life course. Our findings reveal that there were a good number of risks that hindered the education of the Syrian children included in our sample, many of which have been identified by previous studies of refugee education in Lebanon, including access, affordability, language challenges, deficits in teacher training, and an environment of intolerance and abuse, as previously discussed. The principal of her children’s private school advised Abu-Amsha that she “should help [her] children to ‘wear a shield’ at school” to tolerate the insults tossed at them. This study revealed that, for many of these young refugee students, the combination of Syrian families’ beliefs about education and the challenges facing those seeking an education in Lebanon had made it difficult for them to determine whether continuing their education was a resilient behavior worth pursuing. Due to the influence of family and culture, some youths felt that pursuing a Lebanese formal education was not worth the risk and that other pursuits such as employment were more likely to give them a greater sense of self-worth. The timing of when major events occurred in the life of the students also had an impact, as the changes individuals and families experienced over time, from wealth to poverty, security to uncertainty, and from familiar cultural and institutional norms into the confusion and distrust of a new system had an impact on them across the various ecological spheres.

The following sections describe how the influence of family and culture, combined with the experience of displacement, has created additional risks for students seeking to develop resilience through education. They also discuss how different education programs at Jusoor School and other non-formal institutions have responded to these risks.

**PRE-CRISIS EXPERIENCES IN RESILIENCE MEANING-MAKING:  
A HARMFUL MIX**

Ali and Ahmad<sup>5</sup> are two brothers who attended the Jusoor School's non-formal education program. They both chose to drop out of Lebanese schools. The boys and their 13 siblings come from a formerly wealthy landowning family from the rural region of Deir Ezorr in Syria. As a landlord, their father had a stable if not substantial income and he had not worried about his sons receiving a quality education, as he expected their future to be secure regardless of their studies. However, due to the crisis, the family was displaced and lost its income, and Ali and Ahmad's father has struggled in Lebanon to even pay the bills. For these brothers, the combination of limited financial resources in the present, together with the lack of meaning formal education held for their family in the past, created a situation in which the boys were unable to see attending a formal school as a resilient behavior that would help them and their family.

The combination of the risks facing refugee families and a lack of support for education has created an environment in which sustained school attendance has less meaning as a resilient behavior, especially in light of the discriminatory education system in Lebanon. The children who lacked certain assets, particularly academic and financial support from their families, were the most likely to drop out of school. Many were "trying to cope without success," as one young focus group participant put it. Children who had some family support for education reported being much more motivated to stay in school, even if financial resources were limited. Although the Syrian education system had near universal enrollment prior to the conflict, several teachers noted that the deficits of the education experience in Syria may be partly to blame for families' negative attitude toward public education.

Many of the adults interviewed discussed these deficits, such as tolerance for absenteeism and a lack of teacher training, which resulted in poor-quality instruction. Children from families that were supportive of education and emphasized its importance, including those whose parents had limited education or financial struggles, were believed to be more willing to sacrifice in order to pay for private lessons, to provide other support such as homework assistance, or to stay in communication with the school. By believing in formal education as a pathway to better opportunities, these children and their families found the resources they needed to be resilient and were able to avoid confrontations

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5 All names have been changed for confidentiality.

at school. The challenge for many families, however, even for those who placed high value on education, was that they had limited resources available. This forced many children, in particular boys, to drop out of school to help support the family's financial needs, including financing their siblings' education.

Jusoor School offered a variety of programs to help their students, such as psychosocial support and classes in developing academic skills to help youth who wanted to transition to Lebanese schools, as well as those who choose to drop out. Despite having dropped out of their formal Lebanese school, Ali and Ahmed were continuing their education four days a week through an accelerated learning program program at Jusoor School.

### **DIFFERENT GENDER EXPERIENCES**

In the sample interviewed for this study, more girls than boys were continuing their education and were attending classes at Lebanese public schools, a gender dynamic that was consistent across the regions hosting Syrian refugees. There may be a connection between the pre-conflict situation of gender and education in Syrian schools and the greater success Syrian refugee girls experienced relative to other refugee populations in schools across host countries. Syria had near universal primary enrollment for boys and girls before the conflict and close to equal gender enrollment at the secondary and tertiary levels (Education Policy and Data Center 2010), and in fact, women outnumbered men in university enrollment (Deane 2016). These numbers are quite different in other refugee situations; in Kenya, for example, girls represent only 38 percent of refugee school enrollments, and in Pakistan the dropout rate for girls is nearly 90 percent (UNESCO and UNHCR 2016). In contrast, girls in Syrian refugee communities are more likely to remain in school than boys, as most boys drop out to seek employment (CARE 2015). This exemplifies the effects culture and family have on the meaning-making of resilient behaviors for individuals, as abandoning school to seek employment may give young Syrian boys a sense of purpose and fulfillment in providing for their family and thus become a path to resilience that does not benefit from further education.

The experience of Salma and her family illustrates how Syrian refugee families' treatment of their male and female children differs from other refugees' experiences. Salma's father used to own a small workshop in Aleppo, where the family lived in a decent home and had a good financial situation until they were forced to leave Syria in 2012. Salma and her brother attended private schools in Syria, but in Lebanon Salma's father didn't earn enough even to cover the rent

of a modest apartment, so Salma's brother, Samer, worked from the time they arrived in Lebanon to subsidize the family income and help keep Salma in school. Salma's father explained: "Samer was not really willing to go to school here [in Lebanon, and] I didn't want him to waste his time. So, he started to work . . . back in Aleppo, and until the end I was sending my children to private schools, but here . . ." Salma's family has not registered as refugees and they do not receive any aid. Salma's mother was an English teacher in Syria, but she was unable to bring her diploma with her to become eligible to teach in Lebanon. Nevertheless, she has provided important academic support for Salma. Salma will need to find transportation to the high school when she completes primary school, and the family is worried about the extra cost. Like many Syrian families, Salma's is hopeful that they will soon be able to return to Syria and rebuild their lives. In Salma's and Samer's situation, education is a meaningful opportunity, but the family's immediate financial needs are equally important. Samer shows resilience in his ability to provide for his family and support his sister, whereas Salma demonstrates her resilience by succeeding in school. There are training programs that recognize Samer's resilience and can connect him to education resources that provide training and certification for gainful employment. These programs may help Samer pursue opportunities that enhance his ability to maintain an important and necessary role in the family.

The Syrian and the Lebanese teachers in the sample interviewed reported having more trouble with violent behavior among the boy students, and the boys in the sample reported experiencing more violence at school than the girls. The boys also reported using physical violence more often than the girls and expressed pride about standing up to humiliation; Syrian refugee youth in Jordan reported the same (Panter-Brick et al. 2017) and described being pressured by their families to solve their own problems and be "tough."

The adults who were dealing with these violent children said they had great difficulty managing their behavior. However, reactions to these violent children reported by Lebanese teachers and Syrian volunteers differed profoundly. The Jusoor School volunteers described attempting to deal with the violent students compassionately and to provide activities they felt would channel the children's anger. In contrast, the Lebanese teachers who dealt with the violent children in formal education settings expressed their weariness with this behavior and declared that these children would no longer be welcome in Lebanese schools. It was also reported that nonchalant Lebanese teachers sometimes allowed Syrian children to express themselves aggressively among their peers. When one young Syrian teacher who observed the children suggested providing some activities to

channel the children's energy with the help of older Syrian student participants, the Lebanese school staff rejected the idea and clearly did not welcome what they considered Syrian intrusion in their school system.

### **A MAJOR ASSET: PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT FROM VOLUNTEERS**

Multiple child focus group participants shared stories describing the emotionally difficult experience of attending Lebanese schools. Many had suffered bullying and discrimination, as well as physical and verbal abuse from their classmates and teachers. One Syrian-Palestinian boy who attended a UNRWA-run school in Lebanon stated that “the verb ‘hit’ is not enough” to express the severity of the corporal punishment there. He had been deeply affected and literally whispered his story about leaving the school. He described how the principal hit him; at first he resisted and then he left the school. Another boy who left the same school described how the school threatened his parents, saying that the whole family would be banned from receiving humanitarian aid if he did not go back to school.

On the other hand, many child participants shared stories about the emotional support they received at Jusoor School, which they described as being instrumental in overcoming the harmful mix of having little family support for education and the difficult finances at home. One volunteer shared the story of Iman, a teenage girl whose mother was putting negative pressure on her and insulting her about continuing her studies. Volunteer teachers met with the mother, trying to explain that Iman needed encouragement and that verbal violence would affect her self-esteem and keep her from making any progress. Iman's mother insisted that she had her own way of raising her daughter. Following this, the volunteers decided to balance the negative influence of Iman's upbringing by giving her daily positive reinforcement and encouragement. The girl was able to overcome the negative effects of her mother's abuse and started having better results at school.

Iman's story shows the effective and psychologically supportive role played by the Jusoor School volunteers. They are committed to helping Syrian children, and they have deep understanding and empathy for the mentality of the Syrian parents, even those who come from different socioeconomic classes. In fact, Iman's mother was very willing to educate her daughter but she did not know how to support her; she (and her daughter) benefitted greatly from the constructive help the Syrian volunteers offered. Although teachers in the Lebanese schools should also have offered psychosocial support, many were not trained to do so; they also were under the strain of their professional obligations.

### **NON-FORMAL SCHOOLS: CREATING PATHWAYS TO RESILIENCE**

To establish attending and having success at school as meaningful opportunities to develop resilience among the Syrian refugee population, the education system serving them had to take account of the varied needs, beliefs, and values of the each student's social-ecological environment. From the focus group conversations, it was clear that children balanced a number of factors in making the decision to quit school, doing so only when that option was more beneficial to their well-being and that of their family. The combination of struggling to perform academically, facing discrimination in the classroom, and lacking family support, in addition to uncertainty about Syria's future, created a situation in which the meaningfulness of education as a pathway to resilience was muddied, and many individuals therefore chose alternative paths. The children interviewed for this study demonstrated the hidden and uncommon forms of resilience discussed in Ungar (2006), such as dropping out of school to avoid feelings of abuse, isolation, and discrimination, choosing to work to support their families, and deciding to study at non-formal education centers rather than at formal schools. Although these children recognized the importance of education, their decision to quit formal education showed that school had lost its meaningfulness as an opportunity to develop resilience.

By allowing students who had dropped out of Lebanese schools to attend non-formal education programs, Jusoor School helped these young people translate their alternative choices into resilient behaviors that would enable them to continue their formal education if they so desired. The Jusoor School's non-formal programming provided both psychosocial and academic support and fostered resilience in several key ways: by helping students make sense of difficult situations and find purpose in education; by helping them develop a sense of well-being and identity, even if that meant supporting the decision to temporarily leave a Lebanese school; by teaching students to develop sufficient control and competence to access the things they need for both immediate survival and long-term purposes; by keeping students connected with others; and by helping students be accountable and responsible to themselves by engaging them in decisions at the school and allowing them to make choices.

Much of the Jusoor School's ability to enable children to stay in school or to help students who had dropped out to re-enter the formal Lebanese system lay in its ability to communicate with families, understand the children's specific needs, speak in a familiar language, and maintain strong links with the Syrian refugee community. As an important part of the children's social-ecological



environment, along with family, community, and culture, Jusoor School reflected the community's values and beliefs while emphasizing the importance of education. The school provided an opportunity for the children attending its programs to access the resources they found most useful, whether it was psychosocial support and homework help for the students who remained in the Lebanese system, or language skills and basic education for the students who had left the Lebanese system.

One challenge for the school was that its educational programs remained unaccredited in Lebanon, and it had only limited success in getting refugee students back into the accredited education system in Lebanon. Nonetheless, Jusoor School helped families keep students in school by providing financial aid paid for by donor support and arranged for several private Lebanese schools to waive refugee students' fees.

At the time this research was conducted, the Jusoor School's program delivery was limited by its being fully dependent on volunteer educators and by the high rate of turnover among this volunteer staff. Although Jusoor School educators were highly committed and motivated, many did not have formal teaching credentials. The school eventually began to hire trained teachers and do more to support teachers' professional development, including additional training, shortly after the research project was concluded.

### **LIMITATIONS OF THIS RESEARCH**

As a qualitative case study of experiences among children who attended one community-based education center in Beirut, the findings presented here are neither generalizable nor representative of the wider world refugee population. At the same time, the experiences described in this study may support program interventions within the greater Jusoor NGO community and spur further inquiry about the hidden risks of impeding education and the benefits of supporting education among the wider refugee community.

The fact that this study was undertaken by a Syrian researcher also created important limitations. First, the nature of the current conflict has generated significant mistrust among Syrians. The experiences refugees have suffered at the hands of their compatriots and the fact that many loved ones remain in Syria leave many wary of trusting others and of divulging too much information. Gaining access to refugee students in Lebanon proved a challenge and took numerous



attempts with several NGOs providing refugee education. Participatory research was important in gaining access and in mitigating concerns among the refugee population that their stories and experiences would not simply be taken from them and presented to an indifferent audience (Hugman, Pittaway, and Bartolomei 2011). It was critical that the community participated in creating questions and collecting data that were of immediate and relevant use to them (Jacobsen and Landau 2003). Consequently, it was crucial to remain transparent throughout the research process and about the purpose of the study. A participatory methodology supported this objective, as it ensured that the researchers and stakeholders were in continual dialogue throughout the process of shaping and articulating shared objectives.

We envision eventually conducting a quantitative phase of this study to determine if children in other Syrian refugee communities are experiencing the same risks, assets, and opportunities as the students now attending Jusoor School. Furthermore, because parents' participation in this study was limited to a few informal interviews, a qualitative phase that includes parents' perceptions could reveal other issues that this pilot study detected but did not have the resources to explore.

## CONCLUSION

Syrian refugee children and youth face a multitude of significant risks in nearly all aspects of their lives, and progress toward eliminating them is slow. Attending school can be a source of protection, as it offers Syrian children positive options for their future and helps them gain the skills needed to rebuild their society. Lebanon has generously offered room in their education system for many Syrian refugee youth; however, there are many drawbacks to this offer: a lack of space coupled with low-quality teaching and reports of discrimination and abuse in schools; overwhelming language hurdles; a lack of recognition of students' previous academic achievements; and uncertainty about the relevance and usefulness of gaining certification as compared to the immediacy of gaining financial security. This has created a situation in which the meaningfulness and benefits of attending school have been called into question, and children and families are making other choices.

Resilience is a complex set of behaviors that are influenced over time by an individual's environment, including their own characteristics, skills, and beliefs, along with those of their family, school, community, and culture. Fostering resilience through education requires creating opportunities for children and youth to make choices that include attendance and achievement at school as a meaningful pathway to the future, and then providing the supports necessary to maintain those choices.

For some Syrian refugee students, remaining in Lebanese schools is not considered a meaningful, healthy choice. For the children at Jusoor School who dropped out of Lebanese schools, their struggle to achieve in school was exacerbated by the lack of support within their social-ecological environment, including families who questioned the relevance of Lebanese schools, a community and culture that had little ownership or involvement in the Lebanese system, and schools that discriminated against them. This created a situation in which staying in a Lebanese school was no longer meaningful and not worth the struggle. Another challenging barrier to these Syrian refugee children receiving an education in Lebanon was the financial struggles of their families, the majority of whom live below the poverty line, are not supported by refugee organizations, and are working for extremely low wages. In contrast, students at Jusoor School who also remained in Lebanese schools had supportive families and reasonable academic success and stayed out of trouble. These assets, combined with the social and cultural support of the Jusoor School programs, enabled these students to see pursuing a Lebanese education as a positive decision that was worth the struggle.

To encourage resilience, children need to be given educational opportunities and supports that are meaningful to both the child and the environment they are part of. The children, families, teachers, and coordinators involved in this study identified the importance of school affordability, program choice, social and cultural support, and academic assistance as essential to students' success. Additional resources must be directed toward easing the financial burden education places on these Syrian refugee families. Education was highly valued in Syria prior to the current crisis, and many families recognize the importance of continuing their children's education. Eventually, enabling the Syrian community to be more involved in the schools, particularly allowing Syrian teachers to collaborate with their Lebanese peers, will increase the number of relevant educational opportunities available to Syrian children. Syrian volunteers also identified the importance of the psychosocial support and encouragement offered at Jusoor School and emphasized the need for Lebanese teachers to get more training in how to offer this support. They also noted the importance of the Syrian

community having an expanded role in Lebanon’s public education system. By recognizing and implementing these suggested changes and interventions, officials in Lebanon can enact policies that emphasize the assets and mitigate the risks that make resilient education decisions a complex calculus for Syrian families.

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# MAPPING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EDUCATION REFORM AND POWER- SHARING IN AND AFTER INTRASTATE PEACE AGREEMENTS: A MULTI-METHODS STUDY

GIUDITTA FONTANA

## ABSTRACT

*To what extent does the adoption of consociational power-sharing affect the design and implementation of education reforms? This article maps this territory through rich and detailed interviews collected in Lebanon, Northern Ireland, and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in 2012-2013. Insights from these interviews are corroborated by evidence from the first large-scale dataset of educational provisions in intrastate peace settlements (the Political Agreements in Internal Conflict [PAIC] dataset). There is strong evidence that the values and practices of power-sharing affect the implementation of education reforms: they constrain syncretistic (integrationist or assimilationist) initiatives and enable pluralistic reforms. Analysis of the PAIC dataset also suggests a relationship between the adoption of power-sharing and the inclusion of education reforms in peace agreements: pacts including power-sharing are more likely to also include pluralistic education reforms. Beyond their implications for the theory and practice of postconflict education reform, these findings inform research on peace agreements and on the factors conducive to successful power-sharing.*

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## INTRODUCTION

This article contributes to the mapping of the uncharted territory of how education reform is addressed in peace agreements and how it is implemented after their ratification. In the context of increasing adoption of consociational power-sharing<sup>1</sup> “almost as a panacea” (Binningsbø 2013, 89) for societies experiencing violent conflict (Bieber and Keil 2009; Hartzell and Hoddie 2003), this study addresses a fundamental question: To what extent does the adoption of consociational power-sharing constrain the type of education reforms included in peace agreements, and their implementation?

Previous efforts to “turn from the world of best practice to the world of political feasibility” (Stedman, Rothchild, and Cousens 2002, 3) in the study of peace agreements and their aftermath have focused on the inclusion and implementation of core political and security provisions (Wallensteen and Eriksson 2009; Hampson 1996; Walter 2002; Stedman et al. 2002; Joshi, Quinn, and Regan 2015; Jarstad and Nilsson 2008) while overlooking the reform of social institutions, such as education.

Nevertheless, it is widely established that education systems reflect and reproduce conflict and inequality (Burde et al. 2017; Smith and Vaux 2003). Recent research and policy reiterate that education reform is instrumental in promoting the transition out of intrastate conflict (Burde et al. 2017; Dryden-Peterson 2016; GIZ 2014; Smith and Vaux 2003; UNICEF 2011). Several qualitative studies also suggest that constitutional structures affect education policy (Fontana 2016; King 2014; Shanks 2015). However, despite the growing body of research that explores the complexities of education reform in conflict-affected societies, important gaps remain in our understanding of the nexus between education, conflict, and peace-building (UNESCO 2016).

The existing comparative politics literature proposes how the adoption of consociational power-sharing (hereafter power-sharing) could impact education reform and how education reform may enhance the stability and legitimacy of power-sharing.<sup>2</sup> It suggests that education systems in societies adopting power-sharing will gravitate toward pluralism, in which separate institutions serve

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1 As the literature review explains, consociational power-sharing includes four institutional mechanisms: executive power-sharing, veto rights, proportionality, and communal autonomy (Lijphart 1977; McGarry and O’Leary 2006a, 2006b; O’Leary 2006).

2 This article uses “power-sharing” and “consociational power-sharing” interchangeably, as further explored in the literature review, despite the existence of many types of power-sharing (for other types of power-sharing, see Binningsbø 2013).

different and homogeneous groups, rather than syncretism, which is characterized by single institutions and overarching narratives, whether imposed or consensual (Lijphart 1977, 2008).

This study tests such expectations. It draws from interview data collected in 2012-2013 in three postconflict societies that have adopted power-sharing: Lebanon, Northern Ireland, and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (hereafter Macedonia).<sup>3</sup> These data complement cross-tabulations of the first large-scale dataset of education reforms in intrastate peace agreements (Fontana et al. 2018).

The rich and detailed data presented in this paper indicate that the majority of peace agreements include syncretistic education reforms, regardless of whether they also include power-sharing. However, agreements that do adopt power-sharing are more likely to include pluralistic education reforms than those that do not. Moreover, there is strong evidence that the values and practices of power-sharing affect the implementation of peace agreements: they constrain syncretistic education reforms while enabling pluralistic initiatives. These findings add to the literature on peace agreements and on comparative education by showing that the adoption of power-sharing affects both the design and the implementation of the education reforms included in negotiated settlements. They also provide important insights into conflict management; they suggest, for example, that pluralistic education policies establish the legitimacy and stability of both liberal and corporate varieties of power-sharing, at least in the short term.

The following section provides a brief theoretical overview that locates this article at the intersection of studies of peace agreements, comparative education, and power-sharing. The article then presents the selection of case studies and methods. The fourth section explores education reforms in intrastate peace agreements and the fifth investigates the implementation of educational initiatives after the establishment of power-sharing. The concluding section maps avenues for future research.

## **EDUCATION AND POWER-SHARING: WHAT WE KNOW**

Existing studies of intrastate peace agreements have identified a number of factors that influence their design, including the key issues at stake in the conflict, the presence of international mediators, the inclusiveness of the peace process, and

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<sup>3</sup> The data in these 75 interviews informed some previously published studies, which, however, do not employ the quantitative evidence drawn from the new dataset of Political Agreements in Internal Conflicts.

the timing of the agreement (Wallensteen and Eriksson 2009). Similar factors also constrain the implementation of the political, military, and security provisions of peace agreements. Other factors that affect the implementation of negotiated pacts include the regional and international environment (Hampson 1996; Walter 2002; Stedman et al. 2002), the commitment of local actors and the presence of spoilers (Stedman et al. 2002), the strength of security guarantees (Walter 2002), and the quality of the peace agreements themselves (Stedman et al. 2002). However, previous studies have largely overlooked the inclusion and implementation of reforms other than core political and security provisions, including education system reforms.<sup>4</sup>

This omission has occurred despite the fact that mechanisms like education reform are crucial to the long-term resilience of peace. International documents present the provision of formal education as important to the transition out of civil war (UNICEF 2011; World Education Forum 2000; see also Burde et al. 2011), and previous studies suggest that peace agreements are no exception (Dupuy 2008). While it would be simplistic to assume that a lack of education leads directly to violent conflict (Smith and Vaux 2003), it appears that a lack of schooling can exacerbate animosities and pave the way for them to escalate into violence, as a lower level of education is correlated with an increased willingness to resort to violence in interpersonal conflicts (GIZ 2014). Recent studies have also suggested that increased access to education helps maintain peace (Burde et al. 2017; Ishiyama and Breuning 2012).

The kind of education provided is equally important. Formal education may perpetuate a conflict, as it can entrench and compound socioeconomic inequality and frustration by denying access to schooling, which can lead to an unequally qualified citizenry and divergent employment opportunities (Davies 2004; Gallagher 2005; GIZ 2014; King 2014; Novelli and Higgins 2016; Smith and Vaux 2003; UNICEF 2011). It can also nourish the mutually exclusive and intolerant identities that can be mobilized in a conflict (Bush and Saltarelli 2000; Davies 2004; GIZ 2014; Gallagher 2004; Niens and Cairns 2005). In postconflict societies, schools may continue to produce and reproduce antagonistic narratives and identities even after the conclusion of a peace agreement, thereby nurturing conflict “even after the initial, objective causes have become irrelevant” (Taush, Schmidt, and Hewstone 2009, 75; see also King 2014; Burde et al. 2017).

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4 The Peace Accords Matrix (Joshi 2015) provides some data on the implementation of 51 provisions in 42 comprehensive peace accords, including educational provisions, but these data were not analyzed comparatively to date. Dupuy (2008) provides a snapshot of the education reforms in 144 peace agreements (1989-2005), but she does not differentiate between intrastate and interstate peace agreements.

While there is broad agreement that the potential of education is not fully exploited in promoting peace (GIZ 2004; Novelli, Lopes-Cardozo, and Smith 2017; Smith and Vaux 2003; UNESCO 2016), the field is only starting to produce systematic and empirically tested overarching theories (most notably Novelli et al. 2017). A variety of case studies and policy papers do identify potentially important education reforms. For example, beneficial changes to an education system's governance structures would address unequal access to education, promote mixing children from different backgrounds, and foster participatory and democratic decision-making (Niens and Cairns 2005; Paolini et al. 2004; Novelli et al. 2017; Burde et al. 2017). Reform of educational budgets and financing could make funding distribution more transparent and equitable (Bush and Saltarelli 2000; Smith and Vaux 2003), and the manifest and hidden curricula could be designed to teach minority languages and to educate students about plurality of identity, tolerance, the roots of conflict, and citizens' rights and relationship to the state (GIZ 2014; Paulson 2015; Williams 2014; Novelli et al. 2017; see also UNESCO 2011; UNICEF 2011). Choices made in the immediate aftermath of violent conflicts tend to solidify quickly (Davies 2004; Dryden-Peterson 2016; GIZ 2014), and these studies identify a favorable window of opportunity for the development of conflict-sensitive education systems in the immediate postconflict phase.

However, successive calls for educational programs rooted in comprehensive conflict analysis and for the identification of political and economic influences on the implementation of educational initiatives are only starting to be addressed (UNICEF 2011; UNESCO 2016). Little is currently known about how political influences affect the design and implementation of educational programs (Smith and Vaux 2003). This gap is surprising, as it is well established that curricula, school structures, and schooling practices tend to reflect and reproduce the core principles and hierarchies of a state, thereby helping to legitimize and embed political systems (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990; Easton 1969). At the same time, widespread consensus about the legitimacy and the very existence of a state and its political system are instrumental to long-term stability and to the prevention of violent conflict (Easton 1969; Green 1997).

The present study employs a novel dataset and in-depth interviews to examine the extent to which the nature of the political system established by a peace agreement (consociational power-sharing) affects the adoption of specific education reforms in that agreement, and their ultimate implementation.

MAPPING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EDUCATION REFORM AND POWER-SHARING IN AND AFTER INTRASTATE PEACE AGREEMENTS

Consociational power-sharing provides an ideal model for examining political constraints on education reforms for two main reasons. First, the existing literature generates some clear expectations about power-sharing’s relationship with education reform (summarized in Table 1). Consociational power-sharing involves four basic institutional mechanisms: executive power-sharing (a grand coalition or cross-community government founded on the principle of joint consent); veto rights or weighted majority rule; proportionality in the electoral system, in the allocation of cabinet and parliamentary seats, and in the distribution of funding; and extensive autonomy for previously warring communities (Lijphart 1977; McGarry and O’Leary 2006a, 2006b; O’Leary 2006; for other types of power-sharing, see Binningsbø 2013). Recent advances in the practice and theory of power-sharing have identified two main varieties: corporate power-sharing, which accommodates communities according to predetermined, permanent, and internally homogeneous communal identities (O’Leary 2006; Wolff 2011); and liberal power-sharing, which “rewards whatever salient political identities emerge in democratic elections” (McGarry and O’Leary 2007, 675). As Table 1 shows, in accommodationist political systems based on power-sharing (McGarry and O’Leary 1994), education reforms are expected to gravitate toward pluralism (with separate institutions serving different groups) rather than syncretism (with mixed institutions and overarching narratives) (Lijphart 1977, 2008; see also Smith and Vaux 2003). Previous case studies of education reforms after a conflict suggest that this is the case (Fontana 2016).

*Table 1: Education Reform and Power-Sharing. Expectations from the Literature*

		Relationship between multidimensional power-sharing and education reform	
		Present	Not Present
Peace Agreement	Text	Peace agreement(s) that include power-sharing are more likely to include pluralistic provisions.	Peace agreement(s) that include power-sharing are equally or less likely to include pluralistic provisions.
	Implementation	Pluralistic provisions are more likely to be implemented in jurisdictions that adopt power-sharing.	Pluralistic provisions are less or equally likely to be implemented in jurisdictions that adopt power-sharing.



Second, power-sharing is an increasingly common approach to the management of intrastate conflicts: the UN Peacemaker dataset (2018) confirms that about one-third of intrastate framework agreements finalized since the late 1990s contain provisions for political power-sharing, up from less than one-fifth of those finalized in the 1980s. Critics of power-sharing assert that it freezes and enhances the cleavages that underpin a conflict in the first place, thereby hampering long-term transition (Finlay 2010; Taylor 2006; Horowitz 2014; Binningsbø 2013). Proponents, however, argue that power-sharing, particularly its liberal variety, facilitates long-term conflict resolution and the emergence of overarching identities (Lijphart 1977; McGarry and O’Leary 2006a, 2006b; Hartzell and Hoddie 2003; Sisk 1996). Recent works have identified important determinants of the success of power-sharing as a conflict-management tool, including the quality of institutional regimes (Schneckener 2002), the balance of military forces (Mukherjee 2006), the determination of external actors and local elites (Bieber and Keil 2009), and the type of power-sharing adopted on the spectrum from liberal to corporate (Cammett and Maleski 2012; O’Leary 2006; Wolff 2011; McGarry and O’Leary 2007). These works have largely overlooked education’s potential contribution to successful conflict management through power-sharing, despite the implicit expectation that “voluntary self-segregation” into separate and equal schools may reduce the potential for intergroup clashes, improve communal cohesion, and enhance elite legitimacy (Lijphart 1977, 2008, 70). This study employs a new large-scale database and existing qualitative evidence to address this gap, and to identify implications for the broader research and practice into education and conflict.

## METHODS

This article focuses on formal education reforms explicitly codified in peace agreements that establish power-sharing; it considers all educational institutions from primary school to university. Other studies have looked at broader postconflict education reforms in societies that have adopted power-sharing (Fontana 2016; Shanks 2015), but none has focused on the specific clauses mapped by the agreements. Without underestimating the importance of informal education for peace-building processes, this paper focuses on formal education, as it reflects the principal concerns of the academic and policy community (GIZ 2014; Smith and Vaux 2003).



### CASE SELECTION

This study is grounded in the analysis of a large-scale dataset of intrastate agreements and complemented by qualitative evidence from Lebanon, Northern Ireland, and Macedonia. Education policies are notoriously slow to embed, so their implementation can only be investigated robustly where agreements have held for longer than ten years.<sup>5</sup> According to the Political Agreements in Internal Conflicts (PAIC) dataset, of the 17 peace processes that included multiple dimensions of power-sharing and extensive education reforms, only seven lasted longer than ten years.<sup>6</sup>

Lebanon's Taif Agreement (TA), Macedonia's Ohrid Framework Agreement (OFA), and Northern Ireland's Good Friday Agreement (GFA) are representative of these cases and of divided societies more generally in several respects.<sup>7</sup> First, they are comprehensive agreements negotiated in the absence of a clear military victory. The three cases represent conflicts of different intensity and duration. Lebanon's 1975-1989 civil war resulted in more than 100,000 fatalities—more than 7 percent of the Lebanese population. As much as one-quarter of Lebanon's population was internally displaced or fled the country during the war (Makdisi and Sadaka 2002, 23). Northern Ireland's "Troubles" affected the region between 1968 and 1998, resulting in approximately 3,500 fatalities (Sutton 2018). Macedonia's ethnic conflict affected the country between February and August 2001, causing 150-250 deaths and approximately 140,000 internally displaced persons (Ripilowski 2011, 100-101).

Second, these constituencies' ethnic, religious, and linguistic cleavages "are politically salient—that is, they are persistent markers of political identity and basis for political mobilisation" (Choudhry 2008, 5). In Lebanon, religious affiliation is paramount and political power is shared among 18 official religious sects. The

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5 The Peace Accords Matrix (Joshi 2015) traces the implementation of education reforms in 42 comprehensive peace accords and shows that—in contrast to political and military reforms that are typically implemented immediately—education reforms are typically implemented between three and seven years after the conclusion of the agreement (when they are implemented at all). The survival of an agreement for ten years would provide an opportunity to implement and embed some education reforms.

6 The seven cases in question are Angola's 2006 Memorandum of Understanding on Peace and National Reconciliation in the Cabinda Province; Bangladesh's 1997 Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord; El Salvador's peace process (Chapultepec Peace Agreement, New York Act II, Mexico Agreement, New York Act, Acuerdo Complementario del 22 de Diciembre de 1992 Acuerdo de la Reunion Tripartita, Timetable for the Implementation of the most Important Agreements Pending, Acuerdo Complementario del 5 Febrero de 1993); Lebanon's Taif Agreement; Macedonia's 2001 Ohrid Framework Agreement; Niger's Accord établissant une paix définitive entre le Gouvernement de la République du Niger et l'Organisation de la Résistance Armée (O.R.A.); and Northern Ireland's Good Friday Agreement.

7 Northern Ireland's "Agreement Reached in the Multiparty Negotiations" is also known as the Belfast Agreement and, perhaps most accurately, as the British-Irish Agreement. See O'Leary (1999).

salience of the Muslim-Christian divide (crucial until the end of the civil war) was recently overshadowed by mounting Sunni-Shia tensions (Beydoun 2007; Knudsen and Kerr 2013). In Northern Ireland, confessional affiliation overlaps with national and political cleavages, which creates two triadic identities: Protestant-Unionist-British and Catholic-Nationalist-Irish. In Macedonia, language and ethnicity (the primary markers of identity there) overlap with religious differences between Macedonians and Albanians (Republic of Macedonia State Statistical Office 2002). Consequently, the conflicts in Lebanon, Northern Ireland, and Macedonia can all be broadly identified as identity based.

Third, these cases represent different varieties of power-sharing: Lebanon is a case of corporate power-sharing, while Macedonia and Northern Ireland approximate liberal power-sharing. Including cases along the full liberal-corporate spectrum speaks to the debate about the long-term societal impact of different varieties of power-sharing (Horowitz 2014; McGarry and O’Leary 2006a, 2006b; Taylor 2006).

Finally, the substantial educational provisions in the TA, OFA, and GFA encompass the breadth of tools available for the reform of formal education in the aftermath of intrastate conflicts, from expanding access to reforming curricula to altering educational governance. These characteristics make Lebanon, Northern Ireland, and Macedonia particularly suitable to a study of political constraints on education reform and make the present findings relevant beyond the three case studies.

## RESEARCH METHODS

Cross-tabulations of the PAIC dataset were used to place the qualitative evidence in a wider comparative context to determine whether a relationship exists between two dimensions of intrastate peace agreements, multi-dimensional power-sharing and different types of education reform. The PAIC dataset includes 293 negotiated agreements concluded between 1989 and 2016 with the intent to end or ameliorate a violent conflict through institutional reform. It includes both partial and comprehensive agreements but excludes simple ceasefires, pre-negotiation documents, procedural agreements, and unilateral declarations (for more details and descriptive statistics, see Fontana et al. 2018). In this sense, the PAIC dataset expands on existing efforts to map education provisions included in peace agreements but focuses explicitly on intrastate conflict (cf. Dupuy 2008).

MAPPING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EDUCATION REFORM AND POWER-SHARING IN AND AFTER INTRASTATE PEACE AGREEMENTS

To create the dataset, the available intrastate peace agreements (including the TA, GFA, and OFA) were read and coded into binary categories along the two dimensions of interest. In the power-sharing dimensions, those including multiple dimensions of power-sharing were coded 1 and those not including multiple dimensions were coded 0. In the education reform dimension, those including education reform were coded 1 and those excluding education reform were coded 0. The educational clauses were then coded into two further categories: syncretistic (S) and pluralistic (P). This coding follows previous categorizations of educational provisions and wider political systems (see, e.g., Smith and Vaux 2003; McGarry and O'Leary 1994; for a comprehensive overview of the PAIC coding protocol, see Fontana et al. 2018). After coding, the agreements were divided into four groups: those including no education reforms (0), those including only syncretistic education reforms (1S), those including only pluralistic reforms (1P), and those including both pluralistic and syncretistic reforms (1B). Using Excel, cross-tabulations for power-sharing and varieties of education reform were created for these data (see Table 2 for results).

Rather than taking the promises of peace agreements at face value, the second part of this article uses qualitative evidence to investigate the extent to which postconflict education policies in Lebanon, Northern Ireland, and Macedonia were either constrained or enabled by the core values and practices of power-sharing. The fine-grained analysis of education reforms implemented after the TA, GFA, and OFA was completed through 48 semi-structured interviews carried out by the author during research visits to the three countries in 2012-2013. Interviewees included government members, political party spokespersons, bureaucrats in the education ministries and management organizations, scholars and curriculum writers, officers in international organizations, members of NGOs, and journalists. They included members of all the main communities and political parties, as well as international observers (see Appendix 2 for more details).

The author listened to the recorded interviews and field notes, transcribed the interviews, and read the transcript multiple times to identify overarching and cross-case themes within a list of broader categories based on the existing literature on education and conflict (Miles and Huberman 1994). The author manually coded the interviews and analyzed them in parallel with the data collection. Quotations included in this article were chosen during a final read through the transcripts. This process was very time intensive, but it gave the author a full appreciation of the rich and complex data collected during fieldwork (Basit 2003).

**EDUCATION REFORM IN PEACE AGREEMENTS**

According to the PAIC dataset (Fontana et al. 2018), just over a quarter of all the intrastate peace agreements concluded globally between 1989 and 2016 addressed education reform (about 28 percent). The dataset also shows that peace agreements that included multiple dimensions of power-sharing were considerably more likely also to address education policy (50 percent).<sup>8</sup> In contrast, less than one-quarter of the agreements that included less than two power-sharing provisions also addressed education reforms (23.4 percent). The data suggest a relationship between the inclusion of constitutional reforms broadly identifiable as power-sharing and the mapping of education reforms. In other words, the PAIC dataset confirms that education reform is a useful complement to power-sharing (cf. Fontana 2016).

On the one hand, the evidence suggests that there is no statistically significant difference in the breadth and depth of education reform between agreements that include multiple dimensions of power-sharing and those that do not (see Appendix 1). On the other hand, the data indicate that power-sharing is associated with different types of educational prescriptions, on a spectrum from syncretistic to pluralistic initiatives. Most agreements that include education reforms include a majority of syncretistic provisions, regardless of their constitutional arrangements. However, agreements that prescribe multiple dimensions of power-sharing are substantially more likely to prescribe both syncretistic and pluralistic reforms than their counterparts (see Table 2). In other words, when agreements include extensive power-sharing they are also more likely to include pluralistic educational provisions.

*Table 2: Number of Intrastate Peace Agreements Concluded between 1989 and 2016, Including Education Reforms and Power-Sharing*

	None 0	Syncretistic 1S	Pluralistic 1P	Both 1B	Total
No Multi-dimensional Power-Sharing 0	183	42	1	13	239
Multi-dimensional Power-Sharing 1	27	14	1	12	54
<b>Total</b>	210	56	2	25	293

<sup>8</sup> A peace agreement includes multiple dimensions of power-sharing if it addresses at least two out of the five categories of political, military, legislative, civil service, and economic power-sharing, as recorded in the PAIC dataset (Fontana et al. 2018).

MAPPING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EDUCATION REFORM AND POWER-SHARING IN AND AFTER INTRASTATE PEACE AGREEMENTS

A fine-grained analysis of the TA, GFA, and OFA corroborates the findings above. As mentioned, the agreements created to manage the conflicts in Lebanon, Northern Ireland, and Macedonia are examples of intrastate peace agreements that include multiple dimensions of power-sharing and extensive education reforms and have lasted longer than ten years. As such, they are ideal cases for testing the relationship between power-sharing and education reform in conflict-affected places. As Table 3 shows, the three agreements contain a number of pluralistic provisions that directly address the demands of the conflicting parties. This evidence corroborates the hypothesis that there is a relationship between the inclusion of power-sharing and the nature of education reforms in peace agreements. However, the TA, OFA, and GFA also map a number of syncretistic reforms (as do most peace agreements in the PAIC dataset; cf. Table 2). Fine-grained qualitative research helps make sense of provisions that contradict the pluralistic governance arrangements.

*Table 3: Syncretistic and Pluralistic Educational Provisions in the TA, GFA, and OFA*

	Syncretistic	Pluralistic
<b>Taif Agreement</b>	Strengthen state control over private schools and textbooks Review and develop curricula to strengthen national belonging, fusion, and openness Unify the textbooks for history and citizenship education Provide free and compulsory elementary education Reform and strengthen vocational education Reform and aid the Lebanese University	Freedom of education Freedom of religious education Protection of private education
<b>Good Friday Agreement</b>	Facilitate and encourage integrated education	Freedom of education Freedom of religious education Protection of private education
<b>Ohrid Framework Agreement</b>	Uniform standards for academic programs Positive discrimination for members of non-majority communities in university enrolment Macedonian language teaching for all pupils (Article 48)	Mother-tongue education in primary and secondary school State funding for university education in languages spoken by 20 percent of the population

Macedonia's experience suggests that education reforms may signal a shifting intercommunal balance of power. The OFA's pluralistic reforms were clear concessions to the Albanian insurgency, which during the 2001 conflict had explicitly demanded mother-tongue instruction at all education levels (Ripiloski 2011; Karajkov 2005; Rosulek 2011). As the drafter of the Strategy for Integrated Education put it,

if I'm to exaggerate a little bit, most reforms prescribed by the Ohrid Agreement were already in the make. Minus language, which the Macedonians would never have agreed [to] . . . never, never, over the prime minister's dead body. He said it like that. (Interview 15)

The agreement also leans in a syncretistic direction by entrenching the right to learn the official state language (Macedonian) at all levels of education and establishing quotas for the number of ethnic minority students attending Macedonian-language universities (Ohrid Framework Agreement [OFA] 2001). This compromise between the demands of ethnic Albanians and those of ethnic Macedonians echoes the accommodationist rationale of power-sharing and explains the inclusion of both pluralistic and syncretistic reforms in the OFA (see Table 3).

Lebanon's TA also includes both syncretistic and pluralistic reforms to accommodate a shifting balance of intercommunal power. Muslims there had long advocated for the unification of history and civic education curricula and textbooks under state supervision (Interview 40). They largely blamed the private religious schools for promoting widely "different identities" (Interview 19). A Druze member of the advisory committee on history books drew a direct connection between the fragmented education system and the Lebanese civil war: "The main source of disturbance . . . was the huge diversity of public and religious schools . . . This created difference in the moral and ethical outlook of the Lebanese." The temporary weakness of the divided Christian communities at the end of the civil war provided an ideal opportunity to advance this integrationist aim, thus the TA called for schools to "strengthen national belonging, fusion, spiritual and cultural openness" through unified history curricula and textbooks and envisaged the establishment of state control over private schools. However, these syncretistic aims were tempered by clear concessions to the Christian communities and their longstanding advocacy for educational pluralism. Thus, as outlined in Table 3, the TA provides for the protection of "freedom of education," "freedom of religious education," and "private education" (Taif Agreement [TA] 1989).

## MAPPING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EDUCATION REFORM AND POWER-SHARING IN AND AFTER INTRASTATE PEACE AGREEMENTS

Education is more marginal to the GFA, with a brief syncretistic pledge to “facilitate and encourage” integrated education (The Agreement Reached in the Multi-Party Negotiations [GFA] 1998), promoted primarily by smaller mixed negotiating parties (BBC 2017). In contrast, the GFA’s pluralistic support of Irish-medium schools responded to the demands of Irish Nationalists (see Table 3).

In sum, analysis of the PAIC data shows that when peace agreements include education reforms they are most likely to be syncretistic. However, the agreements that include multi-dimensional power-sharing are more likely to also include pluralistic reforms. This finding partially corroborates the existing literature’s identification of a relationship between power-sharing and educational provisions that potentially leads to “voluntary self-segregation” across liberal and corporate cases of power-sharing (Lijphart 2008, 70).

The qualitative analysis above also suggests that compromises between negotiating parties explain the uneasy coexistence of syncretistic and pluralistic provisions in the same text. Education reforms are subject to the same bargaining processes as other communal interests during peace negotiations. As a consequence of the hard compromises involved in the establishment of power-sharing, education clauses in the three peace agreements analyzed reflect the aggregation of the diverse interests of previously warring groups, rather than their genuine synthesis.

### **POLITICAL CONSTRAINTS ON POSTCONFLICT EDUCATION REFORM**

Stedman et al. (2002) suggest that peace agreements that have inconsistencies are less likely to be implemented. As seen in Table 3, the education reforms mapped in the TA, GFA, and OFA are rather inconsistent. For example, the TA vows to protect private education while at the same time establishing state control over all private schools. Analysis of the interviews collected in Lebanon, Northern Ireland, and Macedonia confirms that implementation of the education reforms postulated in the TA, GFA, and OFA is patchy.<sup>9</sup> This section traces the implementation of selected education reforms in Lebanon, Macedonia, and Northern Ireland in order to identify common patterns across the three case studies.

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<sup>9</sup> This article focuses only on the education reforms codified in the TA, GFA, and OFA. Other studies have looked at education policy more generally (Fontana 2016).

### THE IMPLEMENTATION OF LEBANON'S TAIF AGREEMENT

In Lebanon, education reforms remain among the many unfulfilled promises of the TA. Whereas pluralistic provisions were largely implemented, this was not the case for the syncretistic clauses, including clauses that called for the drafting and dissemination of a unified history curriculum and textbook. A politician and member of the advisory committee on history books recalled that “before the Taif agreement the history book was biased [in favor of the Maronites], since the Lebanese president back then had many privileges.” He went on to explain that unified history books were key to “developing the national spirit in the Lebanese” (Interview 35). A former education minister similarly reflected that the TA’s education reforms aimed to disseminate “common principles . . . such as freedom, respect for others’ opinions, forgiveness, openness to others, equality, understanding of democracy . . . [and] the meaning of citizenship.” The minister asserted that a unified history curriculum would “help the Lebanese understand their history on the right foundations and not . . . [based on] political points of view” (Interview 41).

However, Lebanon to this day lacks a unified history curriculum, and different schools teach about the past based on more than 28 textbook series (Abouchedid, Nasser, and Blommestein 2002; Abouchedid and Nasser 2000). A former director of the Centre for Educational Research and Development (CERD) reflected that persisting political controversies over the history curricula are ultimately “about [politicians] having their share in history and being presented positively” (Interview 19). History textbooks consider history only up to Lebanese independence in 1943, effectively amplifying the institutional silence over Lebanon’s recent past, its civil wars, and its current political configuration. A local expert reflected that:

that gaping hole has allowed different interpretations of history and competing interpretations of that history to come in. And . . . because they’re being taught in a void, you have generations that . . . are learning a history that is . . . the perspective of their particular community and not the perspective of other communities. (Interview 23)

What explains the sidelining of the TA’s promise for unified history textbooks? The interviewees explained it primarily by referring to the values and norms of the politics of power-sharing. The promotion of “national fusion” (TA 1989) through education clashed directly with the logic of a pluralist political system founded on the autonomy of equal communities. Conversely, as Interview 23 underscores,



the institutional silence over Lebanon's recent past legitimizes the autonomous histories of previously warring communities and furthers the socialization of children into separate and potentially antagonistic narratives. Abouchedid et al. (2002) demonstrate that teachers and textbooks portrayed past events such as the French Mandate differently, depending on their communal affiliation. Thus the pluralistic education system strengthens the previously warring political and religious communities of Lebanon (Interview 19; Interview 21). Interview 23 traced this process clearly:

Because there's this gaping hole, it's opened the door for these different communities to teach that particular history of Lebanon in the way they see fit . . . So the result is . . . [that] we asked them [3,000 14-year-old students] two questions: who is your favourite political leader and who is your favourite historical leader. These kids could not tell the difference for the most part between what is a historic leader or a historic figure, and what is a political leader . . . And the answer would be depending on their sectarian affiliation.

The sidelining of the TA's syncretistic educational provisions appears to contribute to the entrenchment of the equality and autonomy of Lebanon's communities, thereby embedding the core values that underpin power-sharing.

More implicitly, the evidence collected in Lebanon points to the decision-making structures and core practices of power-sharing as an important constraint on the implementation of syncretistic education reforms. In the aftermath of conflict, the inclusive structures of power-sharing were reproduced at most levels of the administration, including by committees in charge of education reforms. For example, committees that included representatives of all the main Lebanese religious and political groupings were tasked with producing the common history curriculum and drafting a unified textbook in 1999-2001 (Frayha 2004; Interview 19). As a former director of CERD admitted, "I'm not proud of it, it's not pure academia" (Interview 19). In other words, he suggested that consensual and inclusive curriculum-drafting procedures may undermine the academic rigor of the textbooks. However, another former CERD director reflected that only a curriculum and textbooks that emerge with the consensus of all previously warring groups would be acceptable in every school (Interview 21).

Inclusivity was not sufficient. When the first common history textbooks were printed and distributed in 2001, controversy ensued over the portrayal of the events of 636 A.D. as an “Arab conquest” (Interview 19; Interview 35). As the then education minister said in an interview, “This is wrong; there was Arab existence in Lebanon, it was not a conquest” (Interview 34). Others who participated in the drafting process note that members of the drafting committee deeply disagreed about the interpretation of some past identity-sensitive events. A senior officer of CERD is one crucial example: “When I say that Jesus Christ was crucified, the Muslims don’t accept it, the Quran is different.” These controversies resulted in the withdrawal of all textbooks and of the common curriculum.

A new draft history curriculum was presented to the Lebanese cabinet in 2011. As in other societies that have adopted corporate power-sharing, the Lebanese cabinet is a grand coalition of representatives from all the main religious and political groups. One member of the advisory committee on history books reported that “every minister wanted to add points to the book to support his sect” (Interview 35). Negotiations broke down over the proper designation of the mass demonstrations following Rafic Hariri’s assassination, which led to Syria’s withdrawal from Lebanon in 2005 (*Daily Star* 2012). Tensions spilled over into violent street demonstrations. Unable to mediate an agreement, Prime Minister Najib Mikati declared a moratorium on the history curricula and textbooks (*Daily Star* 2012).

In both instances, the curricula and textbooks were expected to be formulated through inclusive and consensual institutions that enabled representatives of each community and political party to safeguard their core identity-forming narratives. Debates within these consensual institutions mirrored wider clashes over the identity of the Lebanese people and the contributions Lebanon’s various communities made to the state, reflected shifting political cleavages, and, ultimately, explained the deadlock over Lebanon’s history curriculum.

Lebanon’s experience confirms the expectations expressed in the literature (Lijphart 2008). In this case of corporate power-sharing, power-sharing affected the implementation of education reforms through its core political values and decision-making practices. It did so by entrenching consensual and inclusive decision-making practices and (implicitly and explicitly) reaffirming the equal legitimacy of communal narratives of the past.

### **THE IMPLEMENTATION OF MACEDONIA'S OHRID FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT**

If the attempt to formulate unified history curricula and textbooks in Lebanon epitomizes the difficulty in furthering a syncretistic agenda in a society adopting power-sharing, the implementation of the OFA's educational provisions exemplifies the ease in promoting pluralistic initiatives, even in a case of liberal power-sharing.

The OFA provided for the expansion of mother-tongue education in primary and secondary schools, and for state funding for Albanian-language university education (OFA 2001). These reforms were implemented swiftly and successfully. For example, by 2004, two state universities, the South East European University and the University of Tetovo, were teaching in the Albanian language. Combined with the introduction of quotas for students of ethnic minority background in Macedonian-language universities, this led to a threefold increase in the proportion of ethnic Albanian students in the state's universities between 2001 and 2004 (Ragaru 2008). Successive power-sharing governments also expanded access to education for students of minority backgrounds by making secondary education free and compulsory and lowering the threshold for the number of children required to open an Albanian-language class (Interview 45; Myhrvold 2005). A former education minister also recalls that, "in order to attract more students we provided better opportunities . . . We built some buildings for the secondary schools in Tetovo, in Skopje. That infrastructure was lacking for secondary education" (Interview 46).

These initiatives were concrete testimony of the new political equality between ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians. However, the expansion of Albanian-language education and the creation of a full educational pathway in the Albanian language helped turn previously mixed-ethnicity schools into "parallel, non-intersecting communities" (Myhrvold 2005, 18; Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe [OSCE] 2010). Oversubscription and some violent incidents encouraged schools to create separate shifts and satellite buildings for students studying in the two languages, and to separate students on the basis of their language of instruction (Lyon 2011; OSCE 2010). An official in an international mission explained the process, reflecting on its relationship with the wider politics of power-sharing:

What we're finding is that we have schools that suddenly receive a petition from parents or teachers or students asking for the shifts to be organized by language . . . What are the reasons behind this? Preemptive strike, because maybe there

might be a fight . . . The concept is separate but equal. It's not reconciliation, dialogue, and cooperation . . . There was a fight in a school yard, we don't talk about it, we don't discuss it, we don't bring the parents, we don't bring anyone in. We have video cameras, we have a security guard, and we separate the kids. So, yes, the fights might stop, but what kind of society are we creating that it fears dialogue . . . fears debate . . . fears confronting even something as silly as a school fight? . . . Many of these school fights aren't even ethnic-based. (Interview 24)

The number of monolingual schools also expanded: the proportion of Albanian children studying in monolingual schools grew from about 65 percent in 2000 to about 70 percent in 2008 (UNICEF 2009). Thus, the implementation of the OFA's pluralistic provisions has served to entrench and legitimize the cultural autonomy of the Albanian community in Macedonia while reproducing the "concept [of] separate but equal" (Interview 24).

In fact, the OFA and Macedonia's constitution guarantee the right to learn Macedonian at all levels of education. However, children studying in Albanian, Serbian, and Turkish do not start Macedonian lessons until fourth grade, and then for only two hours per week. There is broad agreement that ethnic Albanians' declining competence in the state language is potentially detrimental to their long-term employment prospects: one interviewee reflected that this is because "[minorities] don't have their own economy" (Interview 38). Several other interviewees echoed this perspective, warning that mass unemployment can in turn destabilize interethnic relations (Interview 11; Interview 25; Interview 26).

In an attempt to implement the teaching of Macedonian outside the inclusive, consensual structures of postconflict power-sharing, the education minister announced in 2009 that every child would learn Macedonian beginning in first grade. He justified this unilateral decision by referring to a new, internationally sponsored strategy for integrated education. In fact, the drafter of the strategy reflected that introducing Macedonian instruction in first grade "was a little political stunt by the minister who made a major mistake . . . [He] hit a tsunami of resistance" (Interview 15). An education expert at the Open Society Foundation echoes this observation: "The bomb fell. In the middle of the school year the minister decided that the Albanians should learn Macedonian and . . . it was disaster" (Interview 37).

## MAPPING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EDUCATION REFORM AND POWER-SHARING IN AND AFTER INTRASTATE PEACE AGREEMENTS

As an official in an international organization put it, when it comes to language learning, “nobody wants to be . . . given orders” (Interview 26). Ethnic Albanians interpreted the initiative as a “pure provocation based on ethnic dominance” (Interview 12). Parents and teachers protested and promoted a boycott of the Macedonian language classes. A government crisis developed between the ethnic Macedonian majority party and its ethnic Albanian coalition partner, while the ethnic Albanian opposition appealed to the constitutional court.

Koneska also asserts that “the problem was not in the contents of the measure, but in the manner in which it was being ‘rammed through’” (2014, 152). Specifically, the avoidance of inclusive and consensual institutions rang alarm bells among the ethnic Albanian community, as it appeared that education reforms were being used to change the rules of the political system. Indeed, by July 2010 the constitutional court issued a verdict declaring that all education reforms (including the introduction of Macedonian language classes) were subject to double-majority approval in Parliament (Marusic 2010) and that the minister’s decision was unconstitutional.

This overview of the implementation of the educational clauses in the OFA suggests that, as in Lebanon, power-sharing constrained the implementation of syncretistic education reforms while enabling the implementation of pluralistic provisions. More specifically, the attempt to implement the OFA’s provision for Macedonian-language instruction outside the new administrative structures of power-sharing were interpreted as a challenge to the political order and were contested both on the street and in court.

### THE IMPLEMENTATION OF NORTHERN IRELAND’S GOOD FRIDAY AGREEMENT

The GFA’s commitment to “encourage and facilitate” integrated (Catholic/Irish/Nationalist-Protestant/British/Unionist) education stemmed primarily from pressure from smaller mixed political parties, like the Women’s Coalition, at the negotiating table (BBC 2017). Research findings on the social impact of integrated education are largely positive (McGlynn et al. 2004; McGlynn 2007; Paolini et al. 2004; Hansson, Bones, and McCord 2013; Niens and Cairns 2005). Moreover, demographic and financial pressures have been a further impetus for the promotion of integrated schools. The 2006 Independent Strategic Review of Education suggested that a single integrated education system could lead to savings of up to £79.6 million in the Northern Ireland education budget (Hansson et al. 2013), and by 2011-2012 the education department found that Northern

Ireland's schools were not operating at full capacity: there were 82,472 empty spaces (Hansson et al. 2013; Torney 2012).

However, when asked about education reform since the conclusion of the GFA, a politician and member of the education committee in Stormont argued that there was a lot of “fiddling about with” education (Interview 28). Another politician reflected that “the systems haven’t changed much” (Interview 29), and a third argued that, “fundamentally, I think that most people on the street, if they were asked that question, would say that very little has changed in education since 1998” (Interview 27). The president of the Integrated Education Fund reflected on this issue:

It’s almost like there’s a whole lot of issues within the Good Friday Agreement that have never been fulfilled. And those are the issues we have to get, because they are what I would call grassroots issues. Like education . . . I think people were so grateful at the time just to get peace on our streets that it was accepted. (Interview 30)

The available data corroborate the interviewees’ perspectives: Irish-language schooling has expanded but there has been no significant increase in integrated education (Hansson et al. 2013; Interview 31; Interview 39). In fact, integrated education has remained only one of four equally funded education sectors and, according to a local expert, it’s “a small sector that’s very closed within itself” (Interview 36).

As in Lebanon and Macedonia, the reproduction of inclusive decision-making practices at all levels of the educational administration partly explains this. Immediately after conclusion of the peace agreement, the Northern Ireland Department of Education established a working group called *Towards a Culture of Tolerance: Integrating Education*. One of the members recalls that the committee was inclusive, comprising representatives of the three main education sectors (state controlled, Catholic maintained, and integrated), local authorities, and education experts (Interview 36). A member reports that a deadlock ensued at the first meeting, when the representatives of the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools called for the promotion of tolerance through existing school sectors rather than through the expansion of integrated schools (Gallagher 2005). The terms of reference of the working group were amended accordingly, resulting in loss of momentum and a limited long-term impact (Gallagher 2005). As in Lebanon and Macedonia, the inclusive institutional structures and decision-

making patterns established with power-sharing made it essential to gain the consensus of all the affected communities for any education initiative.

The core political values of communal equality and autonomy also help to explain the partial implementation of the GFA's educational provisions. An expert reflected on the puzzle that "all the surveys show that most parents want to send their children to integrated education or integrated schools but in reality [they] don't [send them to these schools]" (Interview 8). A senior official at the Education and Skills Authority said that "actually, when it comes to the decisions that the parents make, the vast majority continue to decide to educate their children in the school type which would represent their family background" (Interview 33). A politician reflected that this is because parents treasure the particular school sectors that "uphold their positive sense of identity" (Interview 27).

In fact, the integration movement's success in creating a broad consensus over the desirability of "educating children together" (O'Connor 2002, 64) precipitated attempts to portray all education sectors as catering to a mixed student population. For example, immediately following the signing of the GFA, the Catholic Bishops of Northern Ireland affirmed for the first time that "Catholic schools are open to children of all denominations," adding that "the presence of children from other denominations is seen as an enrichment of the education experience" (2001, 8). The Protestant/Unionist community in turn has maintained that controlled schools are non-denominational and open to all. As a Unionist politician and chair of the education committee put it, "I've maintained that the controlled sector is the vehicle that should be used for making shared education" (Interview 43). Other prominent political representatives have attacked separate education as "a benign form of apartheid" (*Belfast Telegraph* 2010).

Despite paying lip service to the syncretistic ambitions of the GFA, the main thrust of Northern Ireland's education policy has been toward the enhancement of communal autonomy and equality in education (Interview 42). Successive election manifestos and government programs have confirmed a preference for "education policies that plan for separate development rather than structural change" (Hansson et al. 2013, 66). A 2014 high court ruling suggested that the implementation of initiatives like area planning and the entitlement framework created "a presumption in favour of the status quo" and accused the education department of failing to fulfill its statutory duty to "encourage and facilitate" integrated education (Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunal Services 2014). In this context, Northern Ireland's schools continue to reproduce and crystallize the



boundaries between the ethnic and confessional communities that participated in the conflict and now share political power.

### THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EDUCATION REFORMS

This brief overview of the implementation of the educational provisions codified in the peace agreements of Lebanon, Northern Ireland, and Macedonia corroborates the implicit expectations presented in the literature (Lijphart 2008). Power-sharing constrains the implementation of syncretistic education reforms while enabling the implementation of pluralistic provisions. Most education provisions in the TA, GFA, and OFA pointed in a syncretistic direction (as shown in Table 2). However, the core political values of power-sharing, particularly communal equality and autonomy, and its inclusive and consensual decision-making practices affected the implementation of education initiatives, sidelining syncretistic provisions while enabling pluralistic ones in cases of both corporate and liberal power-sharing. Wider studies of postconflict education policy suggest that this is also the case for provisions not explicitly codified in the peace agreements (Fontana 2016; Shanks 2015).

The establishment of political power-sharing in Lebanon, Northern Ireland, and Macedonia was paralleled by the reproduction of inclusive and consensual patterns of decision-making at all levels of the state administration. Walsh (2014) proposes that the legitimacy of decision-making and advisory bodies in postconflict societies is enhanced if their members represent the main communities that participated in conflict and that now share power. An analysis of education reform in constituencies that adopted power-sharing shows that inclusive committees and provisions for communal vetoes provide important safeguards that no reform will be enacted without the acquiescence of the previously warring parties it affects. Attempts to implement the peace settlements that bypassed the inclusive and consensual administrative structures were interpreted as a challenge to the new political order and were opposed outright, as in Macedonia. However, the inclusive and consensual approach to education reform did not foster swift decision-making or full implementation of the peace agreements, and syncretistic reforms such as Lebanon's unified history curriculum were sidelined.

Successive power-sharing governments also refrained from implementing policies that would take the wind out of the new political system's sails. Reforms were fully implemented when they complied with the core values of equality and autonomy that underpin legitimate power-sharing. This underscores the importance of



considering education reform in its broader political context in order to design effective interventions.

Finally, Lebanon is an example of corporate power-sharing, while Macedonia and Northern Ireland approximate liberal power-sharing. The literature suggests that corporate power-sharing is more likely to entrench and reproduce conflictual identities than its liberal counterpart, which “rewards whatever salient political identities emerge in democratic elections, whether these are based on ethnic or religious groups, or on subgroup or transgroup identities” (McGarry and O’Leary 2007, 675). This study suggests that, while liberal power-sharing allows for more flexibility in electoral outcomes, it may still “have legitimized difference to the extent that [it] left little space for the articulation of any discourse of a common good” (Gallagher 2005, 431) in other fields, including the reform of education systems.

## CONCLUSION

A growing body of literature is tackling the complex process of education reform in the aftermath of civil wars (Burde et al. 2017; Novelli et al. 2017). However, few studies have examined the complex relationship between education reform and constitutional and political structures (cf. Fontana 2016; Shanks 2015). To help map this uncharted territory, this article has examined the reforms of formal education explicitly codified in peace agreements that establish power-sharing. It explored the question, to what extent does the adoption of power-sharing constrain the type of education reforms included in peace agreements and their implementation?

The literature on power-sharing suggests that the expectation was that pluralistic educational provisions would be paramount while syncretistic reforms would be marginalized (Lijphart 1996, 1977). This article tested this expectation through a cross-tabulation of the educational clauses codified in all the intrastate peace agreements concluded between 1989 and 2016 and a qualitative investigation of the peace agreements in Lebanon, Northern Ireland, and Macedonia, and of their implementation.

This study found that peace agreements prescribing multiple dimensions of power-sharing are more likely to include education reforms, which suggests that this combination (power-sharing with education reform) may provide legitimacy and stability, particularly after identity-based conflicts. Analysis of the PAIC dataset

also suggests that peace agreements that include extensive power-sharing are more likely to include pluralistic educational provisions than those that do not (cf. Lijphart 1977).

The qualitative analysis of the TA, GFA, and OFA refined the findings from the cross-tabulation of the PAIC dataset and underscored the fact that peace negotiations embed both pluralistic and syncretistic provisions in the same pact. The uneasy coexistence of syncretistic and pluralistic education reforms in the same peace agreement implies that there is ongoing disagreement about how schools can best support conflict transformation among conflicting parties. In this sense, peace agreements reflect the aggregation of the diverse interests of previously warring groups rather than their genuine synthesis. This finding has important implications, as the literature suggests that vague and inconsistent pacts are less likely to be implemented (Stedman et al. 2002). However, future studies are needed to shed light on the factors leading to the inclusion of specific power-sharing and education reforms in peace agreements, including the nature and characteristics of conflict, the relative strength of conflicting parties, and the extent of foreign involvement. Research that explores the extent to which specific contradictions constrain the implementation of postconflict education reforms is also needed.

This article confirms the expectations expressed in the power-sharing literature (Lijphart 1977). The implementation of education reforms does not depend on the prominence of education in the broader peace agreement. Both the TA and the OFA devoted considerable time to education policy, but the TA's prescriptions were all but neglected. Implementation also does not result from positive international pressure. For example, there was broad donor support for the introduction of Macedonian language learning from first grade, but this proposal was sidelined due to Albanian resistance. Finally, implementation does not depend on whether the reforms embody broad intercommunal consensus or are supported mainly by one community (Koneska 2014). Both the introduction of common history textbooks in Lebanon and the expansion of Albanian-language education in Macedonia drew strong support from one community (the Muslims and Albanians, respectively) and equally strong objections from others (the Christians and Macedonians, respectively). The latter was implemented, the former was not.

The qualitative evidence shows that syncretistic education reforms were severely restricted in all cases, whereas pluralistic education reforms were most likely to be implemented in societies that adopted both liberal and corporate power-sharing. Both varieties of power-sharing affected this implementation by altering

decision-making structures (i.e., by making reform bodies broadly inclusive of representatives of the previously warring communities) and by entrenching some core political values (particularly communal equality and autonomy). It will be essential to explore the complex interaction of these two factors in future research.

This study has three main implications for the literature and for practice. First, it represents a step forward in understanding the complex relationship between politics and education reforms (Smith and Vaux 2003; UNESCO 2016). If education reforms are to be subject to the same bargaining process as other communal interests, more attention should be devoted to their formulation during the negotiating phase and to their ultimate implementation. Moreover, the quantitative and qualitative evidence suggest that the adoption of certain constitutional structures affects the design and implementation of education reforms in places affected by conflict. Thus, the idiosyncrasies of different political systems should be considered in order to maximize the impact of educational initiatives.

Second, this work adds to the broader study of the design and implementation of peace agreements, which has overlooked the implementation of reform of social institutions. It confirms that the inconsistency of peace agreements complicates the implementation of specific reforms, and that the type of political system established at the end of a conflict can constrain the implementation of syncretistic educational provisions. This finding may be applied beyond the niche of education policy and should be further explored.

Finally, this study suggests that education fosters the legitimacy and stability of power-sharing by producing and reproducing its key political principles (cf. Fontana 2016). The PAIC dataset shows that agreements that include power-sharing are more likely to include education reforms. The qualitative evidence suggests that, rather than purposefully transforming the narratives and identities at the heart of violent conflict, formal education helps to crystallize the boundaries between the national, ethnic, linguistic, and confessional communities that participated in a conflict and are subsequently sharing political power. Unlike electoral prescriptions, education policies are remarkably similar across liberal and corporate cases of power-sharing. As suggested by the power-sharing literature, this may foster the short-term stability, legitimacy, and resilience of power-sharing (Lijphart 1977). However, education policies' long-term impact should be investigated more critically.

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## **APPENDIX 1: EXTENT OF EDUCATION REFORM IN PEACE AGREEMENTS**

The following table provides a snapshot of the extent of education reform in different types of peace agreements, coded on a scale of 0-3. Peace agreements were assigned an index, depending on the number of aspects of education they address, with those scoring 3 having the most extensive approach to education reform.

To build the index, all the educational provisions in peace agreements were coded into three broad categories: Contents, Access, and Governance. Reforms addressing content map changes to the educational curricula, as in the case of clause F5 in Lebanon's Taif Agreement: "The curricula shall be reviewed and developed in a manner that strengthens national belonging, fusion, spiritual and cultural openness, and that unifies textbooks on the subjects of history and national education." Reforms to access to education prescribe the expansion of educational provision to reach formerly marginalized communities or the introduction of quotas, as in the case of article 6.3 of Macedonia's Ohrid Agreement: "The principle of positive discrimination will be applied in the enrolment in State universities of candidates belonging to communities not in the majority in the population of Macedonia until the enrolment reflects equitably the composition

of the population of Macedonia.” Finally, reforms of the governance affect the funding, management, and overall structure of the education system. For example, Northern Ireland’s Good Friday Agreement includes the intention to “place a statutory duty on the Department of Education to encourage and facilitate Irish medium education in line with current provision for integrated education.”

It becomes apparent that there is no statistically significant difference in the extent of education reform between agreements that include multiple dimensions of power-sharing and those that do not include power-sharing. Yet, as observed in the article, agreements including power-sharing are more likely to include some education reform. They are also marginally more likely to adopt a more comprehensive approach to education reform: most of the agreements including multidimensional power-sharing alongside both syncretistic and pluralistic reforms address the contents, access, and governance of education. This does not apply to the agreements adopting only a syncretistic or a pluralistic approach to education reform.

	N	Mean Dimensions	SD	Mode Dimensions
<b>Without Multi-dimensional Power-Sharing</b>	239	0.4	0.8	0
<i>With Syncretistic Reforms</i>	42	1.57	0.7	1
<i>With Pluralistic Reforms</i>	1	1	0	1
<i>With Syncretistic and Pluralistic Reforms</i>	13	2.08	0.86	2
<b>With Multi-dimensional Power-Sharing</b>	54	1.02	1.21	0
<i>With Syncretistic Reforms</i>	14	1.64	0.93	1
<i>With Pluralistic Reforms</i>	1	1	0	1
<i>With Syncretistic and Pluralistic Reforms</i>	12	2.58	0.51	3

## APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW LIST AND PROTOCOL

The author conducted a total of 75 interviews with educational experts, policy-makers, and practitioners in Lebanon, Northern Ireland, and FYR of Macedonia. They were asked slightly different follow-up questions, depending on their role and experience. This appendix reproduces a detailed list of the interviews cited in this article (48) and a sample Interview Protocol.

### INTERVIEWS CITED IN THE ARTICLE

Person ID	Description	Case	Location/Date
Interview 1	Senior Officer, Council for Catholic Maintained Schools	Northern Ireland	Belfast, February 18, 2013
Interview 2	Expert of Primary Religious Education	Northern Ireland	Telephone Interview, March 25, 2013
Interview 3	Expert of Religious Education and Citizenship Education	Northern Ireland	Belfast, February 19, 2013
Interview 4	Former Curriculum Developer for Local and Global Citizenship	Northern Ireland	Belfast February 22, 2013
Interview 5	Senior Officer, Council for Curriculum, Examination and Assessment	Northern Ireland	Belfast, February 19, 2013
Interview 6	Head of Education Standards, Council for Catholic Maintained Schools	Northern Ireland	Hollywood, February 19, 2013
Interview 7	Expert of Post-Primary Religious Education	Northern Ireland	Telephone Interview, March 8, 2013
Interview 8	Expert on Faith Schools and Inter-Group Relations	Northern Ireland	Belfast, March 4, 2013
Interview 9	President of the History Teachers' Association of Macedonia	FYR of Macedonia	Skopje, September 13, 2012
Interview 10	Albanian Historian	FYR of Macedonia	Skopje, September 14, 2012
Interview 11	Journalist, Transitions Online, Edno Magazine	FYR of Macedonia	Skopje, September 9, 2012
Interview 12	President of Civil - Centre for Freedom	FYR of Macedonia	Skopje, September 18, 2012
Interview 13	Deputy Country Director Forum ZFD	FYR of Macedonia	Skopje, September 13, 2012
Interview 14	Policy Analyst, Centre for Research and Policymaking	FYR of Macedonia	Skopje, September 10, 2012

(cont.)

Person ID	Description	Case	Location/Date
Interview 15	Independent Consultant and Drafter of the Strategy for Integrated Education	FYR of Macedonia	Skopje, September 12, 2012
Interview 16	Professor of Education	Lebanon	Beirut, June 18, 2012
Interview 17	Expert on Citizenship Education	Lebanon	Beirut, June 28, 2012
Interview 18	Lebanese Association for Educational Studies Director and Curriculum Specialist	Lebanon	Beirut, June 22, 2012, and July 13, 2012
Interview 19	Lebanese Academic and Former Director of the Centre for Educational Research and Development (1999-2001)	Lebanon	Beirut, June 19, 2012
Interview 20	Senior Officer, Centre for Educational Research and Development	Lebanon	Beirut, June 27, 2012
Interview 21	Lebanese Academic and Former Director of the Centre for Educational Research and Development (1994-1999)	Lebanon	Telephone Interview, September 6, 2012
Interview 22	Project Manager, Youth for Tolerance	Lebanon	Beirut, June 20, 2012
Interview 23	ESCWA Regional Advisor	Lebanon	Beirut, July 3, 2012
Interview 24	Official in an International Mission	FYR of Macedonia	Skopje, September 10, 2012
Interview 25	Head of Sector for Professional Development, Bureau for Development of Education	FYR of Macedonia	Skopje, September 14, 2012
Interview 26	Official in International Organization	FYR of Macedonia	Skopje, September 11, 2012
Interview 27	Social Democratic and Labour Party Member of the Northern Ireland Assembly and Former Member of the Education Committee	Northern Ireland	Belfast, March 1, 2013
Interview 28	Ulster Unionist Party Member of the Northern Ireland Assembly and Member of the Education Committee	Northern Ireland	Stormont, September 19, 2013
Interview 29	Independent Member of the Northern Ireland Assembly	Northern Ireland	Belfast, February 25, 2013
Interview 30	President, Integrated Education Fund	Northern Ireland	London, March 19, 2013

**MAPPING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EDUCATION REFORM AND POWER-SHARING IN AND AFTER INTRASTATE PEACE AGREEMENTS**

(cont.)

<b>Person ID</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Case</b>	<b>Location/Date</b>
<b>Interview 31</b>	Communications Director, Integrated Education Fund	Northern Ireland	Belfast, March 4, 2013
<b>Interview 32</b>	Community Relations Coordinator, Department of Education Northern Ireland	Northern Ireland	Bangor, February 26, 2013
<b>Interview 33</b>	Senior Officer, Education and Skills Authority	Northern Ireland	Telephone Interview, March 13, 2013
<b>Interview 34</b>	Lebanese Politician and Former Education Minister	Lebanon	Beirut, June 27, 2012
<b>Interview 35</b>	Progressive Socialist Party Member, Member of the Advisory Committee on History Books	Lebanon	Beirut, July 10, 2012
<b>Interview 36</b>	Professor of Education	Northern Ireland	Belfast, February 26, 2013
<b>Interview 37</b>	Education Program Director, Foundation Open Society Macedonia	FYR of Macedonia	Skopje, September 17, 2012
<b>Interview 38</b>	Officer in International Delegation	FYR of Macedonia	Skopje, September 11, 2012
<b>Interview 39</b>	Chief Executive, Council for Irish-medium Schools	Northern Ireland	Telephone Interview, March 5, 2013
<b>Interview 40</b>	Lebanese Academic and Political Analyst	Lebanon	Beirut, July 6, 2012
<b>Interview 41</b>	Lebanese Jurist and Former Education Minister (2005-2008)	Lebanon	Beirut, July 17, 2012
<b>Interview 42</b>	Senior Education Advisor, Council for Catholic Maintained Schools	Northern Ireland	Belfast, February 18, 2013
<b>Interview 43</b>	Democratic Unionist Party Member of the Northern Ireland Assembly, Chair of Education Committee	Northern Ireland	Stormont, February 27, 2013
<b>Interview 44</b>	Alliance Member of the Northern Ireland Assembly and Minister for Employment and Learning	Northern Ireland	Belfast, February 25, 2013
<b>Interview 45</b>	Education for Development Specialist, UNICEF	FYR of Macedonia	Skopje, September 18, 2012
<b>Interview 46</b>	Academic and Former Minister of Education (1998-2002)	FYR of Macedonia	Skopje, September 11, 2012
<b>Interview 47</b>	Officer in an International Donor Organization	FYR of Macedonia	Skopje, September 14, 2012
<b>Interview 48</b>	Project Manager, Nansen Dialogue Centre	FYR of Macedonia	Skopje, September 12, 2012

## INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

### Opening statements:

I would like to invite you to participate in this original research project. I am interested in how education evolves after the establishment of power-sharing. I am particularly interested in investigating whether power-sharing has an impact on priorities in educational reform, on the values and narratives underpinning education and on the way education is or is not employed as an instrument to transform conflicts and create social cohesion in divided societies.

Discussion of further issues you may deem relevant is welcome. Should you feel uncomfortable with any of the questions, you can avoid answering it.

I have invited policy-makers and academics from across Lebanon, Northern Ireland and FYR of Macedonia to take part in this study. It is up to you to decide whether to take part or not. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw without giving a reason. If you do decide to take part you will be given an information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form.

The consent form asks for consent for:

- processing of personal information for the present research in accordance with the terms of the Data Protection Act 1998;
- the interview being recorded;
- disclosing personal details (or keeping them confidential).

Guiding Questions and Probes (to be adapted depending on the specific expertise of the interviewee):

1. What was the impact of the Taif Agreement/Good Friday Agreement/Ohrid Agreement on education?
  - Objectives of the peace agreement in regard to education;
  - Specific examples of implemented or sidelined reforms;
  - Sources for the inclusion of specific reforms in the peace agreements.



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2. What are the most necessary education reforms in Lebanon/Northern Ireland/FYR of Macedonia?
  - Beneficiaries;
  - Champions of the reform.
3. What are the challenges to these reforms?
  - Obstacles with legislation (political);
  - Obstacles with implementation (teachers' responses; resources; expertise);
  - Public reaction.
4. Does education contribute to peace and how?
  - Specific examples drawn from professional experience;
  - References to the existing education/political science literature if expert interviewee.

DEVELOPING SOCIAL COHESION  
THROUGH SCHOOLS IN NORTHERN  
IRELAND AND THE FORMER YUGOSLAV  
REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA:  
A STUDY OF POLICY TRANSFER

REBECCA LOADER, JOANNE HUGHES, VIOLETA PETROSKA-BESHKA,  
AND ANA TOMOVSKA MISOSKA

**ABSTRACT**

*Transferring education policy from one country to another, or between supranational bodies and national administrations, is common practice, and the potential benefits for educational quality and standards are evident. Despite these advantages, the dominant approaches to policy transfer have been criticized for, among other things, neglecting contextual influences on policy and prioritizing the economic function of education over others. In this article, we consider an example of policy transfer for another purpose: to promote social cohesion through schools, specifically in societies that have experienced ethnic division and conflict. Focusing on the model of shared education, which promotes school collaboration and contact between pupils across ethnic or religious boundaries, we explore a process of policy transfer between Northern Ireland and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Drawing from documentary analysis, interviews with practitioners in both countries, and direct observational experience, we examine the purpose, nature, and impact of this case of policy transfer and identify what lessons can be shared with future education initiatives.*

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## INTRODUCTION

This article explores the process of transferring an intercultural education program—that is, shared education—between its country of origin, Northern Ireland, and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (hereafter Macedonia). In the field of comparative education, the practice of studying international educational systems to draw lessons to apply in other contexts is well established. Having emerged as an imperative in the 1960s, as policy-makers and researchers sought to improve national education systems within a climate of international political competition (Cowen 2014), the field has expanded over the past three decades (Auld and Morris 2014; Steiner-Khamsi 2010). This growth, Auld and Morris argue, has accompanied the transition to a new paradigm of applied comparative education that is promoted by international consultants, policy entrepreneurs, and think tanks. The new paradigm views education as “an economic investment designed to cultivate human capital so as to maximize a nation’s competitiveness in the global economy” (Auld and Morris 2014, 149). Within this framework, international comparison is endorsed as a means of identifying best practice in existing high-performing education systems, which then can be shared and implemented in other countries to enhance their educational—and thus economic—success. Consistent with the emphasis in this approach on measurement and targets (Cowen 2014), exemplar countries are frequently identified by their leading position in global rankings, such as OECD’s Programme for International Student Assessment and the World Bank’s World Development Indicators.

The benefits of this normative approach to identifying and sharing lessons—what we refer to in this article as policy transfer—are evident.<sup>1</sup> Policy-makers who have access to information about other countries’ experiences can gain valuable insights that will inform improvements they make in their own contexts and, as importantly, enable them to avoid reforms that have been unsuccessful elsewhere (Burdett and O’Donnell 2016; Johansson 2016). Increased examination of education systems across different countries can also increase transparency, reduce parochialism, and encourage cross-national collaboration (Dimmock and Tan 2016). However, current approaches to policy transfer in education have drawn criticism, chiefly from academic comparativists. One strand of this criticism has

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1 The most appropriate term for this process has been the subject of some debate, with terms such as “policy borrowing,” “policy learning,” “lesson-drawing” also in use. In this article, we prefer the term “policy transfer” as the most suitable for the case we discuss. In this, we are influenced by Divala’s argument that “‘borrowing’ assumes an agential relationship that ultimately ends up in the lender owing back what is due to the self. On the other hand, ‘policy transfer’ simply recognises the origin of policy and the end user of policy” (2014, 99).

challenged what is perceived as a narrow focus on the economic function of education and the relatively limited interest in other aims, such as the development of social cohesion and citizenship (Auld and Morris 2014, 136). Another strand of criticism has argued for greater attention to the cultural, political, and historical contexts of the relevant countries when proposing the transfer of policies and processes (Andrews et al. 2014; Dimmock and Tan 2016; Morris 2012).

These criticisms of normative approaches to transfer have emerged from the analytical tradition (Steiner-Khamsi 2012, 2014) in comparative education, which seeks to theorize the policy transfer process. While normative studies promote transfer as a means of improving educational quality and outcomes, the analytical literature prioritizes the explication of the transfer process, its antecedents, and its outcomes. Among the longstanding concerns of this literature are the motives for policy transfer, the level at which transfer occurs (international, domestic, or interorganizational), what is transferred (policy aims, ideologies, programs, or institutions), and the effect on the recipient context (Burdett and O'Donnell 2016; Dolowitz and Marsh 2000; Hulme 2005; Phillips and Ochs 2003; Steiner-Khamsi 2006, 2014). Researchers examining the first of these concerns have identified several motives for transferring policy, including the failure of existing policy, economic and political change (including change of government), and a desire to quell domestic political conflict or to legitimize a preferred policy approach (Dolowitz and Marsh 2000; Halpin and Troyna 1995; Phillips and Ochs 2003; Steiner-Khamsi 2006). Such findings reveal that policy transfer is not merely a matter of importing best practice. Consistent with criticism of normative studies for their neglect of contextual influences, scholars in the analytical tradition also emphasize the importance of context to any understanding of the transfer process. In this regard, they argue that researchers should consider “inherited ideas and values, habits and customs, institutions and world views” (Alexander 2001, 5) within the settings of interest.

While normative and analytical approaches represent separate strands within policy transfer, they are not mutually exclusive, and comparative scholars are often engaged in research in both traditions (Steiner-Khamsi 2014; for examples see Harris, Jones, and Adams 2016; Ochs 2006; Phillips and Ochs 2004). Like these researchers, we aim to bring normative and analytical perspectives together in our work to develop and research a model of shared education that promotes interschool collaboration across ethnic and religious boundaries as a way to enhance social cohesion. As critical advocates of shared education, we aim to identify lessons learned from its implementation “that, under certain circumstances and in specific contexts, could be transferred to other educational

systems” (Steiner-Khamsi 2014, 154). We reflect simultaneously on the process of policy transfer and explore how shared education is interpreted and implemented in different settings. These aims are reflected in the present study, which is the first to explore the transfer of shared education from its original context in Northern Ireland to a new setting in Macedonia.

### **THE CURRENT STUDY**

To explore in depth the experience of transferring the shared education model, we undertake a two-stage analysis. In the first part of the paper, we examine the development of shared education in both Northern Ireland and Macedonia. We draw from the policy and research literature and from the observational experience of Hughes and Petroska-Beshka, both of whom have been involved in this process of transferring and implementing shared education. The second part of the paper complements this policy-level discussion with an exploration of shared education in practice. In it we draw from qualitative data collected through interviews with principals, teachers, and program coordinators in both jurisdictions. We aim to draw our own lessons from this analysis in two ways. First, we identify lessons learned that will help the shared education initiatives under study to meet their aim of improving relations between previously opposing groups. We anticipate that these lessons might inform the future development of shared education in other contexts, given the interest national governments and international bodies such as the UN have expressed in the program (see UNESCO 2017). Second, we analyze the policy transfer process, exploring its purpose, nature, and impact. As this paper focuses on a case of interorganizational transfer that involved academic and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), it provides a valuable opportunity to explore issues at this level (Hulme 2005).

A note on terminology: while “shared education” is the term applied to the general model of collaborative education that we discuss in this article, it is also commonly used for the specific program operating in Northern Ireland. We use it in both senses in this article and aim to make the meaning clear from the context. In Macedonia, the equivalent initiative is known as the Interethnic Integration in Education Program, or IIEP. We shall use this term, or simply “interethnic education,” when referring specifically to the Macedonian program.

## THE DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSFER OF SHARED EDUCATION

### SHARED EDUCATION IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Shared education was introduced in Northern Ireland in 2007 with the aim of promoting collaboration and intergroup contact across separate denominational schools. These schools, which mirror the cleavage between the Catholic-Irish-nationalist and the Protestant-British-unionist communities, educate more than 90 percent of the region's pupils (Department of Education [NI] 2017). Separate education has long been a source of contention in the region, with commentators suggesting that the physical and cultural isolation of pupils may perpetuate prejudice and division (Murray 1985; Grayling 2005). While supporters of separate schools have repudiated this claim, initiatives to promote intercommunity contact and mutual understanding through education were nevertheless introduced from the 1970s onwards (Gallagher 2004).

Among the programs emerging during this period were those promoting cross-group contact as a means of improving attitudes and fostering positive relationships between the two groups. Informed by the contact hypothesis (Allport 1954; Hewstone and Swart 2011), these initiatives included integrated schools that educated pupils from all denominational backgrounds in the same institutions and so-called contact programs that provided activities and excursions for pupils attending separate schools. While important, these initiatives had mixed success. Despite research indicating that school-based contact has a positive impact on students' attitudes (Hayes, McAllister, and Dowds 2007, 2013; Hughes et al. 2013; Stringer et al. 2009), integrated education today remains a niche sector, accounting for only 7 percent of pupils in Northern Ireland (Department of Education [NI] 2017). Meanwhile, contact programs in schools have been limited by their short-term nature and low priority, and by teachers' lack of confidence in facilitating such interaction (O'Connor, Hartop, and McCully 2002; Richardson 2011).

Recognizing the need for a new approach to promoting integration through the education system, educationalists led by Professor Tony Gallagher of Queen's University Belfast (QUB) developed proposals for shared education in 2005. These proposals aimed to address the limitations of existing initiatives by (1) providing pupils from all schools, not only those in the integrated sector, with opportunities for sustained cross-group contact; and (2) appealing to schools' core priority—enhancing the provision of education. The proposals recommended creating collaborative school partnerships across denominational lines as a mechanism for enhancing social relations. The partnerships would provide joint classes and

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activities on a regular basis, and pupils would travel between the participating schools to learn in mixed groups. This would enable young people to interact and build relationships while also helping schools extend their curriculum and share expertise and resources. In developing this model, the architects of shared education were able to capitalize on the increasing prominence of collaboration in education policy (see Independent Strategic Review of Education 2006; Post-Primary Review Body 2001), as well as a new legal requirement (the Entitlement Framework) for schools in Northern Ireland to offer a minimum number of subjects to students ages 14 to 18. The emphasis on the curriculum helped secure the participation of schools that may have been reluctant to engage in a program focused primarily on reconciliation.

Shared education was introduced in 2007 via three pilot initiatives that involved both primary and postprimary schools and were supported by two philanthropic organizations, the Atlantic Philanthropies and the International Fund for Ireland. Prospective school partners were invited to submit a joint application and, if successful, were assigned funding for equipment, staff, and other costs of participation. From the outset, each partnership was encouraged to develop an activity program that addressed the educational priorities of the participating schools. The only stipulation was that “the partnerships had to contain sustainable, high quality engagement by young people from different cultural traditions and backgrounds” (SEP 2008, 2). These pilot initiatives continued until 2013; one of the three—a postprimary program managed by QUB—involved 150 schools across two cohorts (Knox 2013). Early evaluations of these shared education programs were favorable. Pupils at the participating schools reported having new friends from the other religious group and were found to have more positive intergroup attitudes than those at non-participating institutions (Hughes et al. 2010).

Recognizing the importance of communicating these and other benefits of shared education to policy-makers and politicians, the initiatives’ leaders invested significant time and resources in a regional advocacy strategy. This proved effective, as Northern Ireland’s four main political parties included references to educational sharing and collaboration in their manifestos for the 2011 Northern Ireland Assembly election (Hansson, O’Connor-Bones, and McCord 2013), and the Northern Ireland Executive (2011) subsequently agreed to incorporate shared education into their Program for Government. This led to the appointment of the Ministerial Advisory Group on Shared Education in 2012, the introduction of the Shared Education Signature Project across Northern Ireland in 2015, and the passing of the Shared Education Act in May 2016. The act made it a statutory duty of the Northern Ireland Department of Education to encourage, facilitate,

and promote shared education and established it as a core element of education policy in the region.

#### SHARED EDUCATION IN MACEDONIA

In 2009, researchers from the Centre for Shared Education at QUB were appointed to a UNICEF-sponsored project to work with local authorities in Macedonia to develop mechanisms for enhancing interethnic relations through schools. Due to the constitutional provision for mother-tongue instruction, virtually all ethnic Macedonian pupils and more than 95 percent of Albanian pupils are educated in their first language, either in separate schools or in separate shifts or buildings within multilanguage schools (Lyon 2013). There is also a provision, albeit less common, for instruction in the Turkish and Serbian languages. While this is considered good practice from a minority rights perspective, there has been concern about the resulting segregation of pupils from different ethnic groups, particularly against a background of interethnic conflict and violence (Reka 2008; Lyon 2013). Efforts to address educational separation, notably via a ministerial Strategy for Integrated Education (Ministry of Education and Science 2010), have been stymied by politicians concerned about the reaction within their ethnic constituencies (Koneska 2012). In the absence of political action, NGOs have assumed responsibility for advancing integration.

Through the UNICEF project, members of the Centre for Shared Education, led by Hughes worked with officials and educationalists in Macedonia to develop a systematic approach for intercultural education. The intention was to draw from Northern Ireland's experience of shared education and to complement existing intercultural education initiatives in Macedonia. The latter included extracurricular multicultural workshops, which promoted interaction between mixed groups of pupils who learned about diversity through a series of hour-long meetings (see Dedova et al. 2010 for more details on the content of these workshops). Existing initiatives also included the Nansen model of integrated education, which encourages bilingual education at the primary and secondary levels (Nansen Dialogue Centre 2012). Through the UNICEF project, staff from the Centre for Shared Education organized a series of in-country workshops that explored the theoretical perspectives that underpin shared education and other approaches to diversity in educational settings. The staff also coordinated a study tour of Northern Ireland that included visits to partnering schools and meetings with academics, civil servants, third-sector organizations, and teachers involved in shared education. With a view to informing future initiatives in Macedonia, these meetings focused particularly on approaches to mainstreaming



shared education in Northern Ireland, which included an advocacy strategy that promoted shared education at the policy level and the creation of a steering group to inform this work.

In 2011, following the conclusion of the UNICEF project, USAID, working with the Center for Human Rights and Conflict Resolution (CHRCR) and the Macedonian Civic Education Center in Skopje, introduced the state-wide IIEP, which operated from December 2011 until March 2017. The IIEP was ambitious in scope and included strands to, first, raise awareness of the importance of interethnic education and, second, develop capacity within the system to deliver it. The project's third strand, which focused on building relationships among students, was influenced by the Northern Ireland model of shared education. It was designed with the guidance and involvement of CHRCR, which also participated in the UNICEF-QUB project. This strand encouraged collaboration across linguistic boundaries, thereby forging partnerships between institutions with different languages of instruction and developing mixed activities within multilanguage schools. Activities for students were delivered bilingually (and occasionally trilingually), with teachers providing instruction in Macedonian and Albanian in most cases, in Macedonian and Turkish in some cases, and in Macedonian, Albanian, and Turkish in the three-language schools. Staff from the Centre for Shared Education at QUB continued to be involved with the program as consultants. The fourth strand of the IIEP involved refurbishing schools as an incentive to participate in integration activities.

With reference to key frameworks on policy transfer in education, we can make several observations about this case. First, as Phillips and Ochs (2003, 2004) advocate, schools participated in the transfer voluntarily, rather than being directed or coerced to do so. UNICEF, and subsequently USAID, appointed researchers from QUB to address educational segregation in Macedonia. The "impulses" (Phillips and Ochs 2003, 452) or preconditions for policy transfer were thus observed to be dissatisfaction with existing approaches to integration in Macedonia and a corresponding desire to improve interethnic relations. Moreover, what Phillips and Ochs (2003, 453) term the "foci of attraction" (that is, the aspects of education policy and practice that are borrowed) were the processes associated with the shared education model. Second, transfer in this case was a collaborative process between colleagues from Northern Ireland and Macedonia. This ensured that decisions were guided by those with knowledge of the local context and were realistic and practical rather than merely expedient (Phillips and Ochs 2003, 455). Finally, in terms of the level of transfer (Hulme 2005), this example occurred largely at the interorganizational level between a university and

two NGOs. Given the slow progress on integration at the state level in Macedonia (Fontana 2016), an NGO-led initiative like this one arguably offered a better chance of addressing segregation in education. However, including an outreach strand implied the recognition that the long-term sustainability of such a program would depend on state support.

### **COMPARING THE DESIGN OF SHARED EDUCATION ACROSS BOTH COUNTRIES**

The influence of the Northern Ireland model of shared education is evident in the design of the IIEP, particularly its adoption of a model of collaboration between separate schools or different linguistic groups within multilanguage schools. Mirroring shared education's advocacy strategy, the IIEP prioritized engagement with stakeholders outside the school to build capacity for interethnic integration. However, the IIEP also adapted or omitted features of shared education so that its effort can be described more accurately as emulating than copying the Northern Ireland program (Dolowitz and Marsh 2000). This is particularly evident in the differential importance attached to educational objectives—that is, extending the curriculum and improving educational opportunities. In Northern Ireland, educational objectives are given parity with social aims in recognition of the fact that schools are more likely to engage in collaboration that offers explicit educational benefits. In Macedonia, while there have been efforts to develop sharing around certain subjects in the curriculum, the discourse of integration is more prevalent.

After examining contextual influences on policy transfer (Phillips and Ochs 2003, 2004; Steiner-Khamsi 2014), we attribute this difference, first, to the policy of mother-tongue education in Macedonia and, second, to the designation of subjects as curricular or extracurricular. Widespread access to education in pupils' first language and a corresponding lack of proficiency in the language of the other makes the joint delivery of academic subjects less feasible in Macedonia than in Northern Ireland. Interethnic education in a minority of schools thus has focused on curricular subjects that are not so dependent on mother-tongue instruction, such as English, fine arts, and information and communication technology, but it has more commonly centered on activities such as sports, drama, and music. While these are curricular subjects in Northern Ireland, most are designated as extracurricular in Macedonia; moreover, although required by law, provision and participation vary in practice. Consequently, extending curricular provision via collaboration has not been part of the policy discourse in Macedonia as it has been in Northern Ireland.

A second difference between the two programs is their scale and pace of development. As Phillips and Ochs note, the implementation of transferred policy may be “speedy or long-term in nature, depending on the adaptability of particular policy measures” (2003, 456). In Macedonia, development of the IIEP was rapid and widespread—far more so than in Northern Ireland, where shared education was first implemented in a limited number of schools via three pilot programs over six years. Moreover, the Northern Ireland initiative was extended only after the pilots had ended. In Macedonia, by contrast, IIEP sought to involve all of the country’s 447 schools within three years of the introduction of shared education (Petroska-Beshka and Osmani 2016). Developing the project at this speed has arguably required a more directive approach in Macedonia than in Northern Ireland, including increased guidance about the structure of the activities (see Jankulovska and Tahir 2013; Pistolov et al. 2016).

A third difference between the two programs relates to the role of financial incentives. While shared education has been presented to schools in Northern Ireland as a way to conserve resources, this has been less common in Macedonia. Again, the reasons for this may be found in the local context: while partnerships in Northern Ireland can reduce expenditures by sharing staff and materials, this is less feasible when operating in multiple languages. The funding available to schools also differed. Most of the initial costs in Northern Ireland, such as for transport, were met through the pilot programs and, subsequently, by the Shared Education Signature Project. In Macedonia, however, while funding through USAID supported the core strands of the program, school-based activities did not benefit equally. Schools instead sought financial support for these activities from municipal authorities, with mixed success (Petroska-Beshka and Osmani 2016). Resources for refurbishing the participating schools were similarly limited: of 99 schools that applied in 2014, for example, only 10 were selected for renovation (Interethnic Integration in Education Program 2014).

Having explored the development of shared education and its transfer between universities and NGOs, in the following section we consider how these programs have been perceived and implemented at the school level. As Alexiadou and van de Bunt-Kokhuis have argued, “policy implementation [is] socially constructed, and enacted by individuals who are located within specific institutional frameworks” (2013, 345); consequently, for a full analysis of policy transfer, we must consider how new policies “interact with traditions, ideologies, forms of organization and cultures of practice that have developed locally” (347). Employing a comparative approach, we examine how the interactions between policy, actor, and context shape the development of shared and interethnic education in each setting.

### SHARED AND INTERETHNIC EDUCATION IN PRACTICE

Interviews, the principal method of data collection, were conducted with representatives of two school partnerships in each jurisdiction. The selected partnerships offered contrasting settings for the implementation of shared education in terms of the nature of relations within the local area (largely integrated or divided), the setting (urban or rural, applicable in NI), and/or the phase of education (primary or postprimary, applicable in Macedonia). In Northern Ireland, the interviews were conducted with staff of schools belonging to two school partnerships. These schools participated in the first phase of the Sharing Education Programme, a shared education initiative. The first partnership was comprised of four coeducational postprimary schools, two Catholic and two Protestant. Three of these schools were located in a market town with a mixed population and a recent history of harmonious relations; the fourth school was located in a largely Catholic area approximately ten miles away. The second partnership involved three postprimary girls' schools, two Catholic and one Protestant. These schools were located within walking distance of each other in an urban area where segregation and intergroup tension persist. Both partnerships provided shared classes for students ages 16 to 18; the rural partnership offered A-level examination courses, and the urban partnership offered a course on personal effectiveness.

In Macedonia, interviews were conducted with staff of three "demonstration schools," two primary and one postprimary, that were participating in IIEP. The schools were selected to participate in a more extensive program of shared activities and to serve as exemplars for other institutions. The postprimary school was a multilanguage institution that operated two shifts in one building, one for Albanian pupils and one for Macedonian and Turkish pupils; space had been created for shared activities at the end of the first shift. The school was located in a mixed rural town with a high level of residential segregation. The two primary schools were separate Albanian- and Macedonian-language schools located in neighboring, largely homogeneous towns. The schools had a collaborative arrangement in which their pupils and teachers met regularly for shared activities. As in all demonstration schools, the program of shared classes and activities was determined by the partners. In these schools, the program included additional language-acquisition workshops, multicultural workshops, shared classes for English and sports, outdoor "teaching in nature" classes, mixed extracurricular activities in areas such as art and performance, and excursions to local sites of interest, including those with cultural or religious importance for a particular ethnic group.

Ten interviewees participated in Northern Ireland, including four school principals (two from Catholic backgrounds and two Protestant), two vice principals (both Protestant), and four teachers (two Catholic and two Protestant). Thirteen interviewees participated in Macedonia, including four staff from CHRCR, which supports shared activities, three school principals (two Albanian and one Macedonian), and six teachers (three Albanian and three Macedonian). The senior school staff in both countries were selected because of their strategic role in overseeing their respective partnerships, while the teaching staff were selected based on their experience of implementing shared activities in the classroom. NGO staff were also interviewed in Macedonia because of their experience developing the program and supporting schools within it. Seventeen participants (six in Northern Ireland and eleven in Macedonia) were interviewed separately, while six (four in Northern Ireland and two in Macedonia) were interviewed in pairs. In Northern Ireland these pairs comprised staff from the same school, while in Macedonia the pairs comprised two shared education coordinators.

Interviews were conducted primarily by Hughes, with assistance from colleagues from the Centre for Shared Education, and each lasted up to an hour. A semi-structured approach was employed to ensure that all interviews covered the same topics while allowing the interviewer to adapt individual questions to the interviewee's role as principal, teacher, or coordinator. Topics included their reason for participating in shared/interethnic education, the challenges and benefits of implementing the program, and their approach to building relationships and exploring difference. All interviewees were advised in advance of the nature and purpose of the research, the topics of discussion for the interview, and the guarantee of confidentiality and anonymity; they accordingly agreed to participate. In Macedonia, a local interpreter was present to translate between Albanian or Macedonian and English where required, and the interpreter was fully briefed in advance about the initiative and the research. Several of the participants could converse in English, thus using an interpreter for the remaining interviews was considered the most appropriate approach; however, we acknowledge that nuances may have been lost in translation.

The data were transcribed by Loader and a research assistant at QUB and verified by Hughes. Loader conducted most of the analysis, while the coding frame and themes were checked and amended in consultation with the coauthors. Any areas of uncertainty that arose during the analysis, particularly those relating to the cultural and policy contexts of each country, were clarified with other members of the research team. Coding was undertaken using a thematic approach, which involved full coding of all data, refining the initial codes, and grouping the codes

into themes and subthemes. The resulting key themes, which correspond to the headings below, provide some insight into how shared education was interpreted and implemented as it moved from Northern Ireland to Macedonia and from policy to practice (Cowen 2009; Steiner-Khamsi 2012).

#### MOTIVE FOR PARTICIPATION

Shared education in Northern Ireland has been promoted with three aims: enhancing educational provision, conserving resources, and improving intergroup relations. In interviews, however, when discussing their motives for participation, principals and teachers referred most frequently to educational and economic imperatives, particularly the opportunity to extend the school's subject offerings, in keeping with the new legal requirements under the Entitlement Framework. Social outcomes were mentioned less often, which suggests some divergence between those designing and those delivering shared education. For the principal of a rural grammar school, for example, collaboration was of value because it helped his school meet minimum curriculum requirements and deliver the academic subjects necessary for a "grammar school education," thereby strengthening its appeal to parents. Building relationships was at most a secondary priority, which was a source of frustration for the principal of a Protestant school, who suggested that, in their partnership, "the mechanistic need to deliver a [broader] curriculum" had obscured the focus on social cohesion.

Other interviewees suggested that social and educational aims could be complementary but that the latter was prioritized in practice. A teacher from the urban Protestant school illustrated this, remarking that the opportunity to study for a qualification that was offered only through shared education was what motivated the pupils to participate in the program. In her view, if the activities had lacked a curricular focus, "the girls would be saying there is no value in it and they don't want to go." One Catholic headteacher revealed the limited focus on reconciliation, noting that the social aims of shared education were simultaneously "a natural part" of the program and "not something we even talk about." Neither interviewee suggested how social benefits were to be achieved. Rather, in these schools and others, improved relations were considered an inevitable consequence of mixing students in class and were given little specific attention.

In Macedonia, by contrast, the program's objective of enhancing integration was more widely reflected at the level of practice. Lacking the educational policy drivers that motivated collaboration in Northern Ireland, participating teachers in Macedonia were more likely to espouse a personal commitment to improving

intergroup relations. Two interviewees (one Albanian, one Macedonian) referred to their own experiences as motivating factors: one recalled studying at a mixed school as a child, while another described the multicultural friendship group she had developed as a university student. Both spoke of a desire to provide their pupils with similar opportunities. A third teacher, from a Macedonian background, had become involved in order to share the experience she had accrued from previous intercultural education initiatives. With their focus on relationship-building, such comments suggest a greater alignment of aims between teachers and program designers in Macedonia than among those in Northern Ireland.

This commitment to enhancing relations could be thwarted, however, by the lack of extrinsic incentives for participation. In contrast to Northern Ireland, where sharing occurred through regular curriculum classes, the extracurricular nature of shared student activities in Macedonia required teachers to work more than their mandatory curriculum hours. As there was no additional payment for this work nor any operative mechanism for career enhancement, there was some resistance from teachers, despite the legal requirement to provide these elective activities. Indeed, the lack of remuneration for the additional work was described as “the biggest complaint from the teachers from both sides” (project coordinator, Albanian-language school). Also challenging was an apparently disparate commitment to the program between Macedonian- and Albanian-language schools, with program coordinators reporting less interest and engagement among the latter. This was thought to reflect wider issues with educational quality in these schools, as well as more widespread disengagement from (perceived) state-sanctioned activities among ethnic Albanians.

#### IMPLEMENTING AND FUNDING SHARED ACTIVITIES

Across both jurisdictions, the implementation of shared and interethnic education required considerable organization of schedules and transport. In Northern Ireland, coordinating timetables across schools was among the most frequently cited challenges, particularly where a large number of subjects was delivered collaboratively. Interviewees described the need for “a lot of pre-planning of the timetable” (teacher, Protestant school) and raised concerns that this created “significant challenges . . . in terms of flexibility” (principal, Protestant school). While this could be frustrating, interviewees weighed such challenges against the educational value of collaboration, particularly curriculum enhancement, and for that reason they remained committed. They also reported that scheduling became easier over time, although several teachers remained resistant to extending shared education to the lower schools due the scheduling difficulties it would present.



Moving pupils between schools was similarly complex, particularly where partner institutions were some distance from each other or located in areas where travelling on foot was unsafe. Interviewees reported that travelling could be disruptive and expressed concerns about the impact on the timetable (“a class that would be an hour in actual fact is one-and-a-half”; teacher, Protestant school) and the loss of contact time (“someone who is coming to us from the high school . . . they could be losing out on maybe ten minutes of GCSE music or ten minutes of an A-level class”; principal, Catholic school), as well as the cost of coaches and taxis. They spoke of the assistance provided by the project funding, particularly for transport, which they said had been vital to the frequency and sustainability of shared activities.

Teachers in Macedonia faced similar challenges in scheduling shared activities and transporting pupils between schools, although these issues were exacerbated by the lack of financial support available to schools and the limited space in which to hold shared classes. Due to the lack of capacity within the school building, the multilanguage school in our study operated separate shifts for different languages of instruction. This meant that pupils from different language groups were in school at different times and, consequently, opportunities for joint activities were limited. To address this, shared activities were scheduled at the end of the first shift, the hope being that those in the second shift would arrive early to participate. While this appeared the most feasible approach, schools faced the persistent problem of pupils from the second shift being unable or choosing not to arrive early.

Where sharing occurred between rather than within schools, travel difficulties compounded scheduling concerns. With geographic and residential segregation prevalent in Macedonia, transport was required to cover the long distances between schools or to prevent exposing students to hostility in areas of tension. However, meeting the cost of this was difficult due to the lack of reliable funding, which led to some risky situations. For example, staff from one partnership had attempted to reduce costs by transporting pupils on foot, and they described incidents of ethnic violence that had occurred as they travelled between schools. Despite this, the coordinating staff was ambivalent about meeting the additional cost of transport, arguing that the program’s sustainability would depend on support from state and municipal government rather than short-term project funding. In July 2016, shortly after the interviews were completed, the law was changed to provide financial support up to 30,000 Macedonian denars (approximately U.S. \$600), via an open bid process, to schools for activities involving ethnically and/or linguistically mixed groups of pupils. While a significant step in securing



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state support for interethnic education, the timing of this change was such that it had little impact on most IIEP activities. At the time of writing, the effectiveness of this funding was still to be determined.

PROMOTING INTEGRATION AND DEALING WITH DIFFERENCE

Shared education in Northern Ireland has been characterized by its non-directive approach, with school partners encouraged to build activities around their existing priorities. While it is anticipated that they will “create a space where . . . young people are allowed to talk about identity, Catholics and Protestants, community and culture” (SEP 2008, 2), schools are not required to specify how they will do this. In the absence of such a requirement, it appeared that schools had given little consideration to the mechanics of relationship-building. There was no reference in the interviews to teachers participating in training to prepare for mixed classes or adopting particular pedagogical approaches. Indeed, staff generally saw little need for specific training for shared education, believing they already had the skills and attitudes necessary to lead shared classes. Two interviewees (both Catholics from rural schools) suggested, moreover, that teachers’ attempts to orchestrate relationship-building could be counterproductive, and they preferred to let interactions take their own course. Only when interviewees had encountered a difficult situation, such as a staff member reacting poorly to a perceived insult during a shared activity, did the matter of staff development arise.

This laissez-faire approach extended to the exploration of political, cultural, or religious differences through shared education, which was not widespread. Teachers and principals from each religious group and both rural and urban areas spoke of having limited time during curriculum classes to address such issues, or they said they were uncomfortable exploring differences in mixed groups and preferred to emphasize pupils’ common experiences. Discussions of community differences that arose between pupils were not always welcome: a teacher in an urban Catholic school, for example, made it clear that she had not encouraged her pupils’ conversation about St. Patrick’s Day.<sup>2</sup> There were exceptions to this attitude, most notably a Schools Across Borders project that was delivered at the three urban schools. The project involved learning about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and included discussions with students visiting from that region, along with role play and perspective-taking exercises. However, comments from the teacher leading this class suggested that there had been limited opportunity to

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<sup>2</sup> As the feast of the patron saint of Ireland, St. Patrick’s Day has tended to be celebrated more widely among Catholics than among Protestants in Northern Ireland.

explore the parallels between the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the Northern Ireland experience.

In Macedonia, in keeping with the IIEP's emphasis on integration, staff gave greater consideration to diversity in the development and delivery of the shared education program. This was evident in their approach to capacity-building with teachers, which encouraged them to reflect on their own beliefs and attitudes and to consider the implications they had for their teaching. This consideration was also apparent in efforts to promote equal status between the different groups in shared classes, including using all languages equitably in the classroom and selecting the same number of students from each ethnic group to participate in activities, such as multicultural workshops. To promote positive encounters, the activities were limited to "24 students, 12 of them Macedonians and 12 Albanians, all gender-balanced, 6 Albanian boys and 6 girls, and the same with Macedonian students" (teacher, Albanian-language school).

With respect to the exploration of difference, however, the picture was more mixed. For example, while multicultural workshops sought to explore pupils' diverse cultural backgrounds and enhance their interactions, the highly structured sessions left little opportunity to discuss potentially more contentious issues, such as discrimination and social injustice. This preference for celebratory activities was characteristic of the IIEP and reflected a desire among staff to avoid disturbing the delicate harmony within the group. Illustrating this, a teacher at the Albanian-language school said she did not wish to "break the atmosphere by talking about something that is not pleasant." Arguing that integration was better served by "interesting activities when [pupils] will have positive feelings" (teacher, multicultural school), interviewees described the exploration of difference as undesirable. In this respect, the Northern Ireland program's tendency to avoid discussions of difference was replicated in Macedonia, at least with respect to the more sensitive aspects.

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

At the outset of this article we outlined two aims: to identify lessons learned that can improve the implementation of current and future shared education initiatives, and to analyze the policy transfer process and answer key questions about the purpose, nature, and impact of transfer. While acknowledging that this study was small in scale and that our conclusions are thus largely indicative,

we reflect in this section on our findings and their implications relative to these research aims.

### **LESSONS FOR THE DELIVERY AND TRANSFER OF SHARED EDUCATION**

The foregoing analysis has highlighted a number of features of shared education in Northern Ireland that have been incorporated into the IIEP in Macedonia. These include the development of school collaboration as a way to enhance contact between pupils from different ethnic backgrounds, the emphasis on regular and sustained encounters (where feasible), and the inclusion in the program of an advocacy strand to build support among school leaders and education officials. The presence of these features in the Macedonian program speaks to their “transferability” across divided education systems. A model of school collaboration, for example, can provide pupils with regular opportunities to meet peers from a different ethnic or cultural group without the perceived threat to school and community identity that may accompany proposals to amalgamate separate schools (Loader and Hughes 2017). Although this model has its own challenges, especially with scheduling and transport, findings from this study indicate that these challenges diminish over time and are considered by staff to be outweighed by the program’s benefits.

In addition to collaboration and advocacy, the lack of opportunity to discuss the more contentious aspects of difference is a further similarity between the two programs, although this appears to have been unplanned. Particularly evident at the level of practice, this was attributable to time limitations or to teachers’ anxiety and their unwillingness to encourage such discussions. Although the lack of discussion might preserve harmony in mixed groups, as was the intention, it also can mean that the beliefs and practices that perpetuate inequality and discrimination remain unaddressed (Dovidio et al. 2016; Maoz 2011). While this suggests a need for further support and guidance on engaging with issues of conflict and social justice, it also speaks to the importance of clarifying the intended outcomes and markers of success within shared and interethnic education. At present, the absence of formal expectations as to what these programs should achieve (and, specifically, the role of intergroup dialogue) and how it should be demonstrated can result in program delivery that varies across schools and may not fulfill certain (currently informal) aspirations of the model. Clearer objectives and expectations in both countries could help to address this. At the same time, the particular efforts to promote intergroup understanding in Macedonia should be acknowledged, especially the extensive teacher training and the attention to ethnic and gender balance in mixed activities. There are lessons in this approach

for Northern Ireland, which has given these aspects of shared education only limited attention.

As this last point indicates, the study has also revealed several areas of divergence between shared and interethnic education. Perhaps the most significant of these is the different emphasis on educational aims (i.e., improving educational quality and extending the curriculum) within the respective programs. The shared education model developed in Northern Ireland puts similar importance on social and educational aims, but the latter receive only limited attention in Macedonia. This in part reflects different emphases in the two countries' education policies. Given the focus on performativity in Northern Ireland, the program's educational aims have been prioritized to ensure that it is not marginalized, as prior school-based contact initiatives were. While education in Macedonia is not performance-orientated to the same degree, the country's increasing focus on improving educational standards (see Auld and Morris 2014) may mean that interethnic education will struggle to gain long-term traction unless it can demonstrate that it has a positive impact on education provision. One way to do this would be to link interethnic education to the current priority to improve the physical environment of schools in Macedonia, thereby highlighting the potential of collaboration to promote the sharing of high-quality facilities. Another approach might be to more strongly promote the economic case for interethnic and bilingual education in a plural and global society, thereby addressing the concerns about economic competitiveness that drive most policy transfer. In Northern Ireland, the lack of attention to social aims may similarly limit the program's potential, in this case to foster long-term change in relations. Current and future shared education initiatives must pay careful attention to the balance of social and educational aims if they are to ensure progress on both.

A second evident difference between the two programs is one of scale. In Macedonia, the IIEP was introduced more rapidly and more extensively than the program in Northern Ireland, and with more significant outreach and capacity-building functions. Consequently, resources were spread more thinly in Macedonia, with many schools receiving little or no financial support for interethnic activities until the changes were made in state funding in July 2016. While acknowledging the difference in available financing between these countries, the current study demonstrates the importance of adequate resourcing for shared education, particularly in the early stages. Securing appropriate support from relevant education authorities or independent funders prior to a large-scale rollout should therefore be a priority for future initiatives.

### ANALYZING POLICY TRANSFER

Our second aim in this article was to provide an analysis of policy transfer between Northern Ireland and Macedonia. Drawing on Phillips and Ochs's (2003) model, we have explained that policy transfer in this case was a voluntary process undertaken by two NGOs, UNICEF and USAID, in conjunction with the Centre for Shared Education at QUB in response to a need to address educational segregation in Macedonia. Motivated by discontent with existing approaches to integration, these organizations looked to the Northern Ireland model for a strategy—that is, interschool collaboration—and supporting processes to improve intergroup relations through schools. Collaboration between the two countries ensured that the resulting initiative in Macedonia was realistic and based on an understanding of local dynamics.

The program that resulted in Macedonia was thus an emulation rather than a copy of the Northern Ireland initiative (Dolowitz and Marsh 2000), which is a reflection of the differences between the two contexts. These include multiple languages in Macedonia, the differing designation of subjects as curricular or extracurricular across the two countries, and Northern Ireland's greater emphasis on collaboration in education policy. Such adaptations may be legitimate to ensure the model's success in a new context, but they also raise issues of integrity. If at least one of the original model's core aims—in this case, to enhance curriculum delivery and educational quality—is de-emphasized in the new context, can the new initiative be accurately described as an example of shared education? As Northern Ireland shares its experience with other countries, the question of what defines shared education and what ought to be emphasized in transfer may require further consideration.

Analysis of the transfer process also demonstrated that differences could emerge in practice, even when the design was similar in the two countries. For example, while the model of school collaboration was adopted by the IIEP in Macedonia, it was hindered by a lack of engagement among some Albanian-language schools. Consequently, the contribution made to school partnerships by Macedonian-language and Albanian-language schools could be less equal than intended and less equal than was typical between collaborating schools in Northern Ireland. Such findings highlight the importance of examining the design, implementation, and “enactment” (Ball, Maguire, and Braun 2012, 6) of policy in both the originating and the receiving context. As Ball and colleagues argue, policy is “interpreted and translated and reconstructed and remade” (2012, 6) in schools and classrooms, and analyses of policy transfer should take this into consideration.

As we noted at the outset, international education has put increasing emphasis on policy transfer as a way to enhance educational performance and economic competitiveness among individual nation-states. In this article, we have considered transfer for another purpose: to build social cohesion in societies experiencing ethnic or religious division. There is a need for further work in this area, both to create space for educational transfer of this type and, through examination of real-world cases, to provide theoretical insights and guidance on effective practice. As the experience of shared education has demonstrated, such endeavors will depend on effective collaboration among all relevant actors—academics, NGOs, policy professionals, and perhaps most fundamentally, educators themselves.

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# THE POLITICS OF EDUCATION IN IRAQ: THE INFLUENCE OF TERRITORIAL DISPUTE AND ETHNO-POLITICS ON SCHOOLING IN KIRKUK

KELSEY SHANKS

## ABSTRACT

*The Iraqi Disputed Territories, or Disputed Internal Boundaries, consist of 15 districts stretching across four northern governorates from the Syrian to Iranian borders. The oil-rich Iraqi governorate of Kirkuk lies at the heart of this dispute and reflects the country's ethnic and religious diversity. Arabs, Turkmen, Kurds, and Assyrians all claim ancient settlement patterns within the governorate. The symbolic importance of Kirkuk as a homeland to both Kurds and the Turkmen conflicts directly with its strategic importance to Baghdad. While the two linguistically distinct centers of governance vie for control, interethnic communal tensions are rising and questions of identity increasingly overshadow day-to-day life. The existing research on Kirkuk focuses heavily on governance outcomes and possible administrative solutions, but little has been written about the impact of heightened identity politics on the everyday lives of citizens. This paper explores the influence of these conflicts and contests on education in the city of Kirkuk.*

## INTRODUCTION

The Iraqi Disputed Territories, or Disputed Internal Boundaries, consist of 15 districts stretching across four northern governorates from the Syrian to Iranian borders. The oil-rich governorate of Kirkuk, with its capital of the same name, lies at the heart of the dispute and reflects the country's ethnic and religious diversity.

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Arabs, Turkmen, Kurds, and Assyrians all declare ancient settlement patterns within the governorate. The symbolic importance of Kirkuk as a homeland to both Kurds and Turkmen conflicts directly with its strategic importance to Baghdad. The two linguistically distinct centers of governance have vied for control of the region since 2003, which has resulted in changing regional power dynamics. Military operations to protect against, and later remove, the Islamic State (IS) and the inclusion of the disputed territories in the Kurdistan Regional Government's (KRG) independence referendum in September 2017 have made these power dynamics more complex.

The existing research on Kirkuk focuses heavily on military maneuvers, governance outcomes, and possible administrative solutions to the conflict. However, although the ethnic nature of the territorial dispute has resulted in questions of identity that increasingly overshadow daily life, little has been written about the impact the heightened identity politics have on the everyday lives of citizens. Building on previous research (Shanks 2016) that highlighted the significant role education has played in cultural reproduction in Iraq, this paper seeks to unpack how this environment has influenced the delivery of education in the city of Kirkuk and lay out the specific implications ethnic conflict has for education administration and content.

The paper is broken down into four sections: an introduction to Kirkuk and its political context; a justification for the study's methodological choices; an overview of the academic framing and literature pertaining to the politics of education; and most significantly, a final section that presents the research findings.

## **THE KIRKUK CONTEXT**

Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Kirkuk's symbolic importance as a homeland to both the Kurds and the Turkmen conflicted directly with its strategic importance to Baghdad. Identity politics plagued the north of Iraq, and Kirkuk in particular. The Ba'ath political party conducted a brutal campaign of Arabization across the region, systematically expelled hundreds of thousands of Kurds and other ethnic groups from the region, and denied the ethnic rights of non-Arab populations (Shanks 2015). Baghdad made every attempt to assert a false Arab dominance and counter non-Arab ethnic claims to demographic dominance in the north. For example, the central government renamed roads to reflect Arab nationalism and restricted the provision of ethnically specific education for non-Arab groups. Baghdad not only drove out a proportion of the existing population, it also

persuaded poor Arabs from the south to settle in the newly vacated homes in the north, enhancing the offer with grants of up to 10,000 Iraqi Dinars (Romano 2007). During the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq War, Iraqi Kurds' involvement with Iranian forces preceded Baghdad's Al-Anfal campaign, which affected all communities in the north of Iraq and claimed the lives of 100,000 to 200,000 Iraqi Kurdish civilians in northern Iraq (Romano 2007).<sup>1</sup>

By the end of the first Gulf War, the majority of the Kurdish-populated areas in northern Iraq were effectively outside of Baghdad's control. The imposition of a no-fly zone and the unofficial boundary known as the green line resulted in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq achieving relative autonomy from Saddam Hussein's Iraq in 1991. However, a number of Kurdish-populated areas that lay beyond the green line continued to fall under Baghdad's control, including Kirkuk. In the aftermath of the 2003 invasion of Iraq, the KRG and the Iraqi government both laid claim to land bordering the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The official contest over Kirkuk's administration has resulted in a tug-of-war between Baghdad and Erbil, the capital of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, that has frequently stalled the Iraqi political system; in 2018, an administrative solution for the disputed territories remains elusive. Meanwhile, the disputed territories have been subject to heightened identity politics and sectarian insecurity, and ethnic groups across the region have been pulled into a dispute over complex ethnically defined claims and demographic compositions.

The dispute runs deeper than the political contest, as Kurds' and others' narratives of belonging rely on historical ethnic claims to their homelands. The Kurds' history of persecution appears to drive the imperative to control their destiny in Kirkuk and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, and it is widely accepted that Iraq's Kurdish population would not accept the forsaking of Kirkuk. Therefore, the dispute is closely linked to Kurdish national identity, and the city has come to symbolize the Kurdish struggle (Stansfield 2004). Subsequently, the question of Kirkuk's future has grown into a powerfully sacred concern, with the city often described by the Kurdish leadership as their "Jerusalem" (Rafaat 2008, 252). Since 2003, the Kurdish authorities have consolidated their authority in Kirkuk, demanded protected autonomy similar to what they had pre-2003, and demanded the opportunity, via referendum, to extend the boundaries of Kurdish autonomy in Iraq to include Kirkuk. Kurdish authorities hold that accepting the Kurdistan Region of Iraq's

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<sup>1</sup> The Anfal genocide killed between 50,000 and 182,000 Kurds in the north of Iraq. It was committed during the Al-Anfal campaign, which was led by Ali Hassan al-Majid during the final stages of the Iran-Iraq War.

claim to Kirkuk is the only geographically, historically, demographically, and morally sound action (O'Leary 2005).

However, while Kirkuk is often referred to as “The Heart” of Kurdistan, it is equally important to the Turkmen people, who regard the diagonal strip of land stretching from the Syrian and Turkish border areas in the north of Iraq to the town of Mendeli on the Iranian border in central Iraq as *Turkmeneli* (Turkmen land), with Kirkuk as its center. The Iraqi Turkmen community has expressed concern that its suffering has been underplayed or ignored entirely (Kerkuklu 2007; Stansfield 2004; Al-Hirmizi 2005), as academics and commentators alike tend to focus Kurdish demographic movements and suffering in the region. Moreover, the vast majority of the literature from the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century onward is either focused on elite Iraqi political history or deemed “romantically pro-Kurdish” (Stansfield and Anderson 2009a). The Turkmen narrative is framed by the injustices inflicted on them throughout the 20th century at the hands of the state and the ever-encroaching Kurdish population. The Turkmen claim to Kirkuk is further deepened by a historical narrative in which their ancestors have been present in the region for centuries and have enjoyed key moments in the region’s leadership (Stansfield and Anderson 2009b). Many Turkmen commentators point to their community’s settlement patterns in and around the citadel, the oldest area in the city of Kirkuk, which they claim reflect their primacy.

Kirkuk is also home to a large Arab population, both indigenous and those forced to migrate, and to a smaller Assyrian population, both of which also have historic claims to the city. Kurdish authorities have pushed for an aggressive reversal of population movements instigated by the central government’s Arabization policies (Human Rights Watch 2009), but observations in the media and on social media demonstrate that this push has been met by fervent opposition from Kirkuk’s Turkmen and Arabs.<sup>2</sup>

The sheer complexity of the issue is illustrated by the fact that the timeline of the Arabization policies has enabled Arab settlers in Kirkuk, including those who were largely coerced by Saddam to settle in the north under the banner of “return,” to intermarry with the existing population and to see their children and grandchildren born in the city. Expelling the Arab settlers now, an action

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2 Reflected in media and social media monitored between 2012-2017.



that is highly contested and frequently seen as the forcible expulsion of the Arab community from Kirkuk<sup>3</sup>, is seen as perpetrating further injustice.<sup>4</sup>

Movements of the Islamic State have further complicated the dynamics in Kirkuk. Under the banner of a unified religious identity, IS took control of large swaths of Iraq's multiethnic Disputed Internal Boundaries, including Hawija in the district of Al-Hawija, which resulted in an unforeseen shift in regional power dynamics in Kirkuk. With the sudden departure of Iraqi security forces, the Kurdish military advanced across the green line to protect the city. The Kurdish population viewed this action as necessary to prevent territory from falling to IS, but others saw it as an opportunistic land grab to further the Kurds' control of the city. Feeling empowered by the significant role Kurdish Peshmerga forces played in the defeat of IS, the KRG chose to hold an independence referendum in September 2017. Controversially, and without consensus among the Kurdish political parties, the vote was extended to include Kirkuk—rather than limited to only the three governorates that officially make up the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Turkmen, Arab, and Yezidi communities outside the Kurdistan Region of Iraq objected to Kirkuk's inclusion in the vote, and Baghdad saw the move as inciting conflict. Baghdad subsequently retook control of Kirkuk in October 2017 in a relatively peaceful military maneuver that was preceded by negotiations with the Kurdish political party, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan. Not content with retaking Kirkuk, Baghdad's forces continued across the region and retook disputed territories that had been under Kurdish control since 2003, effectively restoring the 2003 boundaries and halting the Kurds' plan to establish an independent Kurdish state.

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3 The Coalition Provisional Authority, which governed Iraq in the year after the 2003 invasion, responded to the demographic situation in Kirkuk by implementing a “stay-put” policy for Arab settlers. Negotiations over the permanent Iraqi Constitution almost failed over the question of Kirkuk, but the Kurdish parties were ultimately successful. The resulting Article 140 of the new constitution necessitated a three-stage process: normalization, census, and referendum. Normalization would be achieved by the assisted return of internally displaced people and the recovery of their property. Arab settlers who choose to return to southern and central Iraq would be helped in doing so, and the boundaries of the governorate of Kirkuk would be restored to that of pre-1974. Subsequently, a census and a referendum would be conducted to decide the future of the city and the governorate. The set deadline for the implementation of this article was December 2007. However, the implementation window expired, was extended, and expired again. Efforts to resolve the status of Kirkuk have currently stalled over non-implementation of Article 140.

4 Media observations supported by interview data collected between 2012-2015; media observations and interviews AB2, ABA, KD9, and thesis interviews 2012.

## METHODOLOGY

The findings of this paper draw from research conducted between 2011 and 2014 and follow-up data collection conducted between 2014 and 2016. The study employed a purposive sampling method involving qualitative data collection tools. The key modalities for the primary data collection were focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews; consultations were conducted in Kirkuk and Erbil.<sup>5</sup> Data from interviews and focus groups were supplemented by secondary document analysis; monitoring of local and international media and social media; NGO field reports and cluster meeting minutes; and various local human rights agency reports, most of which were associated with one particular community, to further inform and contextualize the research findings.

The criteria for selecting interview and focus group participants centered around two principles. The first was the general rule of achieving a purposive sample that was representative of city's diversity and which included balanced representation from the different ethnically defined schools. The second was that participants had to be knowledgeable about the research questions on education. Therefore, head teachers, teachers, and community representatives were selected. These criteria were later expanded to include education specialists from within political, religious, civil, and international organizations operating in the area. This reflects the myriad actors who, due to the limited capacity of state-funded education, currently influence the provision of education in Iraq's disputed territories.

Participants were located through a number of channels and all efforts were made to ensure a diverse range of participants. To unpack the influence of politics on classrooms, it was vital to ensure that all perspectives were given a voice. First, ministry of education officials from both Baghdad and Erbil were contacted to gain permission to do the research. This had a snowball effect, as the ministry contacts eventually led us to additional interview subjects. It was essential to also seek participants who were not working with UN agencies or closely associated with the education ministry. Therefore, the third source of participants was local civil society organizations and academics with a vested interest in the formal education system. Ultimately, the interview and focus group data and secondary

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<sup>5</sup> Interviews and focus groups were the most appropriate modality of data collection in order to gain an in-depth and thorough understanding of peoples' experiences of education policy and practice. The use of such open discussion would aim to establish the necessary factual information, as well as interview participants' perceptions of education's purpose. Connor proposed that "identity does not draw its sustenance from facts but from perceptions; perceptions are as important or more than reality when it comes to ethnic issues" (1997, 33). This influential work resonated with the objectives of this research and further confirmed the necessary modality for primary data collection.

materials, such as statements issued by government officials or representatives of a particular ethnic group, were collected from 48 education officials and community representatives across the territories.

The researcher was acutely aware of her lack of fluency in the three main languages of the region and took measures to counteract this deficit. To ensure that academic literature in languages other than English was obtained, the researcher contacted two Iraqi academic research centers in Amman, spent a day at each, and then conducted Arabic-language interviews with the academics working there to determine if any publications had been missed. The researcher also was assisted by the Turkmen Human Rights Foundation, a Turkmen NGO, in identifying Turkish literature on the subject. Finally, colleagues helped conduct the Kurdish literature search. Although nothing was found that tackled the main topics of this paper, these efforts did enable the researcher to identify key texts that helped to contextualize the data described above.

The political realities of the contested territories had an impact on the data collection and consultation process. Interviews often ended abruptly due to security alerts, and it was necessary to travel at certain times for security reasons. In this respect, it was essential to have a flexible research design in terms of collecting the required data. For example, using email to interview participants who were unable to travel, whose interviews were cut short, or who were not forthcoming in the interview setting was a useful tool.<sup>6</sup> The insecure environment also created a degree of distrust, and a number of interviewees requested that notes not be taken. In these cases, notes were written up directly after the interview but they included no direct quotes, for fear of misquoting participants.

Great importance was placed on validating the findings and analytical conclusions, which was achieved through a number of channels: emailing report findings to a number of key community members; providing report findings to key members of the journalist community and NGO workers; and, finally, presenting the research at a UNICEF-sponsored workshop on peace education in Kirkuk in 2015.<sup>7</sup>

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6 Providing participants with the opportunity to follow up on the interview via email enriched the data collection more than was anticipated. Many participants had more information to share after the interview. This generally consisted of a written report pertaining to the issues we had discussed during our interview and opened channels for continued communication and clarification of issues raised in the reports provided.

7 The findings were supported by all but one interlocutor present at the workshop. There was some objection from a member of the Kirkuk provisional council during the workshop. This individual rejected the findings and registered a complaint that the research portrayed Kirkuk in a negative light.

## UNDERSTANDING THE POLITICS OF EDUCATION DELIVERY

To understand the complex relationship between identity politics and education in Kirkuk, we must first move away from the commonly held belief that education is an apolitical technical pursuit. Just as aid interventions are no longer viewed as impartial, there is increasing awareness that education systems are not unbiased and are usually designed by elite groups. Correspondingly, over the past decade the international education agenda has shifted to recognize the potential influence education has over social dynamics and the spheres of security, governance, and economics (Brock 2011; Bush and Saltarelli 2000; Conflict Sensitivity Consortium 2012; Davies 2004; Mundy and Dryden-Peterson 2015; Gaigals and Leonhardt 2001; Østby and Urdal 2010; Shields and Paulson 2015; Smith 2010).

The conceptualization of education as being outside the political framework was first challenged by early analysts of nationalism. The important purpose endowed on education by 19th-century state-building projects saw schools play a key role in government communication with the population, which served to disperse an image of the nation and promote national loyalty (Hobsbawn 1996). The transmission of nationalist propaganda through what Gallagher refers to as “common rituals and practices toward iconic images of state and nation” (2004, 23) has seen education commonly being used to assimilate populations (Churchill 1996). Smith and Vaux (2003) have given nationalist school structures a corresponding assimilationist classification. Assimilationist systems provide the opportunity to reinforce the governing language and culture by offering “single institutions operating according to the values of the dominant tradition” (46). As such, ethnically and politically exclusive versions of history, geography, and religion are used to transmit an exclusive banner of national identity, at the expense of minority groups (Skutnabb-Kangas 2002).

Conversely, Smith and Vaux (2003) highlight the fact that “separatist” school systems can serve different constituencies through relatively ethnically homogeneous intakes. Discussions of separatist institutions depend on the historic, geographic, and political contexts in which they operate. Separatist structures exist in a number of forms in countries with divided societies: the peaceful educational pluralism of Canada and Belgium, the complicit character of separatist schooling in Bosnia (Torsti 2009) and Northern Ireland (Gallagher 2004), the imposition of apartheid in South Africa (Davies 2008, vi), and the privatized education system in Lebanon that has resulted in the de facto separation of students based on community affiliation (Akar and Albrecht 2017).

Separatist education systems are no more insulated from political influence than assimilationist systems, and they can as easily become party to broader ethno-political or sectarian agendas. Gallagher (2004) offers three hypotheses to explain how separatist education structures have negatively impacted sectarian divides, using Northern Ireland as an illustrative case.

First, the cultural hypothesis suggests that separatist schools exacerbate community divisions by introducing potentially opposing cultural environments. Curricula that offer the potentially political subjects of history, geography, and language tend to emphasize the differences between communities and fail to acknowledge mutual dependency. In this sense, many have proposed that education content can be manipulated for ethnocentric purposes (King 2011; Kirk and Winthrop 2007; Paulson and Rappleye 2007; Smith 2005). School curricula provide a medium for the transmission of knowledge between generations and therefore are seen as an “extremely powerful tool to promote particular political ideologies, religious practices or cultural values and traditions” (Smith 2010, 17). As such, school content gives students a narrative of the “past and visions for the future” (Paulson 2011, 3) that can influence how they locate themselves and their communities in the context of present conflicts. King (2014) observes that the curriculum was a key tool of the state in the construction and collectivization of ethnic groups in Rwanda. She demonstrates how the histories of the Hutus and Tutsis were depicted as being fundamentally oppositional. Examination of textbooks used in Pakistan and India has shown how they similarly emphasize sectarian divisions and promote exclusive identities (International Crisis Group 2014; Kumar 2002; Lall 2008). In Sri Lanka, Sinhalese textbooks in the 1970s and 1980s were strewn with descriptions of the Tamils as the historical enemies of the Sinhalese and actively celebrated those who had vanquished the Tamils in ancient wars (Nissan 1996).

Second, Gallagher’s (2004) social hypothesis suggests that, regardless of what is taught, separatist schools emphasize and validate group differences and hostilities, thereby encouraging mutual ignorance and suspicion. Third, Gallagher points to wider inequality between groups, noting that separatist school structures create an opportunity to provide unequal education between communities. This creates concerns about education inputs, such as how state resources are allocated. Schools are one of the most prevalent and obvious state institutions, and as such have the potential to highlight institutional discrimination. In Nepal, for example, the Maoist insurgency capitalized on educational disparities as part of its campaign to undermine government legitimacy (Parker and Standing 2007; Pherali 2013).

Another category in Smith and Vaux's (2003) classification of school systems highlights the more positive role of an "integrationist" system, which is defined as "common or shared institutions with diversity represented within the population of each institution" (49). In its ideal form, this model should allow divergent identities to be negotiated in the classroom without political influence. Although it is worth noting that, in a fragile multiethnic society, achieving this form of schooling is challenging. Historical representation of different groups can create ideological battlegrounds that are extremely difficult to navigate.

Smith and Vaux's (2003) typology highlights the need to pay significantly more attention to potential political influence in the classroom. Kirkuk has witnessed a number of ethno-politically driven changes in education over the last 20 years as school systems have moved from assimilationist to separatist (Shanks 2016). The Ba'ath party used the curriculum to promote party ideology and enforce the image of an exclusively Arab Iraq. History and geography lessons failed to recognize the ethnically diverse makeup of Kirkuk, and at the same time as community language schools were obstructed and ethnically specific education rights were denied to non-Arab groups (Shanks 2016). Schools even became party to the regime's surveillance operations, as those who expressed themselves freely were reported and punished (de Santisteban 2005). Education's role in the socialization of identity and its significance in building national unity ensured that it was manipulated by the Ba'ath party's Arabization policies.

The post-2003 reconstruction process saw the new Iraqi constitution recognize the country's multiethnic and multireligious nature. It guaranteed "the right of Iraqis to educate their children in their mother tongue, such as Turkmen, Syriac and Armenian" (Article 4), which obligated the KRG and the central government in Baghdad to provide education in a variety of languages. Consequently, calls for linguistically appropriate schooling were heard from all of Kirkuk's communities. Previous research has noted that education reconstruction in post-2003 Iraq was shaped by the need to preserve identity, with community education decisions being made to promote ethnic distinctiveness and fortify difference (Shanks 2016). As a result, education in Kirkuk is ethnically segregated, with separate schools serving the Arab, Turkmen, Kurdish, and Assyrian communities.<sup>8</sup>

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8 Different mediums of instruction have arisen within these schools, varying from entirely mother-tongue education in Kurdish and Turkmen to dominant language instruction in Arabic, with the inclusion of lessons in traditional languages such as Turkish and Assyrian in the school's timetable. This has resulted in increasingly ethnically homogeneous school intakes and a separatist education system within the multiethnic city (Shanks 2016).

This case study investigates the relationship between the ethno-political territorial dispute and the school system in Kirkuk, asking in particular how schools maintain a neutral position in such a complex environment. Due to the fluctuating administrative control of Kirkuk, issues of geography, history, and cultural representation are of great significance. While the political and military contest continues, the portrayal of ethnic histories has emotive value and can be linked with wider territorial claims and justifications. Ethnic groups in the city vary in terms of their geographic interpretation of homeland, their perception of ancient battle victories, and their experience of genocide. Such issues are contentious enough in a postconflict society, but with the added administrative contest in Kirkuk, history has become an extremely political tool. It is within this complex environment that the rest of this paper explores the influence ethno-politics has had on education delivery in the city of Kirkuk.

### **THE POLITICS OF EDUCATION MANAGEMENT IN KIRKUK**

As a result of the unsettled questions regarding administrative control in Kirkuk and the evolution of the semi-autonomous Kurdistan region, two regional education ministries administer education in northern Iraq: the central Iraqi ministry in Baghdad and the KRG ministry in Erbil. The two systems differ in terms of delivery and structure and are officially confined by their respective geographic remits. All education in Kirkuk Governorate, irrespective of the schools' ethnic or linguistic markers, officially falls under the jurisdiction of the central education ministry in Baghdad.

While the constitutional right of all Iraqis to educate their children in their mother tongue is accepted by Baghdad in principle, there has been little exploration of how this can best be implemented in practice. In the same way, many regional governance issues have been left ambiguous in the post-2003 Iraqi constitution (Bowring 2012), so too have the extent and implementation of mother-tongue education rights. Consequently, memorandums of support for non-dominant language schools receive little in the way of practical governmental support from Baghdad. The lack of textbook translations, teacher-training colleges, and supplementary teaching courses in non-Arabic languages are all points of contention across Iraq's multiethnic disputed territories (Shanks 2016). The government's failure to provide linguistically appropriate education resources has resulted in the perception that schools are receiving unequal education inputs due to their population's different identity markers.



In response to the lack of investment in non-Arabic education, communities have sought ethnically affiliated backers to ensure their ability to deliver mother-tongue or ethnically appropriate schooling. In Kirkuk, Kurdish language schools have turned to the KRG Ministry of Education in search of increased KRG influence. The Turkmen community has similarly sought support from a range of external sources to facilitate the translation of the entire Baghdad curriculum into Turkish. This support has come from a number of different actors in keeping with the geographic location of the recipient schools. Ankara Waqf and the Ministry of Endowment and Religious Affairs have translated the central Iraqi curriculum into Turkish (Interview TK34, conducted 2012), while the Iraqi Turkmen Front, a local political party, has periodically taken responsibility for printing and distributing textbooks (Interview TK34, conducted 2012).

The involvement of the KRG Ministry of Education and Turkmen parties in Kirkuk's education was justified by interlocutors with emotive language and presented as necessary for the continuation of ethnically appropriate education. The framing of Kurdish education in Kirkuk as being under threat is not uncommon; all the Kurdish educationalists and community leaders consulted stated that it would not be possible to provide mother-tongue education if it were not for Erbil: "The Kurdish authorities acted because they had to . . . without their support the Kurds in Kirkuk would only have Arabic textbooks" (Interview KD3, conducted 2011). "The KRG support has developed from necessity, Baghdad provide NO support . . . no teacher salaries, not my salary, no textbooks . . . Just this desk" (Interview KD, conducted 2011). This has created a variety of complex challenges, including the perception of enforced inequality, damage to political legitimacy, and a weakening of educational oversight.

That these external actors have varying degrees of influence and resource capability has further exacerbated the existing funding inequality between Arabic and non-Arabic schools and has created new divisions between the education systems in the non-Arabic communities. This has resulted in a complex service-delivery system based on ethnic identity, wherein education quality is reliant on identity affiliations. Returning to Gallagher's (2004) final hypothesis about the influence education inequality has on conflict, this is particularly concerning, given the existing intergroup fragility and wider ethno-political context in Kirkuk. Interviews and focus groups with Kurdish, Turkmen, and Assyrian actors referred frequently to the lack of central support given their ethnically defined separate schools and demonstrated resentment of the external support sought by their neighbors of other ethnicities (Interview data, collected 2012-2013). This



resentment appears to be compounded by the lack of communication between schools and a lack of transparency among school backers.

The perception of discrimination in the allocation of public spending has led to serious unrest in many conflict-affected countries (International Crisis Group 2014; World Bank 2011). There is an established understanding in political science that relative deprivation (Gurr 1970) and the resulting feelings of grievance can instigate internal conflicts. Stewart expanded on the notion of inequality and grievance in an ethnically homogeneous population (vertical inequality) to introduce the concept of horizontal inequality, or “severe inequalities between culturally defined groups” (2002, 3). When such inequalities are perceived to be horizontal, and therefore defined by identity markers such as language, religion, or tribe, mobilizing groups for the purpose of collective action can lead to ethnic conflict and sectarian fighting (Murshed 2008).

A decade of armed conflict and insecurity has resulted in significant instability within the social and political realms in Iraq, which has included the weakening of state institutions and insufficient funding of education across the country post-2003 (Shanks 2015). Moreover, due to the broader political standoff over the administrative control of the disputed territories, these lower levels of allocated resources were often perceived by interview and focus group participants to have a deliberate political purpose. The neglect of Kurdish education has often been presented as a deliberate attempt to deny Kurds their place in the region and limit their numbers. Interviewees often made comments such as, “Kurdish language is unimportant to the center and they think it is politically unnecessary in the region as they want to control the area and have the administration in Arabic. It is a continuation of the Arabization policies of the past” (Interview KD8, conducted 2011).

Baghdad’s perceived neglect of non-Arabic education has a number of complex implications for future governance solutions. As a public good provided by the state, education plays a vital role in establishing state legitimacy. Scholars have found that equal educational investment decreases grievances against the state (Østby, Nordås, and Rød 2009; Thyne 2006). The state’s commitment to all of Iraq’s ethno-sectarian groups is symbolically represented through its commitment to culturally appropriate education access. The Kurdish community’s reliance on the KRG Ministry of Education and the involvement of Turkmen political parties in state education serve to undermine Baghdad’s role and validity in Kirkuk’s overall administration. The involvement of ethnically affiliated political parties in school management can enforce the view that a community’s needs are served only

by those representing their identity group, thereby enforcing the ethno-political mindset. Such an arrangement supports the prevalent fear that, if administrative control of Kirkuk falls to an ethnically defined community group, the interests of others will not be met, thus hampering interdependency and cooperation.

The involvement of external actors has also affected the quality and oversight of education in Kirkuk. While the administration of education in Kirkuk remains officially under the remit of the central education ministry's directorate, the directorate in reality has no practical jurisdiction within the schools managed by the regional Kurdistan ministry. The Kirkuk education directorate expressed frustration that the mixed administration of schools limited their ability to oversee all teacher recruitment and prevented them from having a clear and transparent process (Directorate interview, conducted 2015). This situation has resulted in more than 7,000 teachers who are not answerable to the local education directorate (Directorate interview, conducted 2016), which raises questions about accountability and educational alignment. Focus groups with head teachers similarly raised concerns about the fact that no one body has jurisdiction in all schools, which has blurred the codes of conduct for schools and teaching staff. This is particularly important in terms of distinguishing between cultural celebration and political nationalism in the classroom, which the paper discusses in the next section.

### **THE POLITICS OF EDUCATION CONTENT IN KIRKUK**

The content of the Baghdad education ministry's curriculum is another highly contentious issue in the city of Kirkuk. The need to address the legacy of Arabization and remove Ba'athist ideology from textbooks was met with consensus from most Iraqis after 2003. Yet the resulting discussions created "debates that reflected the very rifts in Iraqi society that the curriculum sought to address" (IslamopediaOnline 2015). In 2008, the Iraqi government began a complete curriculum review under the guidance of UNESCO that was due to conclude in 2012. However, the satisfactory completion of the curriculum has evaded educationalists (Interview CRB1, conducted 2013).<sup>9</sup> The education ministries in both Baghdad and Erbil have registered the idea that a curriculum should not be dominated by ethnocentric interpretations of curricular subjects and should reflect the diversity of Iraq through history, religious education, geography, and language studies. Nevertheless, the persistent pattern of ethnic conflict and coexistence

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<sup>9</sup> Interview with member of curriculum review board, Kirkuk 2012.

across Iraq has created (as yet) irresolvable differences over interpretations of national and local histories.

The failure to overcome such difficulties has resulted in both education ministries facing continued criticism in Kirkuk for their representation of ethnic groups. Baghdad's textbooks are accused of failing to be inclusive and lacking recognition of non-Arab groups (Focus group 2, conducted 2015; Interviews conducted 2012-2015). Interviewees offered numerous examples to demonstrate that curriculum resources do not represent Kirkuk's diverse population. The religious and ethnic diversity of northern Iraq is not reflected through any subject, which has caused discontent and resentment in among non-Arab and non-Muslim communities. The Turkmen community feels aggrieved by their group's depiction through the lens of Ottoman rule and brutal colonialism (Focus group 2, conducted 2015; Interviews conducted 2012-2015). As one Turkmen teacher noted, "history books portray Turks as wrongdoers and killers. This is the remnants of Saddam's regime, but the bad information about Iran was removed so why not remove the bad against the Turks? I do not understand why we have not been supported in this way" (Interview TMN, conducted 2011). This statement was supported by a Kirkuki head teacher, who noted that "Turkmen are not represented in these textbooks. They do not show our impact on Iraqi culture. Kirkuk is a Turkmen city, the citadel has the original settlement patterns of the Turkmen people, our history is everywhere" (Focus group TMN, conducted 2011).

The KRG's curriculum includes greater representation of minority groups, but it is contested due to the Kurd-centric interpretations of historical events in textbooks and teaching resources. Minority groups are represented through their association with the Kurdish narrative, with Yezidis and Christians deemed primarily Kurdish regardless of their self-identification, which has prompted accusations of attempted "Kurdification" (numerous interviews with minority group community leaders from Ninewa and Kurdistan Region of Iraq, collected between 2011 and 2016). This can be illustrated through the mixed terminology used in textbooks. Kirmanj notes that textbooks often conflate the terms "Kurdish" and "Kurdistani" and use them interchangeably (2014a, 737). Moreover, the presence of Islamic education in the curriculum has been criticized by regional academics who suggest that the absolutist nature of the subject influences the delivery of religious science—a subject wherein students learn about other faiths in the region—by teaching about the religions from an Islamic perspective (Kirmanj 2014b).

With the omission of modern historical events and the denial of Iraq's indigenous diversity, it is possible that each community within the separatist education system will resort to presenting its own conflicting interpretation of history, as cautioned by Gallagher's (2004) cultural hypothesis. Graham-Brown also points out that an ethnic group's control of the history curriculum often leads to "the construction of a version of history . . . which heightens the role of that group at the expense of the others . . . [and the] suppression of events or cultural ideas . . . viewed as subversive or divisive' (1994, 28). Numerous accusations were made during the interviews that, in Kirkuk, history is already a matter of teacher interpretation: "The teaching of history in the schools here [Kirkuk] depends on the school and the teacher in charge. It is the same with Islamic classes. It is about the teacher's belief. Who is to complain when all the pupils are [of] the same [community]?" (Interview AS2, conducted 2012). In the absence of a workable curriculum, the subjects of history, geography, and Islamic education can become reflections of the classroom teacher's ideology. Anecdotal evidence from schools and education actors gathered during data collection confirmed that many teachers exercise their own judgment in the classroom and put less emphasis on parts of the curriculum that may conflict with their own views. The ethnically homogeneous nature of schools in Kirkuk has added to the acceptance of this improvised, ethnically biased presentation.

The interview and focus group data also provided numerous examples of what teachers perceived to be "intentional ethno-political interference" in Kirkuk's schools (Interviews HTT1, HTKD4; Focus group 1; Focus group 2; conducted 2015). Citing partisan and corrupt practices, interviewees indicated that both teacher recruitment and school ethos were subject to political intrusion. Accusations that teachers were appointed based on their political affiliation were heard within all teaching communities. This added credence to the fear that subject matter in the classroom would be used for politically motivated socialization projects. The perception is that, if teachers are appointed as a form of political patronage, the risk of teacher bias increases. Focus groups with head teachers also revealed that political pressure had been exerted on numerous schools across the ethnic spectrum to create an identity-driven ethos in school. This included pressure to commemorate ethnic martyrdom festivals, fly ethnicity-related flags, and sing ethnic anthems daily. Interviews also revealed that the political pressure on schools focused a good deal on encouraging exclusionary actions rather than on holding cultural celebrations that acknowledge the interdependent nature of Kirkuk's ethnic groups. They criticized the pressure for both its political nature and its imposition on the already limited teaching timetable. As one Kirkuk head teacher explained, "We do not have time for the full timetable, schools are in

shifts (classroom time is limited). Yet ‘they’ insist on these political displays . . . each ethnic group has a lot of martyrs you know! It’s not possible to teach if we cover them all! But there are people with influence who put pressure for us to do this” (Interview, conducted Kirkuk 2015). Nevertheless, the insecure ethno-political environment has led many schools to accommodate these requirements, often due to fear of reprisals.

How best to represent identity in the classroom emerged as a continuous theme throughout the data collection. Due to the complex context in the city, the line between expressing identity and ethnic nationalism is blurred. Ethnicity and control of political and social spaces underlie intercommunal conflicts, forced demographic changes, Article 140, and IS control of Mosul. The result is that politics and identity become viewed as one. When a school wants to celebrate a cultural event, those outside the ethnic group involved often consider it part of a political agenda rather than a celebration of identity. Therefore, innocent festivals with no political intentions are often frowned upon by those trying to insulate education from wider political influence. Flags, celebrations, anthems, and traditional clothing all have the potential to be imposed on others and misused for political purposes. However, some of these are also expressions of cultural freedom, which is deemed essential to the post-Arabization education system in Kirkuk. Kirkuk educationalists therefore face a distinct dilemma concerning how to celebrate their own cultural identity without alienating others or being drawn into the wider political contest. As one head teacher noted, “I want to show the children their history and culture, but I don’t want to teach them to hate their neighbor. Yet when I try it is high-jacked by the politicians, they change it, make it about politics” (Focus group 2, conducted 2015).

In such a heightened ethno-political environment as Kirkuk, all expressions of identity in the school system have the potential to underplay the need for mutual dependence among the communities. The separate nature of the system in Kirkuk, coupled with the intrusive political pressure on schools, creates an environment in which communities are left with irresolvable uncertainty about how their neighbor uses education. Communities are left wondering if other schools are celebrating their own distinct culture or are deliberately denying their place in the city. As one interviewee remarked, “Turkmen teach Turk history, Kurds teach Kurdish history, it is all separate. I do not think that a Kurdish teacher would choose to teach my history, would he? No” (Interview ABA2, conducted 2012). The ambiguity of nationalist projects within schools prompts an action-reaction process from other communities, whereby schools operate on the assumption that if “they” are teaching their version of events, we should teach ours. As one teacher

commented, “people teach their own history, so we should do the same” (Interview TK37, conducted 2015). When coupled with political pressure, contradictory and vague rhetoric and poor intergroup communication leads to the assumption of a worst-case scenario and provoke measures and counter-measures in which one group attempts to reinforce its own cultural existence by denying its neighbor’s cultural existence and claim to the city.

## CONCLUSION

This article has demonstrated how the current education system in Kirkuk risks undermining Baghdad’s legitimacy in the region and creating intercommunity grievances in the city. The assimilationist system in Kirkuk was replaced after the 2003 invasion of Iraq by separate school structures based on ethnic and religious identity. Ethno-political contest, the legacy of Arabization, and the underfunding of public services have since resulted in disparate support for ethnically defined schools and a continued contest over representation in the curriculum. Furthermore, the failure to safeguard schools from external influence has opened education up to interference from varying ethnically defined organizations striving to fortify their presence in the city. Consequently, schools wishing to foster cultural identity and heritage have faced challenges because distinguishing between expressions of culture and of politics has become particularly difficult in this context in which politics and identity are closely tied.

Education in Kirkuk should strive to preserve the city’s rich ethnic diversity while fostering interdependence. As such, teaching staff will require support in negotiating the fine line between cultural celebration and politically motivated expressions of division. Educationalists need to work in partnership with political actors and government to address the education challenges faced in this highly politicized and fragile environment. In Kirkuk, achieving equal funding, clear and inclusive administrative responsibility, and a multiperspective curriculum will require cross-sector efforts that examine education through a political lens.

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# THE BORDERLESS HIGHER EDUCATION FOR REFUGEES PROJECT: ENABLING REFUGEE AND LOCAL KENYAN STUDENTS IN DADAAB TO TRANSITION TO UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

WENONA GILES

## ABSTRACT

*This field note examines some of the challenges experienced by students living in and near the Dadaab refugee camps in northeastern Kenya who were making the transition from secondary school to university programs. The students were enrolled in courses offered by two Kenyan and two Canadian universities that were partners in the Borderless Higher Education for Refugees project. The context of Dadaab and the structure of the pilot project are also explored.*

## INTRODUCTION

This field note is a preliminary analysis of the transition from secondary school to university made by two cohorts of refugee and local Kenyan students who were living in and near the Dadaab refugee camps in northeastern Kenya. The university programs were offered through the Borderless Higher Education for Refugees (BHER) development project. Until recently, the refugee students were not admitted to university degree programs, except for the very few who received scholarships each year from the World University Service of Canada and the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative Fund, both of which required that recipients leave the camps and sometimes also the host country.

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The article begins by describing the Dadaab camps and some aspects of the primary and secondary schooling offered there. It then describes the BHER project, which was created in response to a request from residents of the Dadaab camps and nearby Dadaab town for their young people to gain access to a university education. The students in the camp schools confronted several challenges as they prepared to make the transition from secondary school to the university programs, including mistrust of their teachers' effectiveness and commitment to their learning, inadequate preparation for university, and gender inequality. While there are no easy or across-the-board solutions to these and other related education issues, I argue that doing away with camp-based education and instead welcoming primary and secondary school refugee children into local schools would be a step in the right direction. The paper concludes with some proposals for future research.

### THE DADAAB CAMPS<sup>1</sup>

The population of the Hagadera, Dagahaley, and Ifo camps located near the town of Dadaab in northeastern Kenya (see Maps 1 and 2) is currently about 270,100 people.<sup>2</sup> Of these, 249,144, or 92 percent, are Somali nationals (UNHCR 2017a, 2017b). As described elsewhere in more detail (Hyndman and Giles 2017), the number of camp residents has waxed and waned over the two decades of the camps' existence; however, it grew radically in 2011 to more than half a million people who were escaping increased violence and environmental degradation in Somalia.

Since the first camps were established at Dadaab in 1992, many academic and NGO researchers have studied and written books, scholarly articles, and policy reports about the Dadaab camps (e.g., Hyndman 2000; Agier 2011b; Horst 2006;

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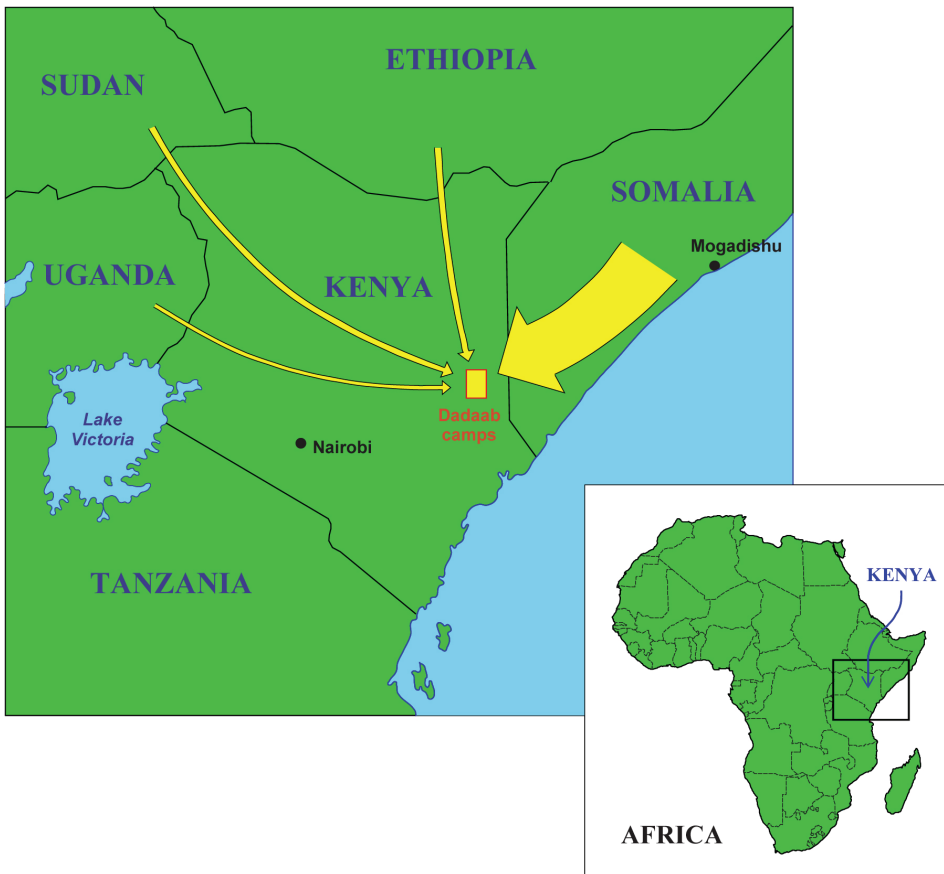
1 Research was first carried out with colleagues (Dippo, Orgocka, and many graduate students) who were engaged from 2011 onward, as we advanced toward the formation of the BHER project. A 2011 feasibility study written by several of us who now lead the BHER project concluded that refugees want quality education that produces cognitive learning outcomes that will increase their chances of procuring gainful employment (Dippo, Orgocka, and Giles 2013). This research was accompanied by interviews videotaped in 2012 with parents and young people in the camps and in the nearby town to ascertain their views on access to higher education (Murphy 2012). Further videotaped interviews with students and professors who were engaged in university courses coordinated by the BHER project from 2014 to 2016 explored some of the students' perspectives on the university programs and their future aspirations (Murphy 2016). Data on the challenges experienced by both students and professors are also contained in reports by university professors who directed courses that are being delivered to students in the Dadaab camps, as well as evaluation and funding reports.

2 As of April 2017, the Kambioos refugee camp had closed and its buildings were handed over to the Government of Kenya. The Ifo 2 camp was still open as of June 2018 but is expected to close.

Horst, Giles, and Hyndman 2008; Crisp 2000; Abdi 2005; Adelman and Abdi 2003; Giles 2012; Rawlence 2016). As Hyndman and I have written elsewhere:

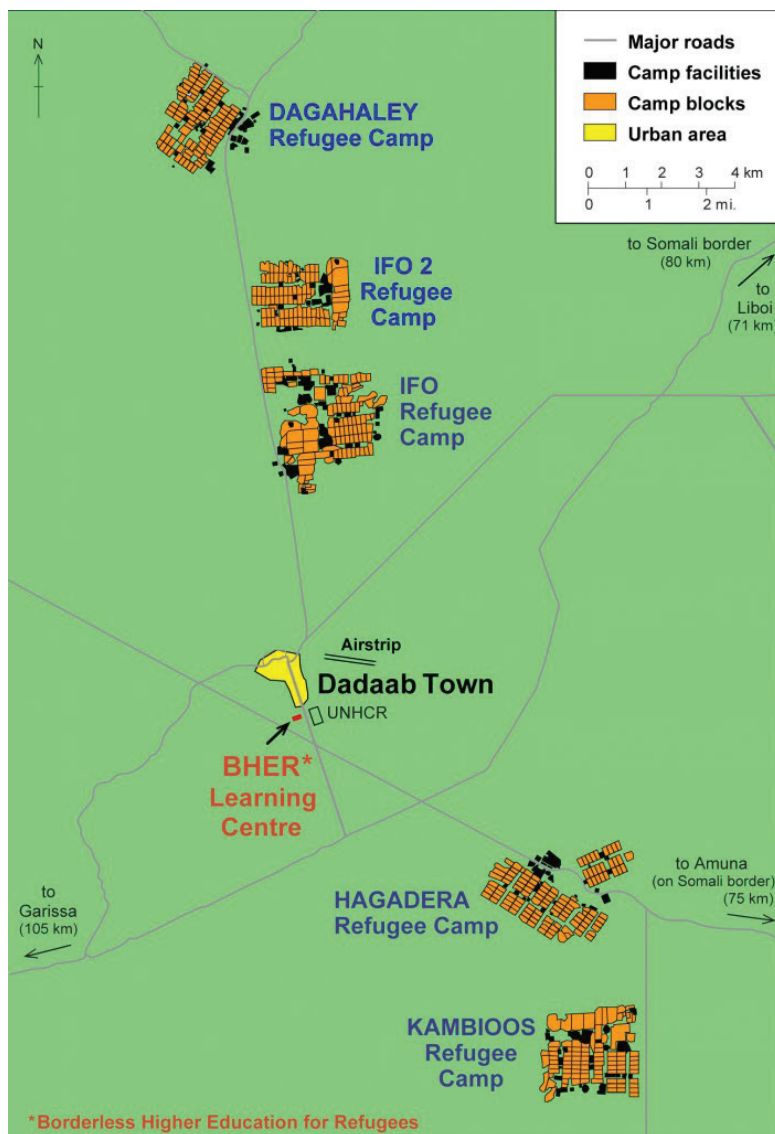
The camps have been variously described as sites deeply rooted in violence and insecurity (Crisp 2000); as “non-communities of the excluded” (Hyndman 2000, 221); as home to refugees whose livelihoods are transnational, rooted in but connected across many countries of asylum and settlement (Horst 2006); and as a transitional humanitarian space (Agier 2011a). (Hyndman and Giles 2017, 50)

*Map 1: Refugee Migration to the Dadaab Camps*



SOURCE: Courtesy of Joseph Mensah and Carolyn King, York University

Map 2: The Town of Dadaab and the Dadaab Refugee Camps in Kenya



SOURCE: Courtesy of Joseph Mensah and Carolyn King, York University

NOTE: Kambioos camp is now closed and Ifo 2 is expected to close soon.

A life of uncertainty plagues people who become labeled as refugees. In Kenya, for example, there are periodic announcements that all refugees must leave the country: in July 2013, Kenyan cabinet secretary Francis Kimemia announced that “Kenya has to be freed of the 600,000 refugees from next year” (Fortunate 2013). Such declarations became much more forceful after the Westgate Mall attacks in

Nairobi in September 2013. Just a few weeks later, on November 10, Kenya signed a tripartite agreement with UNHCR and the Somali government to return refugees to Somalia, despite the continuing violence there. On April 9, 2014, Reuters reported that Kenyan officials had deported 82 Somalis and rounded up and detained hundreds more.<sup>3</sup> Joseph Ole Lenku, the former interior cabinet secretary, is reported to have said, “The process will continue until we do not have illegal aliens and those found to have refugees [sic] documents are taken to refugee camps” (Reuters 2014; Hyndman and Giles 2017, 48). In May 2016, the Kenyan government voiced additional and more urgent calls for the repatriation of all refugees living in Kenya; more recently, the Kenyan government stopped registering new arrivals from Somalia or processing asylum claims (Moulid and McVeigh 2017).

Dadaab is currently considered a high-risk area for a number of reasons: retaliation by various militia groups in response to the Kenyan military’s incursion across the nearby border with Somalia; the activities of the jihadist fundamentalist group Al Shabaab and other gangs in northeastern Kenya; the mix of foreigners and Kenyans who make up the refugee “industry” in Dadaab; and the extreme poverty not only of the displaced people but of the local and often marginalized Kenyans living in this very desolate part of the country. Since the Dadaab camps opened, they have hosted nationalities from the Horn of Africa and from the Great Lakes and East regions, but the majority of the camp population is Somalis; other nationalities are considered minorities, as they constituted less than 2 percent of the camps’ population in 2011 (see Map 1; UNHCR 2011, 9).

### PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLING IN DADAAB

Education has been important to Somalis since the early days of the Dadaab camps and it continues to be so. One of the first priorities of those who moved into the camps 25 years ago was to organize camp schools that followed a Somali-language curriculum, with a view to preparing for a return to Somalia.<sup>4</sup> However, within a year of the first refugees’ arrival, UNHCR and the Kenyan government offered instead to support a Kenyan English-language curriculum in the camps, rather than a Somali-language primary and secondary curriculum. By 1998,

3 The term “Somalian” refers to nationals of Somalia or those who are the children of nationals, living either inside or outside Somalia. This avoids confusion with Somali Kenyans, with whom most Somalis share “Somali” ethnicity (Hyndman and Giles 2017, 27).

4 This is what we were told by some of those interviewed in the Dadaab camps for the 2013 BHER project feasibility study. The extent to which a Somali curriculum actually existed at the time in a Somalia that was fractured by war and violence and had no functioning education ministry is questionable. It certainly would have been difficult for Somali students to access primary and secondary accreditation under the circumstances.



a Kenyan Certificate of Primary Education exam and a Kenyan Certificate of Secondary Education exam could be taken in the northeastern Kenyan towns of Garissa and Dadaab and were therefore available to children and youth attending school in the camps. However, the Kenyan government did not or could not direct much to the camps in the way of educational resources, thus most teachers in the camps were graduates of the camp high schools and had no university degrees or teaching credentials. Moreover, UNHCR or NGOs paid them only low “incentive wages” to teach.<sup>5</sup>

None of the reports examined for this article explains why a Kenyan English curriculum was introduced into a non-Kenyan community. Although a Kenyan English education was more likely to give refugee students a desire to live and work in Kenya, this did not appear to be what Kenyans or their government wanted; it is worth noting that the curriculum decision was supported by a government that historically opposed the presence of Somalian refugees and Kenyan ethnic Somalis within its borders. The decision to offer only a Kenyan English curriculum helps to explain the low attendance rates in the Dadaab camp schools and the serious lack of Somali-language reading and writing skills among their graduates (UNHCR 2015). In 2012, a BHER community researcher who was carrying out interviews in the camps said the following during a meeting in Nairobi, at which it was discussed whether classes should be taught in Somali or English:<sup>6</sup> “We appreciate your efforts to be respectful and not to perpetuate the colonial legacy, but get over it. You want to offer us tradition. What we want is a future” (Giles and Dippo forthcoming).

Quantitative data on education in the Dadaab camps are sparse, different agencies collect various types of data, and conditions change often, thus it is difficult to make comparisons across years. The data presented here were collected from various sources and provide only a partial picture. In October 2011, when we began to consider implementing an education project in Dadaab, the camps had 35 primary schools and 9 secondary schools, most of them UNHCR-supported (UNHCR 2011, 11). Recent information gathered by BHER staff in Dadaab indicates that little had changed as of March 2017; there were still 32 primary

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5 An incentive wage is about one-tenth what a Kenyan would earn for the same job. Dadaab refugees are limited to these jobs and to others in the informal sector because they cannot obtain work permits in Kenya.

6 These were refugees from the Dadaab camps who worked on the BHER feasibility study (Dippo et al. 2013).

schools and 7 secondary schools in the camps (Giles and Orgocka 2018).<sup>7</sup> The percentage of youth attending secondary school did increase from 4 percent in 2011 to 10 percent in 2017 (UNHCR 2011, 11; Giles and Orgocka 2018). However, fewer young women than men were accessing higher education in 2016: of the 91 students enrolled in tertiary education, 13 were female and 78 were male (Giles and Orgocka 2018).<sup>8</sup> Gender disparities, which begin at a young age in the camps, have been of great concern in reports on the status of education in Dadaab.

### **BHER UNIVERSITY EDUCATION IN DADAAB**

BHER is a development project comprised of a consortium of two Kenyan universities (Kenyatta University and Moi University) and two Canadian universities (University of British Columbia and York University) that offer accredited university courses to refugees in the Dadaab camps and to some Kenyans who live in Dadaab town. It was formed in response to a 2010 request from two NGOs—Windle International Kenya and the World University Service of Canada—for access to higher education for the town and the camp communities. A complex and challenging preparation period (2011-2013) ensued that included the following:

- Fundraising
- Development of a partnership among the four universities to ensure that an adequate number of courses and programs would be available and that each university would recognize the others' course credits
- Agreement by all partner universities to a tuition-free model
- Negotiations with prospective students from the Dadaab camp and the town about the types of programs to be offered
- The construction of a local learning center in the town of Dadaab, which had computer labs and classrooms (see location on Map 2)

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<sup>7</sup> The age group served by secondary schools is 14-21 years of age. UNICEF uses Education Management Information System (EMIS) data to maintain school data. Philemon Misoy, the BHER project liaison in Dadaab, gathered these data for us in April-May 2017 through communication with humanitarian agency workers in Dadaab. The EMIS-derived data are thus tentative and are rapidly changing as the camps close and children and youth move out.

<sup>8</sup> These data have been compiled from telephone conversations between BHER field staff and the scholarship point people at the local universities that offer diploma and degree programs.

After the Kenyan Ministry of Education had approved the university partnership and accreditation issues had been resolved, we negotiated with local Kenyan members of parliament, Kenyatta University, and the Dadaab townspeople to acquire space to build the learning center on land occupied by Kenyatta University. The project partners then began to develop tuition-free on-site and online university courses, which were first offered in August 2014 to a cohort of 200 students; a second cohort of 200 students began their studies in 2015. The first phase of the project, funded by the Canadian government, ends in October 2018; Open Society Foundations will continue to fund the project going forward.

A feasibility study conducted in 2011-2012 with the potential refugee and local Kenyan students and among the partner institutions helped to determine what type of university programs the students desired and the universities' capacity to offer these or other acceptable certificate, diploma, and degree programs. Many of the online university courses offered through BHER are part of the regular curriculum of the partner universities. For financial and pedagogical reasons, we did not want to develop entirely separate (in other words, exclusive) programs for the students in Dadaab, thus fee-paying Canadian and Kenyan students have been taking courses and interacting with the tuition-free online refugee students. This pedagogical approach brought Dadaab students into discussion with students living elsewhere, but this practice functioned better in Canadian courses than in Kenyan courses, due to the greater flexibility in the delivery of the former, and significantly benefitted the learning experience of both the Canadian and Dadaab students. The BHER-facilitated online learning model is primarily built around face-to-face courses in years one and two of a degree program, and mostly around online courses by year four. BHER students in Dadaab are supported by teaching assistants from the various universities, who work online (Canadian universities) and on site (Kenyan universities) with the students; technological assistants facilitate access to unstable Internet connections. The assistants enable the BHER students to catch up and keep up with the regular fee-paying students in Canada and Kenya. Kenyan course directors and teaching assistants visit the BHER Learning Centre regularly, and the three BHER Kenyan administrative staff, who live in Dadaab, work with the students daily.

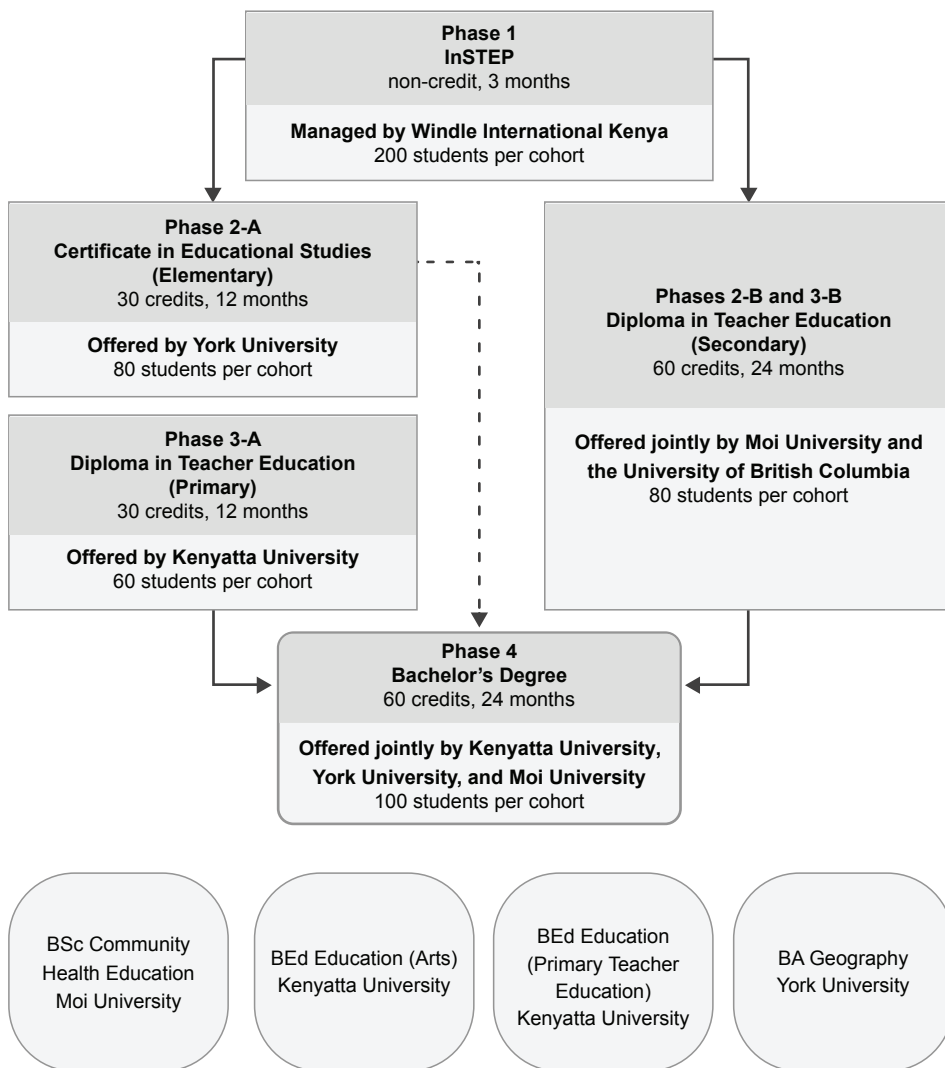
Seventy percent of the BHER project students are residents of the camps and 30 percent are Kenyans from the local area; these numbers reflect the approximate breakdown of the population of refugees and Kenyan citizens in Dadaab. The curriculum and modes of delivery that have been developed for the BHER project have been influenced by requests from potential local students, the capacity of the universities and professors to address these desires, unreliable communication

technology (WiFi, Internet, bandwidth), and the political insecurity of the region, especially since 2011. Some of the tensions embodied in these decision-making processes are explored in more detail elsewhere (Giles and Dippon forthcoming; Giles and Orgocka 2018).

While the BHER project has experienced many of the same challenges faced by programs offered at the primary and secondary levels by UNHCR, CARE, Save the Children, and UNICEF, among others, BHER has the freedom to address them differently. This is because it was inserted into the local Kenyan higher education system through a partnership with Kenyatta University and Moi University and offers courses through York University and the University of British Columbia in Canada. The involvement of universities outside of the host country is important for a population of foreign students classified as refugees, who may be ousted from that country at any time, as is currently happening in Kenya. If the refugee students have to leave Kenya and/or Kenyan universities are no longer able to service Dadaab refugees, the students will have to rely on the academic partners outside the host country to deliver university courses online. Since 2013, some BHER students have been resettled in Canada, the United States, Australia, and Somalia. It is interesting that the BHER students who settled in Somalia or other parts of East Africa have been more likely to stay connected with their university courses. Those who settled in the global North tend to lose touch with the BHER program due to the rigors of resettlement, despite the attentive efforts of individual course directors and BHER staff in Canada and Dadaab to assist them.

By the second year of course delivery for the BHER project, it became apparent that students needed more than access to computer labs in the BHER Learning Centre; they also needed tablets to read course material, make notes, and draft essays. This was especially important for the women students, who could not leave their homes after dark to venture out to computer labs in some of the camp schools. Moreover, the camps go into lockdown if there is a security threat or violent incident, and since the BHER Learning Centre is in Dadaab town, the computer labs are sometimes inaccessible to the refugee students. The tablets also have proven to be a crucial tool for students who resettle and want to continue their university courses through the BHER program.

Figure 1: BHER Model



NOTE: The number of students varies at each level to account for student dropout and retention.

As the BHER model (see Figure 1) describes, the program is structured so that each level that is completed successfully provides a university accreditation that is accepted in Kenya (except for the non-accredited Phase 1), which permits a student to move to the next level. Thus the BHER students, who are themselves mostly unaccredited teachers who graduated only secondary school, begin with a certificate or a diploma program and move on to a diploma and/or degree program. The structure and content of these university programs is prepared by

professors who have been asked to keep in mind the interests and needs of the Dadaab refugee and local Kenyan students. This may include using a variety of social media (e.g., Facebook, WhatsApp, Skype), weekly tutorials, a course teaching assistant who solely supports the refugee and Kenyan students, remedial work, and special workshops on specific issues or topics (e.g., plagiarism). Course delivery remains flexible enough to address constant challenges, several of which are discussed briefly below. The Dadaab students' transition into university programs has been affected by a number of difficulties, including mistrust, inadequate preparation for university, and gender inequality.

#### MISTRUST

Frequent insecurity in and around the camps often curtails visits to the Learning Centre, and the camp curfew limits the hours students can work in the computer labs. The unpredictability of security in the camps flies in the face of what a refugee camp is supposed to offer its residents. It is well known that Dadaab is not a safe place to live and work, and Kenyan teachers frequently expressed their fear about this by not showing up in the camp primary or secondary school classrooms to teach:

There is insecurity in the camp. Even the few trained teachers we had in every school, they didn't reported [sic] to work because of security issues, and that will have an impact on the education; so in the camp there is an unpredictable dynamic situation. (Block leader, Hagadera camp, January 15, 2012; Dippo, Orgocka, and Giles 2013)

Not knowing whether one's teacher is going to show up to teach on any given day diminishes students' trust in their teachers and has negatively affected learning outcomes for primary and secondary school students in the Dadaab camps. Thus it was not surprising when they first met their university professors in on-site or online classrooms in August 2014 that, while hopeful, the students did not place much confidence in BHER plans to offer university programs. As a student-teacher interviewed for the feasibility study in 2012 told us:

There is no tertiary education programs currently in the camp, but some people are assisted by well-wishers . . . [but] most of the courses they sponsor are community development courses, [which are not] . . . marketable. (Male student-teacher, Hagadera camp, January 14, 2012; Dippo et al. 2013)

The BHER experience indicates that education for refugees at all levels cannot be implemented without the support of the local community and the host country government. However, despite the 2011-2012 feasibility study mentioned above, as well as many meetings with parent-teacher associations and numerous visits by BHER staff, the BHER students' prior experience with education in the camps dampened their belief that the project would actually offer university courses, and they also doubted that, if offered, the courses would be useful. In this initial period, when courses were delivered by Kenyan and Canadian universities, students questioned the validity of the Canadian university courses, as they had never heard of either York University or the University of British Columbia. They challenged the four years it was going to take to earn an undergraduate university degree—although this was no different from most universities anywhere in world, it was very unlike the short NGO training courses they were familiar with and which they criticized for not leading to good jobs. When distribution of money for food and transport to the BHER Learning Centre in Dadaab town was late, the largely impoverished students who were used to being paid to take NGO training courses went on strike—twice in the first year of the BHER program. This took precious time away from the intensive mode of course instruction.

#### LACK OF ADEQUATE PREPARATION FOR UNIVERSITY PROGRAMS

An important effect on students of long-term living in a refugee camp is that most who are now taking courses from the four universities associated with the BHER project were seriously under-prepared for both Kenyan and Canadian university courses/programs, despite having a Kenyan English high school graduation certification. Few students who complete primary and secondary school in the camps enter university, especially girls. As one Kenyan woman teacher described to us in 2012, there is a critical dearth of facilities in the camps for the number of students in the secondary schools, which creates challenges for teachers and students alike:

The classes are not enough for the pupils . . . no textbooks in the schools or exercise books . . . in secondary education—a lot of challenges when it comes to facilities . . . not enough laboratories, libraries. (Senior woman teacher, Hagadera camp, April 12, 2012; Dippro et al. 2013)

The BHER program begins with a non-accredited transition year called InSTEP (see Figure 1), which as it turned out was insufficient and problematic as a preparatory stage for students. This is in part because they had little interest in a program that did not offer university accreditation and because we seriously underestimated their lack of preparation for university learning and culture.<sup>9</sup> When they began, the students were barely able to conduct academic forms of online communication, as many were learning for the first time how to attach a document to an email, to communicate beyond simple Facebook-type greetings, or to access Moodle course sites. They also did not know how to comport themselves in a university classroom and, instead of listening to lectures, some would chat or take cell phone calls during on-site courses in Dadaab. For some time, women would not speak in the classroom. Moreover, the Kenyan rote-learning approach left both male and female students at a loss when asked to offer their own opinions and views on course readings and in essay writing. Despite their Kenyan secondary school certification, most refugee students wrote and spoke non-standard English. The majority were working full-time as teachers or for NGOs in the camps and thus were greatly disadvantaged in keeping up with course reading and assignments. As mentioned above, university lecturers from the BHER consortium of universities spent the second year of the program and at least some of the third year doing their best to upgrade the BHER students' ability to participate more equitably with the Kenyan and Canadian university students who were in some of the same courses as the refugee students. Remedial work was and is carried out concurrently and continuously with the ongoing teaching of on-site and online courses and is an important part of our facilitated online learning model.

#### GENDER INEQUALITY

Few women in the Dadaab camps are currently eligible for Kenyan university programs, mainly because they have been unable to achieve an overall C+ on their secondary school exams. However, eligibility requirements vary by university in Kenya and Canada, with more flexibility in the latter. In order to achieve a goal of 30 percent female representation in the university programs, the project staff worked extremely hard to locate and notify women about the program, including the lower entrance requirements, the mentoring provided, the fact that non-academic experience would count, that space would be provided near the classrooms for them to nurse and care for their children, and that they would be allowed to repeat courses when were absent from too many classes in order to deliver their babies. Remedial work specifically directed at the women by teaching

<sup>9</sup> Students said they did not want to waste any more time acquiring more NGO certificates for training courses, which they said were often useless in finding employment in Kenya, Somalia, or elsewhere.



assistants and the constant attention by the BHER staff in Dadaab for women who were absent from class more than once has made courses more accessible to women who did not originally meet the entry requirements. By doing this we have achieved an 83 percent retention rate for women students in a degree program.

The oft-repeated and under-analyzed cultural argument some NGOs and international agencies use to explain the low enrollment rates of girls and women claims that the low rates are due to household gender relations, menstruation, and early pregnancies. Sexual violence and the associated psychological and physical trauma, fear of sexual violence, and early marriage are other reasons young women and girls and their parents use to avoid school (Jones and Naylor 2015, 43). UNHCR has argued that most parents and young people do not consider school strategically important enough to substitute for household work, including animal herding and care of younger siblings or one's own children, or to risk women's honor in Somali culture by exposing young people to non-Islamic, "imperialistic values" (UNHCR 2011, 12). But this type of thinking about gender relations leads to a stalemate and does not tell the whole story. The aforementioned are symptoms of the hyper-masculinized camp environment that seriously devalues women's lives, but they are not the cause. Sequestration and isolation make it easier for communities to create and maintain this type of gendered space, and lack of access to education supports it by keeping populations under-educated, with inadequate knowledge about their rights and no voice to air their concerns. One clear outcome of this extreme gender inequality and segregation is that women's secondary school attendance in the camps is very limited. This undermines their pre-university accomplishments and leaves most young women much less ready than men for university, and by extension severely limits their employment and livelihood possibilities over the long term.<sup>10</sup>

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

This article has presented some initial ideas about implementing higher education for refugees living in a long-term encampment. Our experience with the BHER project points to the importance of addressing the need for quality and equitable primary and secondary education in local regions where displaced populations have found refuge. This need must be addressed in order to ensure that refugee

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<sup>10</sup> It is worth noting that, in a recent communication with several senior professors and administrators in the education faculty at the Somali National University in Mogadishu, I was told that the men rather than the women at the university have more difficulty maintaining good grades and graduating on time or at all. Gender relations are very different in Somalia from in the Dadaab refugee camps, which raises questions about the impact of exile and sequestration in a hostile country.

students have a chance to access higher education opportunities and to succeed once accepted into a program of study. Isolating primary and secondary education, and thus knowledge transfer, within the bounded and insecure area of an encampment does not prepare students to adapt successfully to on-site and online university courses, as the challenges confronting BHER students from the Dadaab camps demonstrate. It is not much better beyond the camps: Garissa County in Kenya, the remote and poor region where Dadaab is located, ranks as the third-worst-performing county in the country in terms of education outcomes (BHER 2017). Important research could be done on the potential impact of enabling host communities to use development funds directed to refugee settlements to improve the quality of local schooling to be more inclusive of refugees. Depending on the outcome of such research, the integration of refugee children, youth, and young adults into local host community schools could follow. This could in turn facilitate the entry of both local Kenyan and refugee secondary school graduates into universities in the host country and elsewhere.<sup>11</sup> While students who are impoverished and sequestered in camps may find local schools challenging for a number of reasons, they likely stand a better chance of successful learning with certified and well-paid teachers at the helm of the classroom. Since Kenya has recently begun to integrate some refugee students into local schools, follow-up comparative research on the outcomes of students there who are attending both types of schools (camp and local region) would be valuable.

The BHER project is a development project, not a research project, although in-depth anthropological and geographical research led to our understanding of the need for this project.<sup>12</sup> Numerous areas for further research arise from the experience of this project, and I suggest several possibilities below. First, the impact of a university education on livelihood and employment outcomes for people who have been exiled, as well leadership roles in rebuilding the homeland (e.g., Somalia), could provide important validation (or not) for access to higher education for refugees. Such research also could provide recommendations for diploma and degree programs other than those offered by the BHER project. In other words, we should look at what types of employment or livelihoods

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11 Refugee students are attending Kenyan universities, but they are either among the few scholarship students or they pay international student fees.

12 The only formal research on aspects of the BHER project itself was funded by a research grant for the feasibility study and a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) grant to our partner, the University of British Columbia, both of which were received prior to the project implementation. During the implementation stage of the project (2015-2018), funding for research on various aspects of the BHER project has not been available to core members of the project team at York University, as we have been deemed by SSHRC, for example, to be in a position of conflict of interest. However, we have been able to gather some data and carry out some interviews (approved by university ethics committees), mainly for project evaluation, and for fundraising and funding reports.

graduates have gained by virtue of the BHER project. We also should consider what other university programs could or should be offered at other sites. We now have some anecdotal evidence of the paths the first cohort of BHER students, who graduated in spring 2018, are following. Some of these students who hold degrees in public health and geography and diplomas and degrees in education are already showing signs of entering into productive and satisfying livelihoods. One student with a geography degree has just been hired by the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization in Nairobi, partly due to his new knowledge of Geographic Information Systems. Another has opened a primary school in Jubaland, Somalia, and is hiring some of his classmates to teach there. Several others have found jobs with civil society (nongovernmental) organizations in Baladweyne, Kismayu, Baydhabo, and Mogadishu in Somalia. One male student who has just graduated with a York University degree in geography said:

Before we joined this program of BHER, you can imagine we had only secondary education. Secondary education in the current world is a big problem to get employment . . . we were “low”—we had a lower level of English, a lower level of thinking, even a lower level of writing. After joining BHER, I can tell you, today, our English is improved. I can say that this program was very important for us because we can think how to assist and lift up other people who are in need.

Another student said, “The knowledge that we are gaining in the BHER project today will help us tomorrow. After I graduate I am going to try to save some money and enroll in a master’s program.” In their recent presentation at the 2018 BHER Annual Partnership Meeting in Nairobi, a BHER student leader said, “With the completion of the undergraduate courses, we expect many more students to find job opportunities locally and internationally.” The majority of students who were admitted to the BHER university programs in 2013 were teachers in the camps and local area who, while studying, continued to work as uncertified teachers in the jobs that were so crucial to the children and youth of the camp. However, with the completion of their certificates, diplomas, and degrees, other possible livelihoods and geographic locations are opening up for them. As a female student told us:

After graduation, I hope I will be helping my community as a woman and a leader to mobilize other women to go to school and to learn. I want to help my community to be self-reliant. If I can go back to Somalia, I will work to fulfill my dream to be

a leader in the new Somalia, as a minister in the government and this degree is going to be helpful to me.

Second, there is little information available on gender relations among those who access higher education in a refugee camp or on gendered outcomes. Such studies could include gendered refugee experiences of accessing university programs, the gendered university classroom in exile, the impact of refugee camp sequestration on women's participation in higher education, and livelihoods chosen after university graduation. If funding timelines permit, it would be worthwhile to consider a lighter course load for women students, whose lives are more complicated than those of the men students due to pregnancies, childcare, and other household responsibilities. Third, valuable research could be carried out on how populations served by refugee students have been affected by those who earned degrees in the four areas of the BHER project—health, education (arts), education (primary), and geography; by those who left the program early after acquiring a teaching certificate or diploma; and by those who dropped out without completing any accredited program. These populations may be located inside or outside of camps, in the homeland, or in exile elsewhere. Finally, research is needed on what the BHER staff call enabling support. For the BHER project, this has included transportation to the Learning Centre from a student's home in one of the camps, which may be 20 kilometers away; funds to buy lunch on the days a student is at the Learning Centre (BHER refugee students are poor, even when they work for incentive wages); tablets for course reading and carrying out assignments; and ongoing online and on-site remedial support. All of these and other enabling supports are as important as the delivery of courses, but it is difficult to predict what will be needed and thus some were greatly underestimated in the initial stages of the BHER project.

In addition to the above research possibilities, there is much to be explored in terms of social justice-oriented partnerships between global North and global South academic institutions and the tensions therein. The bureaucratic and pedagogical cultures of the BHER-related universities in Canada differ, but the disparities between Canadian and Kenyan institutions are much greater and include the tragic impact of colonial legacies (see Giles and Dippo forthcoming). Flexibility and constant communication between staff in Canada and in Dadaab, as well as regular monthly meetings of the partners, including UNHCR, Windle International Kenya, and the four universities, have been essential in keeping the project on track. As a final point, funding agencies and institutions that have supported the BHER project have shaped the delivery of university programs in various and important ways, and this project provides possibilities for further critical research into such relationships.

This seven-year pilot project (two years of development and five years of implementation) will enter a new phase in October 2018, when many of the first cohort of students will have completed one of four degree programs and many of a second cohort will have completed all but one year of a four-year degree program. Second-stage funding from the Open Society Foundations will support the second cohort's completion of BA/BSc degree programs. The project has experienced both successes and failures, as would any pilot project of its magnitude and complexity. The BHER model also has been revised repeatedly to address constantly changing circumstances in the camps and in the university partnership.<sup>13</sup> The BHER partners are considering various alternative models, including one that relies on universities to permanently embed tuition-free education for people living in camps into specific faculties that have the capacity to do so. However, based on our experience with our Kenyan partners, this model may prove to be easier for partners in the global North to adopt than for those in the global South. There is still much to be learned from this project.

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<sup>13</sup> We are currently developing a BHER wiki platform with computer and engineering colleagues at York University that will provide detailed information and tools for other academic institutions that want to develop a model similar to the BHER-facilitated online learning model.

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## BOOK REVIEW

***(RE)CONSTRUCTING MEMORY: EDUCATION, IDENTITY, AND CONFLICT***

**EDITED BY MICHELLE J. BELLINO AND JAMES H. WILLIAMS**

**SENSE PUBLISHERS, 2017. IX + 248 PAGES**

**\$99.00 (HARDCOVER), \$54.00 (PAPER)**

**ISBN 978-94-6300-858-7**

*(Re)Constructing Memory: Education, Identity, and Conflict*, edited by Michelle J. Bellino and James H. Williams, offers insight into the dynamic field of history education and its relationship to the state and to collective memory in conflict-affected countries. Highlighting the complex relationship between education, conflict, and peace, Bellino and Williams bring together a diverse series of case studies to understand the importance of this relationship in both theory and practice. The four parts of the volume examine the various facets of this relationship: the role textbooks play in supporting and legitimating national narratives and building collective identity; how formal narratives of colonial and imperial history in schools change and persist over time; the complex nature of specific programs of interaction and integration in divided societies; and the nuanced role education can play in building peace by developing democratic practices or reconciliation mechanisms in classrooms. The contributing authors offer in-depth case studies of important issues in the field, not only expanding on existing frameworks—particularly the “two faces” of education framework (Bush and Saltarelli 2000)—but also challenging many assumptions within the field.

The first part of *(Re)Constructing Memory* establishes the foundation of the book by exploring how textbooks shape collective identities and national narratives in conflict-affected countries. King (chapter 2) argues that frame analysis is a useful framework for more fully understanding the specifics of how national narratives in textbooks reflect and amplify social conditions and motivate students to act (p. 23). Hagai et al. (chapter 3) and Abdou (chapter 4) similarly demonstrate, through content and narrative analysis, respectively, that ideologies and narratives in textbooks reinforce specific national narratives through both overemphasis and omission. All three authors note that these narratives are not static and that they change relative to the motivation of the government in question, be it Rwanda (King), Cambodia (Hagai et al.), or Egypt (Abdou).

Part two builds on the above themes and extends them by considering the legacies of colonialism and imperialism across the globe. Chapters five through eight identify the difficulty associated with nation-building projects in schools as a result of colonial legacies of exclusion and violence. Each does so from a different perspective: Greene (chapter 5) traces the role of teachers in student learning about national narratives in Uganda and argues that teachers continue to have an important role in contesting “state-sponsored silences” (p. 118) of Ugandan history in schools. Vom Hau (chapter 6) flips the perspective of most colonization scholarship to look at how postcolonial states commemorate colonialism, noting that teachers are active agents within the schools who can make curricular changes in nation-building projects, especially when history is contested. Littleton (chapter 7) turns toward the representation of Islam in English history textbooks and shows that narratives of Islam across time are portrayed in persistently problematic ways. In chapter 8, Wang demonstrates China’s success in shifting the national narrative from a strictly Marxist-Leninist one to a narrative of “humiliation,” which in turn has influenced Chinese foreign policy and international relations.

Part three highlights the complexity of integration and interaction between two groups in deeply divided societies: Northern Ireland (Gallagher, chapter 9) and Israel/Palestine (Kolikant and Pollack, chapter 10). Gallagher argues that the difficulties in implementing integration reforms have left a gap wherein students receive external and divisive narratives of the conflict. In contrast, Kolikant and Pollack look at a specific curricular program designed to increase intergroup contact through web-based programming and show that this type of programming can help build empathy and shape national narratives to have more inclusive identities.

The final section brings together the themes from the previous three to note that schools are resistant to top-down national narratives of identity and are inherently messy places for identity formation. For instance, Goulding (chapter 11) introduces the concept of “pedagogies of haunting” (p. 243) in both the formal history curriculum and informal spaces to show that these are places where history can be both confronted and developed. Gómez (chapter 12) further disrupts the binary view of “positive” or “negative” faces of conflict in schools, arguing that schools are spaces where multiple processes often occur at once. Paulson (chapter 13) looks at the importance of teaching about recent conflict in schools. This section thus showcases the diverse and sometimes conflicting ways that education can shape identity and national narratives in conflict-affected countries.

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The final chapter, by Pingel, notes that, “wittingly or unwittingly, [education] contributes to forming the young generation’s value systems and social attitudes” (p. 315). *(Re)Constructing Memory* highlights the many processes through which education contributes to constructions of national narratives and collective identities. The book shows us that these processes change over time, depending on government priorities. It also reminds scholars and practitioners of education in emergencies that the relationship between education and conflict/peace is not as dichotomous as the literature in this field has argued in the past. We must be mindful that multiple processes that lead to both peace and conflict occur simultaneously in classrooms around the world.

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## BOOK REVIEW

*CHILD MIGRATION AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN A GLOBAL AGE*

BY JACQUELINE BHABHA

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2014. 392 PAGES

\$24.95 (PAPER)

ISBN 978-0-691-16910-1

Migration affects millions of children and adolescents worldwide. At the end of 2016, 65.6 million individuals were forcibly displaced worldwide as a result of persecution, conflict, violence, or human rights violations, more than half of whom were children (UNHCR 2018). Noting that this trend is likely to continue, that the issue of child migration is complex, and that children migrate for multiple reasons, Jacqueline Bhabha's insightful and sobering reflection on this much-neglected issue in the global discourse goes far in shedding light on a "largely untold and unanalysed story" (p. 1). Recognizing that far too many child migrants are denied their rights and that there is little consideration for their needs as children, the book illuminates the gaps in protection and in guaranteeing the rights of children and adolescents affected by migration. A key take-away from the book is that "child migrants need to be viewed as agents whose aspirations are relevant to institutional decision-making" (p. 10).

While noting the enormous and ongoing oversights of the international bodies and agencies, governments, and civil society groups involved in the response to child migrants, Bhabha identifies a change since the late 1990s. She notes that, cognisant of the urgent need to better understand and respond to this phenomenon, these organizations are increasingly engaged in a dialogue on children and adolescents affected by migration (see, e.g., Human Rights Council 2016). Bhabha observes that a more recent recognition of the complexity of child migration is "reflected in a more differentiated categorical lexicon and more thoughtful policy articulation" (p. 5). Yet alongside acknowledging such positive developments, Bhabha alerts us to the myriad of deeply troubling examples of how states, NGOs, and national laws and policies still fail migrant children by ignoring their needs and negating their rights, despite the spate of international human rights instruments, policies, and measures at their disposal.

Covering a broad spectrum of cases, the book is organized across three categories of child migrants—family-related migration (family reunion and adoption); exploitation-related migration (child trafficking and armed conflict-linked recruitment); and survival-related migration (asylum and economics). Utilizing this tripartite structure, Bhabha bases her analysis on concrete examples across a plethora of migration situations, and on a discussion of various legal instruments and policies both national and international.

A constant theme of the book is that “human rights protections become practice only if enforced by vigorous agents” (p. 30), and Bhabha poses a key question in this regard: “How can unprotected child and adolescent migrants—the majority of whom have no access to guardianship, to legal representation, to competent advocacy—translate the principles of international law into meaningful human rights protections?” (p. 11). This has particular relevance for the fulfilment of migrant children’s right to education, not least in emergency and conflict-affected contexts.

Bhabha makes a strong case that concerns about child labor and limited educational opportunity do not justify treating all migrant children as “elementary school children” (p. 10), when in fact “most child migrants are teenagers between the ages of 14 and 17” (p. 14). She makes an appeal for creating a balance between protection, autonomy, and educational opportunity that is crafted in true partnership with young migrants themselves as a way to calibrate the tension between the interests of the child and the child’s need for protection with their evolving autonomy.

A key lesson from Bhabha’s book for those working in education in emergency situations is that “alternate mentoring situations (boyfriend pimps, gang leaders, military commanders) fill the gap left by ineffective or non-existent families and state structure.” She argues that there is official “ambivalence” in the pressure to protect children’s rights and to punish juvenile offenders. When we “legislate migrant children’s right to public education and health care irrespective of the legal status, but we erect practical obstacles to their access to these services” (pp. 13-14), it plays out practically with enormous consequences for migrant children and adolescents.

With regard to child trafficking, the book highlights the importance of public education and awareness-raising campaigns but stresses the need for more effective strategies, including the use of technology to target, expose, and monitor potential dangers, as well as the need to provide greater support for trafficking survivors.

Bhabha notes that multi-vector strategies involving the entire community are needed to address the root causes of trafficking. These include issues of poverty and lack of education and skill-building opportunities, conditions which create fertile ground for exploitation.

Highlighting the fact that as many as 300,000 children are serving as soldiers in armed conflicts around the world—thus depriving them of a normal childhood and education—Bhabha suggests that the focus on justice and accountability has not resulted in the kind or scale of social, economic, and political support needed to address the needs of child soldiers. Referencing the case of Sierra Leone, among others, Bhabha calls for long-term reintegration strategies that address the lack of opportunities for education and employment as part of comprehensive postconflict peace-building efforts.

In examining cross-cutting issues such as intercountry adoption, child soldiers, and child labor, Bhabha's comprehensive interrogation of the complex issue of child migration serves as an important tool for a multi-disciplinary scholarly or applied audience, not least within the field of education in emergencies. As we continue to come to terms with the ongoing global reality of massive forced migration, we must heed Bhabha's final reminder that human rights instruments can never deliver on the aspirations of migrant children "without political honesty and the mobilising muscle that transforms them into live demands" (p. 281).

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## BOOK REVIEW

***TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE AND EDUCATION: LEARNING PEACE***  
**EDITED BY CLARA RAMÍREZ-BARAT AND ROGER DUTHIE**  
**SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH COUNCIL, 2016. 424 PAGES**  
**\$30.00 (PAPER)**  
**ISBN 978-0-911-40003-8**

Despite increased attention given to the idea that education has often been used as a tool to spread misinformation and spark division, education usually is not considered an element of transitional justice (i.e., prosecutions, truth commissions, reparations, and other economic and institutional reforms). In *Transitional Justice and Education: Learning Peace*, editors Clara Ramírez-Barat and Roger Duthie fill a major gap in the literature on education in emergencies, and on reconstruction after periods of conflict and authoritarianism, by exploring what it means to address transitional justice and legacies of the past from an education perspective and how this relates to a broader peacebuilding agenda.

This book is the result of a collaborative research project between the International Center for Transitional Justice and UNICEF that took place from 2013 to 2015. The project aimed to articulate the links between transitional justice and education in peacebuilding, and to develop a better understanding of the role education can play in postconflict situations as part of a broad response to the legacies of human rights abuses. Through 17 commissioned papers representing a variety of experiences and places, the project explored two main questions:

1. How can transitional justice shape the reform of education systems and facilitate the reintegration of children and youth into those systems as a means of contributing to building peace?
2. How can education expand its outreach agenda to engage the younger generation and help transform a culture of impunity into one of human rights and democracy? (p. 12)

When approaching these questions, the contributors looked for ways transitional justice and education can reinforce each other in peacebuilding contexts and explored the tensions, challenges, and obstacles that can result from any attempt to coordinate education initiatives with transitional justice processes and goals. These efforts make each chapter particularly engaging for an audience of practitioners.

This edited volume, which is organized into four complementary sections, offers a selection from the 17 commissioned papers. The first section explores the implications of taking a transitional justice approach to postconflict education reconstruction and offers useful pedagogic guidelines for teachers and practitioners working in such contexts. The second section considers education as a form of reparation for victims of human rights abuses and their descendants, and assesses the extent to which such measures can help reintegrate children affected by conflict into the school system and into society more broadly. The third section reflects on transitional justice outreach programs that use education as a means to engage children and youth with issues of memory, history, and justice. The last section of the book presents civil society activities aimed at addressing past injustices in various informal education settings and explains how such programs might serve as catalysts for similar efforts in formal education systems. Importantly, several authors throughout the book insist on the importance of training educators in how to address the past.

This volume makes a valuable contribution to the fields of education in emergencies and transitional justice for scholars and practitioners alike. The contributing authors provide examples from a large variety of countries, settings, and stages of fragility. They present and analyze both successful and failed attempts to use a transitional justice framework to shape the reform of the education sector. The case studies in the former Yugoslavia (Jelacic, chapter 8) and in Lebanon (Maalouf and Yakinthou, chapter 13) are particularly compelling, as they shed light on the timing and sequencing of such efforts. Especially notable throughout the book is the inclusion of instances where the non-formal education sector complemented the formal sector in the transitional justice process. In contexts where state fragility greatly challenges the efficiency of the education ministry and of the formal education sector in general, NGOs can play an instrumental role that should not be overlooked. Overall, the contributors raise essential questions for the field and offer an analysis that provides key lessons and stimulating suggestions for future research.



Despite its length, this book is a relatively fast read, thanks to its enticing content and its clear and accessible language. However, there are two elements I wish the authors had included more of. First, the ideological challenges these efforts are likely to trigger seem to have been neglected. Scholars such as Paulo Freire (1985) consider education in general to be a political act. Revising history books in postconflict settings is a serious challenge in itself, so one can imagine the pushback that any attempt to coordinate education initiatives and transitional justice processes is likely to receive. It would have been interesting to learn whether this has been an issue in these cases and whether and how and to what extent this challenge has been managed. Second, while readers can find a thorough analysis and guidance points for relevant actors in the online report Ramírez-Barat and Duthie published in 2015, a concluding chapter that synthesized and analyzed the lessons learned through these various experiences would have significantly enhanced this book. This would have created an opportunity to reflect on the transferability of the findings and the extent to which these lessons may be generalized. Nevertheless, this edited volume is a major step toward the inclusion of education in any transitional justice framework. I hope it will be an incentive for a greater number of scholars and practitioners to embrace this important topic.

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## BOOK REVIEW

*YOUTH IN POSTWAR GUATEMALA:  
EDUCATION AND CIVIC IDENTITY IN TRANSITION*  
BY MICHELLE J. BELLINO  
RUTGERS UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2017. 270 PAGES  
\$95.00 (HARDCOVER), \$34.95 (PAPER)  
ISBN 978-0-8135-8799-8

In *Youth in Postwar Guatemala: Education and Civic Identity in Transition*, Michelle J. Bellino draws on 14 months of ethnographic fieldwork to examine the complexities that the historical memory of armed conflict offers for the consolidation of democracy and the expansion of citizenship among youth. Bellino argues that the construction of historical memory mediates the way in which young people from diverse socioeconomic contexts relate to their sense of citizenship and how they perceive the opportunities the future holds for them. She proposes the concept of “wait citizenship,” which describes the condition young people must navigate when relating to a state that obliges them to prioritize the development of their autonomy over their ability to show solidarity with others. As Bellino’s text conveys, awaiting citizenship limits young people’s ability to impact the political and economic structures that have distributed opportunities unequally in Guatemala. Her argument sheds light on the tensions and challenges involved in transforming a society shifting toward a more democratic and just version of itself.

Through this argument, Bellino raises two points that link the contents of the book, and which also represent key contributions to the field of education in emergencies. The first is to present historical memory as an intergenerational social practice that is continuously disputed. The second is to expand the discussion of violence as a multi-dimensional phenomenon, thereby linking social structures with forms of individual agency.

After introducing the history of the armed conflict in Guatemala and anchoring it in recent debates on citizenship, transitional justice, and historical memory (chapter 2), Bellino builds her argument through an analysis of social interactions in four varied educational institutions, two in Guatemala City and two in the rural province of Izabal. The selection of these different sites enables her to analyze

the future aspirations that a nation marked by strong social inequalities offers its youngest citizens. She dedicates chapters 3-6 to an in-depth analysis of each institution. This organization of the book enables the reader to navigate four social worlds, each different and distant from the others, while raising important common themes.

Chapter 3 focuses on the story of Alejandro, a student at International Academy, a private urban educational institution with strong international connections. The author introduces the tensions Alejandro must navigate as he tries to reconcile his activist parents' expectations regarding his political participation with the limited space for agency offered in the dogmatic history of the armed conflict taught in his social science class. In chapter 4, Bellino describes the blurry line between political violence and urban violence by analyzing the excursions taken by students from the Paulo Freire Institute. She examines the forms of exclusion middle-class youth experience, and through these she depicts the phenomenon of marginalization that is part of Guatemala's history. The construction of historical memory as a platform for social change is limited by the relationship young people at this school establish with the state through their notions of risk and fear. In their interactions with the police and the public university, students manifest mistrust and skepticism about the role the state can play in transforming Guatemala's society.

In chapter 5, Bellino examines in detail the consequences of teaching about Guatemala's armed conflict through explanatory frameworks that refuse to differentially distribute responsibility among the actors who have proliferated the violence. When analyzing the presentations that a group of students at the Sun and Moon rural school make about the armed conflict and their interpretations of a film, Bellino concludes that these neutral explanatory frameworks lead students to approach history from preconceived notions, rather than through critical analysis and questioning of historical sources. In chapter 6, Bellino discusses Tzolk Ochoch, a boarding school also in rural Guatemala. In this case, Bellino examines the way the calls for justice and social action promoted by the institution's curriculum are limited by the living history of the armed conflict that, 20 years after its end, still defines the location of each actor on the social map of Guatemala. In these four chapters, Bellino offers a solid illustration of the ways young people build historical memory as an object of political dispute through their encounters with individuals and institutions.

Bellino closes the book with a discussion of historical memory as a localized dimension of the lives of young people living and learning in a postwar society. She presents historical memory as an unfinished project that, through both individual and collective constructions, links the past, the present, and the future. In summary, Bellino invites us to adopt historical memory as a central dimension of citizenship. *Youth in Postwar Guatemala* is a study that will appeal to those in our field who are interested in historical memory, youth, citizenship, and anthropological approaches to violence.

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# JOURNAL ON EDUCATION IN EMERGENCIES

The scholarly, peer-reviewed *Journal on Education in Emergencies (JEiE)* aims to fill gaps in education in emergencies (EiE) research and policy. Building on the tradition of collaboration between practitioners and academics in the field of education in emergencies, *JEiE*'s aim is to help improve learning in and across service-delivery, policy-making, and academic institutions by providing a space where scholars and practitioners can publish rigorous quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods research articles and robust and compelling field notes, both to inform policy and practice and to stir debate. *JEiE*'s aim is to provide access to the ideas and evidence necessary to inform sound EiE programming, policy-making, funding decisions, academic program curricula, and future research.

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# JOURNAL ON EDUCATION IN EMERGENCIES

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DANA BURDE, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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