

MERGING THE LOCAL AND THE GLOBAL: A THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF RIGHTS-
BASED PICTURE BOOKS TO FACILITATE A CRITICAL UNDERSTANDING OF
DIVERSE CHILDHOOD CONTEXTS IN ONTARIO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL SETTINGS

by

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Master of Arts
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ABSTRACT

This study examines the importance of explicitly introducing children's rights in elementary educational classrooms in Ontario through the medium of rights-based picture books. Children's rights as framed within the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) has been largely criticized for promoting a Western model of childhood, characteristic of innocence, play, and adult protection. Specifically, the UNCRC is often problematized for not capturing the diversity of childhoods that exist around the globe, as the articles in the Convention may not holistically examine the historical, cultural, and economic variables that children encompass. It is argued in this major research paper (MRP) that despite the limitations of the UNCRC, there is still a need to move beyond the universalism-cultural relativism dichotomy that currently frames this debate surrounding children's rights. Through a thematic analysis of selected rights-based picture books presented in the Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario's (ETFO) (2011) *Social Justice Begins with Me* resource kit, this MRP will explore how picture books related to the UNCRC can be a tool in classrooms to destabilize assumptions present between and within Majority and Minority World contexts and encourage pluralistic worldviews where diverse childhoods are actively accepted rather than stereotypically rejected.

Keywords: *UNCRC, thematic analysis, diverse childhoods, picture books, elementary settings*

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Dedication

“We are the world's children.

We are the victims of exploitation and abuse.

We are street children.

We are the children of war.

We are the victims and orphans of HIV/AIDS.

We are denied good-quality education and health care.

We are victims of political, economic, cultural, religious and environmental discrimination.

We are children whose voices are not being heard: it is time we are taken into account.

We want a world fit for children, because a world fit for us is a world fit for everyone”

(Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children, 2011).

To each and every child around the globe regardless of race, colour, age, gender, class, culture, and geographical location, this MRP is dedicated to you. I wish that all the adversities and inequities you may face as a result of varied historical, political, and economic variables be proactively resolved by taking your rights into account because service to humanity and to your individual well-being should rise above the ongoing tensions facing our world today.

“Humanity is not about the essence of one religion, one worldview, one geographical location, or one way of living. Humanity is about facilitating spaces for all children to live equitably based on their individual needs and lived realities. A diversified rather than singular humanity is essential to not only promoting but sustaining pluralism and global cohesion amongst all individuals.” - Nabeela Karim Kassam

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Chapter 1: Introduction

“Children’s rights education is an important part of global education and citizenship education, entrenched in curricula for civics, citizenship, life skill development and social studies across Canada” (UNICEF, 2015, p. 1).

Historical Context and Rationale for Children’s Rights

Through traditional educational and work practices, it is evident that historically, children were seen and treated as objects to be owned rather than active subjects with their own priorities, needs, talents, and ways of contributing to our global community. Children were not only denied status as citizens but were often viewed as inferior compared to their adult counterparts. Thus, the successful creation and implementation of a children’s rights framework that respects, values, and upholds children’s dignities has been a long time coming. The founder of the Save the Children movement, Eglantyne Jebb, led and inspired efforts to include children’s rights in international law after seeing how children suffered to extreme extents during World War I (Collins & Gervais, 2015). While majority of the United Nations (UN) human rights-treaties were not initially child-centred or child-focused, the UN finally expanded upon children’s rights in its Declaration on the Rights of the Child which was adopted in 1959 as a result of the rise of injustices occurring amongst diverse groups of children at both the local and global level (Collins & Gervais, 2015). As will be detailed in the latter part of this chapter, the first and most widely-ratified Convention solely pertaining to children is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) adopted in 1989. The UNCRC has a dual purpose, as it has both a legal and moral compass. The purpose of the Convention is not only to ensure that state parties abide by the obligations it attested to when it signed the Convention but it is also to ensure that problematic stereotypes regarding who a child is are destabilized. I argue throughout this MRP that elementary school classrooms are effective spaces for children’s rights according to the UNCRC to be energetically realized rather than just submissively understood.

The Realization of Children's Rights through a Rights-Based Global Classroom

What does it mean to have a global classroom where diverse perspectives and identities are not only allowed but encouraged? What does it mean to practically intertwine global overarching issues associated with working children, poverty-stricken children, children with disabilities, and children who are from minority groups with effective and holistic rights-based pedagogical practices in Ontario elementary school settings? Why should and how might educators facilitate spaces for children to learn about their rights according to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (UN, 1989) through a multi-factorial and multi-context approach? How can notions of 'right' and 'wrong' childhoods be destabilized in Ontario elementary school settings through the medium of rights-based children's literature?

While largely interpretative and idealistic, the questions above are absolutely essential to the overarching goals of this MRP and thus will be implicitly addressed throughout. Keeping these questions in mind will not only help contextualize the 'bigger picture' surrounding this study regarding the urgent need for explicit children's rights teachings; but, it will hopefully serve as a catalyst for further discussions around the importance of children's rights education on both a local and global scale. Prior to moving forward, it is important to recognize that children's rights are part of a broader human rights framework. According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2015), children's rights are the "rights that children everywhere have: the right to survival, the right to develop to the fullest, the right to protection from harm, neglect and exploitation; and the right to participate fully in family, cultural and social life" (p. 1). As will be demonstrated in the forthcoming chapters, it is through children explicitly learning about their rights in the classroom that equity, social justice, and inclusivity can arguably prevail.

In terms of a roadmap, this introductory chapter will first outline why Canada and

specifically Ontario are the geographical contexts for this MRP research. This chapter will then provide justification for the need to explicitly teach children's rights in Ontario elementary school settings by highlighting the current gaps present between principle and practice. Next, this chapter will provide insights into my positionality as a researcher, as acknowledging my biases from the onset is integral to the validity of the overall study. Lastly, this chapter will identify the conceptual frameworks that will be used to inform the research being conducted, as having a rich theoretical background can help facilitate new understandings and visions regarding the explicit implementation of children's rights education in Ontario elementary classrooms and beyond.

Looking Beyond the Surface: The Hidden Realities of Canada's Diverse Nation

The global community often views Canada as a "prosperous and developed country with a high living standard and steady economic growth" (Grant & Sweetman, 2004, p. 47). In addition to economic prosperity, Canada seems to place great emphasis on anchoring spaces for diverse groups of children and families to harmoniously co-exist. Specifically, Canada was the first country to adopt multiculturalism as an official policy, as values of pluralism, diversity, and human rights are seen as an active part of the Canadian mosaic (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2001). However, there is an ongoing struggle between rhetoric and reality in terms of the disposition of these global rights-based values. This is evident in Canada's most diverse province, Ontario, which was used as the geographical context for this research. There are continuous incidences of discrimination in Ontario, which need to be actively addressed, particularly in the educational sector (Ministry of Education, 2009). According to the Ontario Ministry of Education (2009), such problematic issues as bullying, hate propaganda, homophobia, cyber-bullying, racism, and religious intolerance exist within the Ontario school system. Thus, Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy, which was developed in 2009,

serves as an attempt to address these systemic inequities permeating throughout the realm of education. Specifically, this strategy aims to achieve an inclusive and equitable school climate for all staff and students. Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy (Ontario, 2009) refers to UNESCO (2008)'s definition of inclusive education as "an educational reform that supports and welcomes diversity amongst all learners" (p. 6). Put simply, the primary objective of this strategy is two-fold. Firstly, it is to ensure that all members of the school community feel safe, comfortable, and accepted, and secondly, it is to help elicit an ongoing commitment for establishing a "just, caring society" (Ontario, 2009, p. 10) that benefits the entire human race.

Children's rights education can be seen as an irreplaceable aspect of inclusive education because similar to inclusive education, the purpose of rights-based learning is to facilitate socially just ways of thinking and being in the classroom. Perhaps the most convincing justification for the explicit teaching of children's rights learning in the classroom is the real and undeniable failure of Canada as a whole to actively consider, address, and act upon the needs of the diversity of childhoods that exist within its own country. Specifically, when asked by the United Nations (UN) Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2003 to investigate evidence of discrimination in areas including but not limited to child development and education, it is clear that Canada came short on delivering the promises it agreed upon when it ratified the UNCRC back in 1991 (CCRC, 2010). As revealed through the Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children (CCRC) in 2010, affected groups of children include: children with disabilities, children in poor households, Aboriginal children, children in refugee or recent immigrant families, and children in rural areas. It is shocking that a country that prides itself upon justice, equity, and fairness is knowingly allowing the continuation of discrimination in the form of a lack of access to services and child protection to occur. While Canada has made progress since

2003 to aid in combating inequitable types of treatment, such as the *Child Tax Credit* introduced in 2007 to assist children in low-income households and the passing of *Jordan's Principle* by the Canadian Parliament in 2009, which is supposed to give “priority to the best interests of Aboriginal children caught in federal/provincial jurisdictional disputes over funding services for Aboriginal children” (CCRC, 2010, p. 5), the stark reality is that there is still much to be done in terms of the realization and implementation of children’s rights in Canada. Along with proactively combating discrimination in all forms, an explicit teaching of the UNCRC in Ontario elementary classrooms through the medium of rights-based picture books may also help achieve the goals of Article 29 in the Convention which emphasizes how:

Children’s education should develop each child’s personality, talents and abilities to the fullest. It should encourage children to respect others, human rights and their own and other cultures. It should also help them learn to live peacefully, protect the environment and respect other people. Children have a particular responsibility to respect the rights of their parents, and education should aim to develop respect for the values and culture of their parents. The Convention does not address such issues as school uniforms, dress codes, the singing of the national anthem or prayer in schools. It is up to governments and school officials in each country to determine whether, in the context of their society and existing laws, such matters infringe upon other rights protected by the Convention (UNICEF Fact Sheet, 2015, p. 3).

Building upon Article 29, I argue the need to explicitly incorporate rights-based learning as an additional dimension to Ontario’s Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy, as the tenants of rights-based learning go hand-in-hand with the aims of this strategy. By rights-based learning, I am referring to the explicit teaching of the articles in the UNCRC to facilitate spaces for agency, awareness, and social change. Without an inclusive and equitable rights-based school environment where fairness rather than sameness is encouraged, children may not feel comfortable expressing their opinions or authentic selves. A critical understanding of children’s rights amongst all children will be argued to promote active citizenship and social justice at the local level of the classroom. Specifically, this MRP research will address a gap in the current

literature as children's realization of their rights under the UNCRC and the academic and social learning that occurs in Ontario elementary classrooms should not be seen as divergent goals. A critical understanding of the rights the child according to the UNCRC should be interwoven within the Ontario elementary curriculum rather than being seen as a stand-alone lesson or unit without any depth, richness, or continuity in dialogue.

Furthermore, I argue how ongoing discussion regarding children's rights according to the UNCRC may help "disrupt the normal and familiar" by promoting "interruptive spaces" in Ontario elementary settings (Brown, Souto-Manning, Laman, 2010, p. 523). In other words, children knowing, understanding, and articulating their rights may help destabilize some of the stereotypes regarding who a child, such as they are innocent, dependent, and out of touch with reality by broadening the definition of 'childhood' to actively incorporate factors that affect children's identities like gender, ability, economic status, culture, class, geographical location, and refugee status along with others. When referring to the Ontario curriculum, I argue that children's rights should not be an isolated topic introduced only beginning in grade five. Instead, children's rights should be used as a framework for positive social changes within school contexts rather than being seen as a stand-alone subject. On the whole, this study aims to provide sound reasoning for the need to interactively address the diversity of childhoods present in Ontario elementary classrooms through the universal medium of rights-based picture books, as educational settings should be seen as an avenue rather than a roadblock to rights-based learning, pluralism, and citizenship education.

Prior to moving forward, it is important to consider from the onset that many educators may be reluctant to introduce children's rights in the classroom due to attitudes regarding children's abilities and potentials, or potential fears of losing control and power in the classroom,

or perhaps as a result of an overall lack of knowledge regarding children's rights (Howe & Covell, 2005). While some educators may believe that children are unable to competently exercise their rights as a result of their age or so-called limited worldviews, others may be fearful that if children become aware of their rights, there will be "rebellion and chaos in the classroom" (Howe & Covell, 2005, p. 160). A prime example of this fear was highlighted when Collins (2015) wanted to conduct a research focus group on children's rights in an Ottawa-area school but the educators concerned rejected the proposal because they believed that children's rights were "too political." This study will therefore seek to unpack some of these fears through a non-intimidating manner of picture books, as children's lives are centred around geographical, cultural, economic, and historical circumstances and are thus undeniably political.

Paradigm and Positionality

Being an Ontario Certified Teacher and having an inter-disciplinary academic background in children's rights, international development, and education, this study is motivated by the visible and hidden inequities witnessed in Ontario's educational system through my lived and theoretical experiences. I have worked, interned, and volunteered in a range of child-centred settings in the Greater Toronto Area, which include but are not limited to: classrooms, hospitals, inclusion-based day camps, early childhood facilities, and international NGOs. With a commitment to serving humanity in the broadest sense of the term and to gaining a more holistic understanding of how to effectively work with children who experience systemic injustices on a daily basis, I hope to provide insights into the urgent need to incorporate explicit rights-based pedagogical practices in Ontario elementary classrooms in order to facilitate a critical understanding of diverse childhood contexts. By *diverse childhood contexts*, I am referring to the complexities that children face as a result of their racial status, ethnicity, ability,

class, geographical location, and sexuality, to name a few. In other words, because children's experiences are multiple and intersect with other variables as mentioned above, their experiences cannot be categorized based on assumptions or generalizations.

I am distinctly aware that the notion of 'injustices' in the school system involves a broad range of issues ranging from classism to racism to able-ism each of which cannot be addressed through a static or linear method. This is why I am cognizant of making any sweeping generalizations throughout this study, as context and paradigm are of utmost importance.

However, the purpose of this study is to shed light on the importance of actively considering how an explicit rights-based educational curriculum can help debunk stereotypes associated with diverse groups of children and lead to pluralistic understandings where all children not only feel acknowledged but are effortlessly accepted. As eloquently articulated by His Highness the Aga Khan (2008), a note-worthy humanitarian and philanthropist who has been an integral influence in terms of my worldview and perspective on education, "pluralism does not happen by accident but is the product of enlightened education, moral and material investment by governments and the recognition of all of our common humanity" (p. 4). Thus, a concrete understanding of children's rights in the classroom may not only help encourage pluralism but influence the emergence of critical global citizens whose realities are both varied and complex.

Conceptual Framework(s)

Because rights-based learning is interdisciplinary, it can be linked to a variety of theoretical schools of thought, such as the sociology of childhood (James & Prout, 1990) as well as the post-colonial theory of orientalism (Said, 1978), to name a few. However, a children's rights framework according to the UNCRC is the primary lens informing this study. As touched upon earlier, critical to contemporary understandings of childhood is the United Nations

Convention on the Rights of the Child, otherwise known as the UNCRC, which was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1989 (UN, 1989). This Convention has been ratified by every country throughout the globe with the exception of the United States (UNTC, 2015).

Specifically, it is a set of international standards and measures, which works to promote children's civil, political, social, economic, and cultural rights, including the right to survival, to protection, to development, and to participation. The articles in the Convention reinforce "a common understanding among societies that to fulfil the rights of the child, it is imperative to protect childhood as a period that is separate from adulthood, to define a time in which children can grow, learn, play, and develop" (UNICEF, 2009, p. 2). As discussed below in the literature section, the Convention is criticized by various disciplines and by a range of theorists for being an aspirational ideology, as it seemingly promotes challenging visions of peace, tolerance, equity, respect for human rights, and shared responsibility. However, I argue that the UNCRC should be viewed as a pertinent document that has immediate obligations, as it sees children as "rights-holders" rather than mere "objects of charity" (UNICEF, 2009, p. 1).

Despite the UNCRC being international in scope, it is rooted in a particular way of thinking and being. Specifically, the children's rights agenda is a contested discourse because many theorists argue that it promotes a universal model of childhood and thus generalizes the lived experiences of children within and between Majority and Minority World contexts and regardless of factors, such as individual belief systems (Nieuwenhuys, 1998). By Minority World contexts, I am referring to the term used in international development studies to categorize countries which are considered to be economically stable, industrialized, and global power hubs, such as Canada, Europe, and the United States. By Majority World contexts, I am referring to the term used to describe countries which face ongoing political, social, and economic challenges.

However, in spite of the criticisms of the UNCRC specifically in regard to the universalism-cultural relativism debate which will be addressed later in this study, children in elementary school settings, particularly in Ontario, should be critically introduced to and engaged with their rights for a myriad of reasons, which will be further discussed in the forthcoming chapters. I bring forth the argument that children's rights as outlined within the UNCRC should not be indisputably accepted, as it may have differing interpretations based on one's social, cultural, and economic location. However, children should still be taught they have rights, as knowing about their rights may facilitate avenues for active agency and ownership over the learning process as well as a compassion towards broader social changes and the human race as a whole. Unpacking the discussion of children's rights in the classroom through the medium of rights-based picture books can arguably lead to broadening perspectives and help children consider that there are multiple forms of childhoods that exist apart from the dominant Western discourse that childhood is characterized solely by play, attending school, being dependent on adult allies for survival and basic necessities, and remaining silenced against injustices and dehumanizing acts occurring within or outside of a child's community (Ansell, 2005). Thus, the intent of children's rights teachings in the classroom should not be to narrow but rather broaden the discourse regarding who a child is in order to facilitate spaces for diverse groups of children to harmoniously coexist in the classroom and beyond.

A children's rights framework will not only permeate but inform this study because children's rights are applicable to all children whether they are living in local or global contexts. The diverse and changing nature of children's lives in both local and global contexts cannot be overlooked. With the rampant rise of globalization and ongoing technological advancements, polarizing divisions are being created between children who live in Majority World and Minority

World contexts through the media and other means. As briefly noted above, children's experiences are being dichotomized based on their geographical, cultural, and class contexts. This is evident through accessibility of the media where children who are suffering from starvation, who are engaging in armed conflict, who are in the midst of war zones, or who are working for less than minimal wages are pitifully depicted in newspapers or on television screens (Ansell, 2005). However, rather than viewing childhood as having a singular meaning, a shift in thinking is arguably encouraged, as the term childhood is often politicized and thus has varied theoretical and practical underpinnings based on factors including but not limited to geographical location, economic status and familial dynamics (Jones & Welch, 2010). Picture books can be used as a medium by educators at the local level to initiate spaces for dialogue regarding the broader tensions surrounding children. While there may be tensions surrounding whether a children's rights framework can be justified, the reality is that children's rights are "increasingly used as a policy framework by governments, as a research paradigm by scholars, and as an advocacy tool by civil society worldwide" (Tobin, 2013, p. 395). As a result, the influence of a children's rights framework cannot be underestimated in terms of eliciting positive social changes in the classroom and upholding the dignity of diverse groups of children.

In addition to a rights-based framework that will permeate throughout the discussion of this MRP, the second theoretical lens that will be adopted is Paulo Freire's notion of *critical pedagogy*. While Freire was a prominent influence in the study of education during the 20th century, his notion of critical pedagogy can be applied to the study of children's rights and particularly, to the discourses surrounding diverse childhood contexts due to its emphasis on self-reflection and the culture of questioning assumptive ideologies (Giroux, 2010, p. 1). Specifically, Freire explains how critical pedagogy "offers the best and perhaps the only chance for young

people to develop and assert a sense of their rights and responsibilities to participate in governing, and not simply be governed” (Giroux, 2010, p. 1). The aspect of critical pedagogy that will be used to help analyze and inform the research is the notion of ‘praxis’ as coined by Freire (Mayo, 2005, p. 467).

The notion of praxis emphasizes the idea that theory and practice should not be viewed as binary oppositions. Instead, they should be seen as promoting collaboration and participatory forms of action. Specifically, praxis focuses on power, history, memory, relational analysis and justice as opposed to simply representation (Giroux, 2010, p. 3). Praxis is about merging theory and practice in order to “decolonize the mind to be open to new and more democratic social relations in which a diversity of voices can be embraced across all manners of difference” (Mayo, 2005, p. 68). The notion of critical pedagogy and praxis can be applied to the discourses surrounding rights-based learning, as the purpose is to promote a more socially just way of recognizing the diversity children encompass through a rights-based lens. However, keeping Freire’s viewpoints in mind, in order to promote socially just and inclusive ways of viewing children as ‘rights-holders,’ it is essential to engage in a dialogue as opposed to monologue. In other words, rather than simply imposing our dominant ideas of what is considered to be “right” or “wrong” in terms of childhood, we need to actively consider the voices, histories, and experiences of children themselves.

While it is important to recognize that “power privileges certain forms of cultural capital, ways of speaking, living, being, and acting in the world,” we also need to facilitate the conditions for individuals to govern their own identity rather than have their identity be governed for them (Giroux, 2010, p. 5). This translates to the idea that in order to help reduce the hidden injustices that may arise when teaching children about their rights according to the UNCRC, we need to

engage in practices where the experiences of all children are placed at the forefront. Overall, the purpose of using the frameworks of children's rights and critical pedagogy is to move beyond constraining boundaries by placing focus not simply on intellectualizing or thinking; but, rather on a diversity of ideas in terms of knowledge construction.

The subsequent chapter of this paper will further contextualize the importance of teaching children's rights in the classroom. Specifically, chapter two of this MRP will conduct an extensive literature review regarding why it is integral to recognize the multiplicity of childhoods that exist in early childhood settings and how the broader universalism-cultural relativism debate surrounding the UNCRC should not be seen as a deterrent to introducing the Convention to children in our classrooms. Chapter three will then present my methodological approach and rationale for analyzing a select number of rights-based picture books as well as highlight any limitations, as acknowledging one's limitations is an integral aspect of credible research. Chapter four will present the findings of my thematic analysis through both narrative and visual representations, such as pie graphs. Visual representations were used, as they arguably provide the most coherent and organized way of displaying a large amount of data. Additionally, visual representations allow us to compare the data in order to develop comprehensive insights from the findings. Chapter five presents an analysis of the findings through the four guiding principles of the UNCRC. Lastly, chapter six will relate the importance of this study to the field of early childhood studies and offer recommendations for future research and practice.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

In order to provide a holistic understanding of the need to explicitly incorporate rights-based teachings into Ontario elementary classrooms, this literature review aims to be comprehensive, as it seeks to gain a rich understanding of the diverse types of childhoods that may exist in Canadian classrooms and how a rights-based pedagogy can help reflect and treasure this diversity. Additionally, this literature review seeks to provide the context necessary to support the inclusion of rights-based picture books in Ontario elementary school classrooms. Thus, the overall purpose of this literature review is two-fold. Firstly, it is to justify the importance of rights-based learning in the classroom through critical examination of the multiplicity of childhoods that exist in elementary school settings, specifically through the realms of racial and cultural inclusion, disability, gender identity, and curricular performativity.

Secondly, this literature review will further explore the global universalism-cultural relativism debate surrounding the UNCRC and offer sound theoretical background regarding the validity of explicitly introducing the UNCRC in Ontario elementary school settings despite the criticisms that exist in the scholarly debate. It is important to note that because connections between the larger debate surrounding the UNCRC and its applicability to the local level of Ontario elementary school classrooms have not been directly explored, literature surrounding this topic was scarce. As a result, a careful combination of Canadian and international literature in the form of peer-reviewed publications, grey literature, and books were used to offer depth and richness to the conversation. Because the issue of children's rights is interdisciplinary and permeates discussion in a range of fields, such as: human rights, the humanities, law, sociology, and international development, open-ended as opposed to subject specific databases were used to access literature. In terms of the general inclusion criteria, I focused primarily on whether the

literature captured the relations between “children’s rights,” “Majority World contexts” or realms, such as: racial and cultural inclusion, disability, and gender identity. These disciplines were chosen based on my experiences of what are prevalent equity-based issues in our educational system. As mentioned, the focus was on the scholarly theoretical debate regarding the diverse applicability or lack thereof of children’s rights. However, some articles did focus on qualitative studies conducted in the Majority World to examine how certain theoretical frameworks were applied in a practical manner. Regardless of the style of literature, majority of the pieces analyzed throughout this review were written within the last ten years (2005-2015) in order to provide relevance to the academic dialogue.

This chapter is organized in the following manner. Firstly, the multiplicity of childhoods that exist in elementary school settings is explored through consideration of racial/cultural inclusion, disability, gender identity, and curricular performativity, all of which are discussed in relation to children’s rights. Secondly, a global model of childhood is deconstructed in elementary school settings through greater analysis of Western conceptualizations of childhood. Thirdly, the universalism-cultural relativism debate surrounding the UNCRC is contextualized. Finally, rationale for the teaching of children’s rights in Ontario elementary settings is outlined.

The Multiplicity of Childhoods that Exist in Elementary School Settings

A sound understanding of the rights of the child recognizes that notions of ‘children’ and ‘childhood’ are not fixed, universal categories. Instead, they are socially constructed and thus, vary across time and space. Dahlberg, Moss, and Pence (2012) explain how there are various conceptualizations of who a child is according to the social variables one encompasses, whether it is in relation to race, class, gender, age, socio-economic status, or geographical location. While it is important not to generalize, children are often referred to as less than or inferior compared to

their adult counterparts (Jenkins, 1996). In other words, children rarely define their own state of being, as they are often viewed as “becomings” rather than as citizens in their own right (Dahlberg et. al, 2012, p. 50). Because the notion of ‘childhood’ is often decided upon by surrounding authority figures, it may negate children’s autonomy, silence their individual voices, decontextualize their individual experiences, and treat them as “other” or inferior. Referring to the North American or European context, children were and arguably continue to be viewed as innocent, naïve, dependent, and in need of protection. Specifically, Rousseau’s notion of the *innocent child* translates to the idea that children should be sheltered from the corrupt surrounding world, which is said to be “violent, oppressive, commercialized, and exploitative” (Dahlberg et. al, 2012, p. 45). Rousseau’s conceptualizations further debate surrounding why such viewpoints surrounding childhood are problematic, as they seem to go against the tenants of the UNCRC by universalizing children’s lived and diverse experiences, by viewing children as fragile humans lacking agency and influence, and by seeing them as isolated rather than as integrated members of a given society.

Dahlberg, Moss, and Pence’s viewpoints which are in line with the sociology of childhood paradigm that views children as active agents contrast greatly with Jean Piaget’s theory of the developmental stages of childhood. While Piaget focuses on the scientific child or the idea that all children should follow a “standard sequence of biological stages that constitute a path to full realization or ladder-like progression to maturity,” the new sociology of childhood places emphasis on children as active agents or as individuals in their own right (Dahlberg et. al, 2012, p. 46). In other words, we need to recognize that children are not empty vessels to be filled with as much information as possible. Instead, children come with predisposed narratives based on their own social, cultural, political, and economic contexts. This is why it is essential that we

take into account the notion of cultural relativism when working with children in any capacity, as definitions of ‘children’ and ‘childhood’ are not static; but, rather are fluid and vary based on one’s societal upbringings. Cultural relativism recognizes that while all children have the same rights according to the UNCRC, children cannot be homogenized and thus scientific viewpoints of childhood may disregard their individuality, culture, and localized ways of being.

Building upon the sociology of childhood paradigm, the power of discourse, language, and practice cannot be underestimated when working with children and when examining the articles in the UNCRC. In other words, the ways in which educators engage in dialogue about the rights of child can either be empowering or victimizing. Language can either facilitate a sense of agency or dichotomize and perpetuate the unequal power dynamics present between adults and children. For example, child-centred pedagogical practices are often seen as being a positive, as they create the illusion that children’s voices, experiences, and languages are actively being considered in the teaching context. However, the flipside to this approach is that these practices may treat a child as an “autonomous, isolated, and decontextualized being” (Dahlberg et. al, 2012, p. 59). In other words, similar to John Locke’s notion of *tabula rasa* or blank slate, disconnected child-centred practices may assume that children are completely out of contact with society and living in their own homogenous and imaginary worlds. This is problematic, as it not only fails to recognize the diversity of childhoods exist but also that children are actively involved in societal issues depending on their geographical, cultural, and economic contexts. As a result, we cannot be so quick as to judge a child’s circumstances and assume that their life is characterized simply by play and dependency. The idea of play and dependency will be further critiqued in the section surrounding deconstructing a global model of childhood. The multiplicity

of childhoods present in elementary school settings is illustrated through the following identities of racial/cultural inclusion, disability, gender identity, and curricular performativity.

a) Racial/Cultural Inclusion and Children's Rights

As noted earlier, the definition of diverse childhoods explores the notion of intersectionality or how a child's identity is influenced by such factors as race, gender, culture, geographical location, to name a few. This section will therefore explore the notion of diverse childhoods as it relates to the rights of the child through a racial/cultural lens. While it is important not to generalize, as the definition of dominant varies based on one's social and geographical location, the dominant Eurocentric view tends to be that early childhood and elementary settings are often seen as safe spaces where children regardless of the social variables they encompass, such as gender, race, class, and culture, can thrive physically, socially, emotionally, and intellectually. In other words, there may be an assumption that schools and specifically, early childhood settings are "integrated and equal" (Brown, Manning, & Laman, 2010, p. 513). On the surface, it may seem as if many elementary school settings are promoting diversity and inclusivity by placing students of multiple ethnicities and races into shared classrooms (Brown et. al, 2010, p. 513). However, this masks the idea that elementary settings in our Westernized context may promote Eurocentric ways of thinking thereby privileging the idea of "Whiteness" (Brown et. al, 2010, p. 513).

Specifically, the idea of "Whiteness" is evident when students of minority groups are subjected to dominant ideologies, which negate their individual voices, ideas, and experiences. In other words, while schools claim to be "objective, culture-free zones," the reality is that the colonization of peoples of colour continues to occur (Brown et. al, 2010, p. 514). Referring to the Canadian context, this is evident at both the structural and institutional level when examining

curricula, school-based activities, and policy documents. For example, the idea that education represents individualism, independence, and competition is problematic in the sense that it does not account for Aboriginal ways of knowing and learning (Preston, Cottrell, Pelletier, & Pearce, 2012). Specifically, Aboriginal pedagogical practices stress experiential learning through a focus on aspects, such as storytelling, songs and dances, and contours of the land (Preston et. al, 2012). However, because our dominant school system largely emphasizes standardized tests and a competitive learning atmosphere, it fails to recognize the need for “culturally relevant early learning programs,” which actively builds upon the knowledge of the students involved (Preston et. al, 2012, p. 11). In other words, it is important to recognize that schools cannot be seen as isolated institutions; but, rather embedded within the communal context. Rather than simply ‘celebrating’ certain cultures and geographical regions in a timed and specified manner, it is essential to integrate them into our daily activities in order to truly create rich and dynamic learning experiences for all where dialogue, critical questioning, and interactive play can arise. It is especially important to outline the tensions within our current pedagogical practices as overt and covert forms of racism in the classroom are not only dehumanizing but defy the rights of the child according to the UNCRC. This is because children should have a right to choose their own identity, to practice their own religion safely, and to have their cultures, views and opinions respected as outlined in UNCRC articles 8, 14, and 12 respectively (UN, 1989).

Furthermore, building upon the notion of diversity and inclusivity, it is important to recognize the ways in which the “undemocratic practices of early childhood settings” inform children’s identities and “positionings” (Brown et. al, 2010, p. 515). The idea that racial, linguistic, and class-based variables do not affect a child’s ability to ‘succeed’ in the dominant Eurocentric school atmosphere is a problematic assumption (Brown et. al, 2010). Discrimination

within the school system is evident in the stereotypical representations of characters in children's picture books. For example the portrayal of many African American characters is often problematic, as their rich cultural backgrounds and histories are often silenced or disregarded (Brown et. al, 2010, p. 520). This example demonstrates how there may be problematic dichotomies present in both early childhood and elementary school settings. The idea of the "us versus them" or Eurocentric knowledge versus minority knowledge binary needs to be deconstructed as it arguably promotes an orientalist way of thinking and perpetuates the idea of the "other." Orientalism is a "Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (Said, 1978, p. 3). Specifically, it is a discourse that is tied to enabling social and economic institutions that reflect certain power relationships. Edward Said's identification of 'orientalism' is a social construct or an imaginative and geographic division that defines and divides the so-called East and West (1978). It is the idea that European identities are culturally, socially, and politically superior in comparison to all non-European peoples (Said, 1978).

Inclusive and non-discriminatory practices in elementary settings can strongly relate to Edward Said's notion of orientalism. Specifically, orientalism can be linked to the perpetuation of racism and to a sense of narrow-mindedness towards children in early learning settings who represent different social variables. Thus, in order to combat orientalist ways of thinking in the classroom, it is essential to promote socially inclusive practices, which promote children's rights, such as article 31, namely the right to play. Play-based learning and child centred-ness has been challenged throughout early childhood literature (Thomas, Warren & deVries, 2011). However, the importance of play has guided the philosophies of foundational theorists, such as Rousseau. Rousseau focuses on how educating children should occur "naturally and should emerge from children's everyday activities with the teacher taking the form of the 'guide' or 'facilitator' as

opposed to the dominator or expert” (Thomas et al., 2011). Play has been found to “develop the whole child from physical, social/emotional, and cognitive perspectives” (Huisman, 2014, p. 466). Facilitating positive play environments can promote skills, such as: problem-solving, cooperation, and goal-setting (Huisman, 2014). Through play, young children can gain an understanding of the world in which they live. However, in order for play-based opportunities to be effective, it needs to be focused on children’s natural curiosities (Huisman, 2014).

Additionally, transformative action needs to occur at the individual, systemic, and institutional level in order to combat the inequities that are currently taking place. Specifically, the idea of the “ideological yardstick” or “a distinction against which others are measured” needs to be debunked, as it negates complexities associated with a student’s identity, as it relates to class, race, age, gender, language, and geographical location (Viruru, 2005, p. 10). In other words, the ideological yardstick promotes the assumption that all children begin at a neutral platform and thus it fails to consider how a child’s social, cultural, and economic identity plays an integral role in terms of their academic success. Overall, it is essential to unpack racialized practices in early childhood and elementary school settings otherwise ‘civilized forms of oppression’ will continue to occur (Viruru, 2005, p. 19). The notion of civilized oppressions relates to the idea that oppression is not always visible but rather hidden in day-to-day realities. This form of silenced oppression is evident when students’ identities are not integrated into daily school activities, it is evident when they do not have the means to participate in certain school activities due to time or financial constraints, and it is evident when a singular form of ‘success’ is promoted. We therefore need to redefine the notion of ‘success’ to incorporate multiple perspectives, experiences, and ways of knowing. Put simply, as noted earlier, we need to “disrupt the normal and familiar” by promoting “interruptive spaces” (Brown et al. 2010, p. 523). This

can arguably be accomplished through a systemic teaching of children's rights content in the classroom, as this rights-based teaching may lead to bridging the gap between theory and practice when it comes to nourishing the best interests of each student in our diverse classrooms.

Educators in elementary classrooms can perhaps proactively prevent non-discriminatory practices and facilitate an active consideration of each child's views, thoughts, talents, and abilities through the sustainment of educational equity. Children's rights relates strongly to educational equity, as educational equity considers aspects of personal heterogeneity, such as: learning styles, race, gender, socio-economic status, and differentiated opinions (Unterhalter, 2009). Non-discriminatory practices also relates to social inclusion. Social inclusion is defined as a "philosophy based on values aiming to maximize the participation of all in society and education by minimizing exclusionary and discriminatory practices" (Polat, 2011, p. 51). Socially inclusive pedagogical practices involve the assumption that a child is socialized by belonging to a "particular culture at a certain stage in its history" (James & Prout, 1990, p. 15). In order to be inclusive of all social classes, cultures, and abilities, educators need to communicate with families in order to gain insight into the complexities of each child's cultural field. Educators also need to adapt their practices to meet the learning styles children may have developed from being exposed to different cultural expectations (Klibthong, 2012). Overall, because the rights that children have according to the UNCRC can influence their social identity, they should actively be considered within the realm of inclusive early learning practices.

b) Disability and Children's Rights

Expanding upon the notion of diverse childhoods as it relates to the UNCRC, Watson (2012) explains how there have been varying approaches to understanding the notion of 'disabled childhoods' based on time, setting, context, and the social variables that one

encompasses. Similar to childhoods in general, Watson (2012) reveals how certain theoretical models used to examine ‘disability’ are homogenizing, as they are too simplistic and they tend to look at ‘disabled childhoods’ from a singular lens or perspective. In addition, these models, ideologies, or dominant ways of thinking often do not actively consider the voices and experiences of those who are characterized as having a ‘disability.’ While it is important not to generalize, early research on ‘disabled childhoods’ focused primarily on the idea of provision (Watson, 2012). In other words, rather than considering children with disabilities as active agents of their own lives, early research tended to view them as ‘passive’ and ‘vulnerable’ victims; thereby objectifying and silencing their voices (Watson, 2012, p. 193). This is problematic because rather than treating children as “social agents” who can negotiate and take part in decision-making processes, early research tended to refer to them as “objects of welfare or medical intervention” (Watson, 2012, p. 194). These viewpoints surrounding children with disabilities relate to some of the criticisms associated with the UNCRC, as the discourse surrounding children’s rights is often seen as being protectionist and having ‘paternalistic’ as opposed to ‘emancipatory’ tendencies (Stoecklin & Bonvin, 2014, p. 68). While the principles of protection and provision serve as the backbone to the UNCRC, participation is equally if not arguably the most important guiding principle of children’s rights understanding and implementation because through participation, children may have the opportunity to actively stand up for the injustices occurring within and around their daily lives.

Building upon importance of participation as noted in the UNCRC, the experiences of children who are characterized as having a disability cannot be reduced to an either-or dichotomy. Specifically, we cannot individualize the problem of disability by focusing solely on someone’s so-called impairment and how that particular impairment may be inhibiting them

from full economic, social, and academic participation in society. However, we cannot simply focus on the social and environmental barriers faced by individuals with disabilities either, and reduce their reasons for exclusion to policy frameworks (Watson, 2012). Instead, we need to examine the notion of disability through a multi-faceted, intersectional lens which actively takes into account children's voices issues of inclusion at the individual, the societal, and the institutional level. In other words, rather than promoting 'one-size fits all' models of inclusion, we need to recognize that children with disabilities are *not* a homogeneous group and that their 'disability' is not the only part of their identity (Watson, 2012, p. 195). We need to emphasize *intersectionality* or how the idea of 'disability' is a complex interaction that involves active consideration of "physical, biological, psychological, psycho-social and emotional, as well as socio-economic variables" (Watson, 2012, p. 198).

The notion of 'disability' is both politicized and socially constructed (Iannacci & Graham, 2013, p. 55). As a result, when referring to the effective implementation of the UNCRC in elementary school settings, we need to challenge traditional pedagogical practices which create binaries between so called 'special education students' and 'typically developing students.' This is because it is not about perpetuating forms of 'other' but rather it is about broadening our practices to seamlessly incorporate the strengths and interests of all students regardless of the social variables they encompass. In other words, we need to deconstruct the binaries associated with the term 'disability' by engaging with varied forms of knowledge and the unequal power dynamics at play. I argue that UNCRC is not about 'fixing' children or forcing them to behave in a particular manner. Instead, the application of children's rights learning in a school context is about facilitating the recognition of diverse childhoods and in this case, children who are characterized as having a 'disability,' to incorporate a critical analysis of

cultural, environmental, political, and systemic factors that affect all children's daily lives.

Overall, in order for the UNCRC to be effectively implemented in all school contexts particularly around the realm of disability, it is essential that educators “interrogate the language used in relation to those identified as disabled and in the context of disability” (Iannaci & Graham, 2013, p. 55). Language is a double-edged sword, as it can promote both humanization as well as dehumanization. It can be used to communicate, inform, and alter dominant ways of thinking, seeing, and representing. However, when used without thought or consideration, language can not only produce; but, it can also perpetuate stereotypes, misconceptions, and problematic labels that are challenging to overcome (Vojak, 2009). In other words, by focusing solely on the notion of ‘disability,’ it narrows the definition of what it means to be a ‘person’ by associating personhood with someone who is ‘able-bodied.’ This is problematic, as it pathologizes one’s condition and views them as “other” or “inferior.” Thus, in order to bridge the theory-practice divide when it comes to the realm of children’s rights, we need to incorporate a broader definition of personhood, which encompasses all aspects of the human race in an equitable form. Put simply, we need to stop categorizing individuals on the basis of “norms,” as normativity itself is a social construction. Instead, we need to recognize the diversity of childhoods that exist in our elementary school settings and proactively encourage educators to use the articles in the UNCRC as a tool to support children’s rights implementation.

c) Gender Identity and Children’s Rights

Along with racial/cultural inclusion and disability, children’s gender identities form another branch of diverse childhoods. Children’s gender identities are important to consider in the discussion of children’s rights, as they are often linked to dominant social constructions of heterosexuality (Renold, 2006). In other words, because practices in early childhood and

elementary school settings tend to be informed by heteronormative ideals, they need to be reconfigured in order to maintain the status quo (Gunn, 2011). While it is important not to be assumptive, this is evident in the ways in which ‘boys’ and ‘girls’ interact through forms of play and other means. Heterosexuality has become the ‘norm’ in early childhood and elementary settings; however, this is problematic as children who do not identify with heterosexual ideals may be rejected and seen as “other” or “different.” Through a rights-based approach, there is a strong potential to address the notion that identity is not something which is static; but, rather constantly changing based on time, space, and the context-specific variables one encompasses. As revealed through Butler’s conceptualization of identity, it is ‘performative’ and thus “gender is something continually created and recreated through everyday social and cultural practices” (Renold, 2006, p. 492). As a result, through explicit teaching of the articles in the UNCRC, educators and those who interact with children can actively deconstruct the idea of heterosexuality being a taken-for-granted norm and instead, recognize that the ways in which children ‘do gender’ are not rigid; but rather fluid and intersectional (Renold, 2006, p. 494).

In today’s contemporary and globalized culture, the loss of childhood sexual innocence is often seen as a space of ‘moral panic’ as it relates to the idea that children may know “too much too soon” or are “not quite ready for sexual knowledge or activity” (Renold, 2006, p. 490). This compliments Janssen’s notion of the ‘hurried erotics discourse’ or the idea that sexuality is perceived as a “direct threat to the supposed cherished ideals of modern childhood” (Renold, 2006, p. 490). However, it is important to recognize that childhood itself is a social construction and the variables that are often used to distinguish between ‘adulthood’ and ‘childhood’ may not be as clear-cut as they may seem. As a result, rather than focusing on pre-conceived notions, we need to be actively aware of a child’s individual, cultural, social, and economic context before

making generalized statements about what they ‘should’ or ‘should not’ be exposed to in child-centred contexts, such as the classroom.

Furthermore, when referring to early childhood settings, rather than “closeting children’s sexual knowledge” due to potential adult discomforts, we need to work collaboratively with parents and other key agents to ensure that we provide spaces to re-define what ‘normativity’ entails (Renold, 2006, p. 490). We need to acknowledge children as sexual ‘beings’ and ‘becomings’ and recognize them as individuals in their own right rather than as simply passing through ‘childhood’ in order to achieve a state of ‘maturity’ (Renold, 2006). In other words, we need to recognize children as individuals in the present but also as individuals who are growing, changing, and developing their orientation and worldview as they gain more experiences. Imposing heteronormative ideals onto children through early childhood and elementary school practices may be problematic, as these normative constructions tend to control children’s bodies due to the power dynamics associated with them (Gunn, 2011). As a result, we need to disrupt the “hegemonic heterosexual matrix” and find ways for children to explore their sexual identities in non-threatening manners (Renold, 2006, p. 506).

Additionally, the “pervasiveness of heteronormativity in early childhood settings” can be seen as problematic, as it may restrict a child’s opportunity to explore their sexual identity in a safe and inclusive manner (Gunn, 2011, p. 280). However, this type of restriction may be based on the idea that the “West privileges the nuclear family form over all others” and thus the imposition of heteronormative ideals from a young age may be informed by the idea of the nuclear family (Gunn, 2011). This type of sexual identity restriction may also be influenced by the idea that modern childhood is seen as a time of presumed sexual innocence, particularly when referring to the Eurocentric context (Renold, 2006). This relates to Henry Jenkin’s notion

of the myth of childhood innocence or the idea that children are often viewed as innocent, naïve, dependent, and out of touch with reality (1996). Making blanket statements such as ‘children are innocent’ is problematic, as it denies them of their individual agency, their ability to participate in decision-making processes, and most importantly, their rights according to the UNCRC, particularly in regard to respecting their views and bearing in mind their best interests.

It is important to recognize however that a child’s identity is intertwined with contexts of the family, community, and larger society and thus cannot be viewed in isolation (Gunn, 2011). With this said, the notion of cultural relativism needs to be kept in mind to ensure that educators are not overstepping any boundaries when it comes to practices that are occurring in the classroom. For example, while rights-based learning may compliment the implementation of sexual education in the Ontario curriculum from as early as grade one, this might become controversial due to familial ideologies surrounding what is age-appropriate, culturally-appropriate, or religiously-appropriate for children. Therefore, as will be continuously discussed, while rights-based learning is arguably important to engage our children as open-minded global citizens, it is important maintain consistent communication with parents and guardians alike, so that they are aware of what is being discussed within the realm of the school context. This is to ensure that *diversity* in all aspects of the term whether it is in relation to age, class, gender, culture, or sexuality is not only addressed but actively respected.

d) Curricular Performativity and Children’s Rights

Building upon the practicality of introducing children’s rights into Ontario elementary school settings, Sellers (2010) reveals that the ways in which children perform their identities is not through static or fixed contexts. This is why placing emphasis only on prescriptive forms of curriculum may be problematic, as they often categorize children based on “historical matters of

syllabus, that is subject matter and how it is taught” (Sellers, 2010, p. 560). Prescriptive forms of curriculum have been known to help to children meet learning goals or objectives and thus should not be disregarded in totality. However, similar to Ontario’s educational shift to inquiry-based learning, which begins in junior kindergarten through play-based learning, Sellers contextualizes the need to incorporate children’s interests, ideas, and interpretive views of their world by explaining the National Curriculum Strategy that was developed in New Zealand during the 1990s. This strategy effectively merged indigenous knowledge into children’s schooling experiences by focusing on values, such as: “well-being, belonging, contribution, communication, and exploration” (Sellers, 2010, p. 560). With this said, in order for children’s creativity to be unleashed, it is essential that both “planned and spontaneous experiences and interactions” occur through a diverse array of programmes, philosophies, structures, and environments (Sellers, 2010, p. 561). This can relate to Paulo Freire’s theories of moving beyond the banking method of education to problem-posing methods of education, as children should be viewed and treated as co-constructors of knowledge as opposed to empty receptacles to be filled with information from an all-encompassing ‘expert.’ In other words, it is important to recognize that children are experts of their own lives and should be provided with spaces and opportunities to actively be a part of decision-making processes, which affect them. This can arguably most effectively be accomplished through a rights-based teaching framework, which incorporates the voices and experiences of all children.

However, it is also important to consider that even “non-prescriptive curriculum approaches” can be seen as problematic, as it questions whose knowledge is being ‘privileged’ (Sellers, 2010, p. 562). This is because there is power and particular forms of knowledge present in every curriculum approach as a result of one’s personal philosophies and teaching endeavours.

Yet, the notion of curricular performativity is beneficial as it treats children as ‘embodied becomings’ (Sellers, 2010, p. 563). In other words, it recognizes that a clear-cut dichotomy should not be created between adults and children where children are seen solely as “becomings” and adults as “beings.” Instead, similar to the tenants of the UNCRC, the idea of curricular performativity recognizes children as individuals in their own right by reconceiving them as ‘young human beings’ rather than as “inferior, incomplete, and incompetent” beings (Sellers, 2010, p. 563). It also recognizes the relationship between children and the broader realm of society by disrupting taken-for-granted assumptions associated with ‘being’ and ‘identity,’

Overall, curricular performativity goes hand in hand with the teachings of the articles in the Convention, as it works to “disrupt expectations of a technicist performance of achieving a specified standard” (Sellers, 2010, p. 564). Curricular performativity and rights-based learning considers the fact that children do not follow a linear path characterized by certain developmental milestones. Instead, they both recognize the idea of the “rhizo milieus” or how children operate within a liminal or in-between space (Sellers, 2010, p. 565). This is evident in the reciprocal relations that children engage in with adults, it is evident in their discourses of learning, and it is evident in their mapping of performance (Sellers, 2010). Thus, when referring to children’s identities, it is important to challenge early childhood development discourses and move beyond “fixed constructs of judgement” in order to truly value and respect their diverse ways of interpreting the world (Knight, 2013, p. 254). This is because there is no standardized or “one-size fits all model” when it comes to learning from and with the children in our classrooms.

Deconstructing a Global Model of Childhood in Elementary School Settings

This section will continue to explore how Western conceptualizations of childhood may be considered as problematic, as they often assume that experiences of children can be

generalized across time and space. As mentioned earlier, the ‘new’ sociology of childhood in part recognizes this by moving beyond dominant child development paradigms, such as Parson’s socialization theory and Piagetian child development, which focus on the “clear-cut achievement of narrow-ended milestones” (Tisdall & Punch, 2012, p. 249). Additionally, this paradigm actively considers how viewing childhood as a ‘preparatory phrase’ is problematic, as it denies children of their individual agency and their ability to take part in decision-making processes that affect them. Specifically, the ‘new’ sociology of childhood recognizes the need to move beyond the adult-child dichotomy, which views children as “becomings” rather than as “beings” in their own right (Ansell, 2005). The adult-child dichotomy is prevalent primary in Minority World or so-called developed contexts where emphasis is placed on the protection of children (Tisdall & Punch, 2012). In other words, it fails to recognize that Majority World or so-called underdeveloped contexts are often based on “interdependent family relations” (Tisdall & Punch, 2012, p. 258) and thus the Minority World may negate this complexity. Assumptions based on Western conceptualizations of who a child is may therefore be problematic, as they can be seen as promoting a continuation of “colonial imperialism” or the idea that one form of childhood is more correct or suitable than another and should thus be promoted as the ‘norm’ (Tisdall & Punch, 2012, p. 250).

Building upon the idea of “colonial imperialism,” the UNCRC is often viewed as being antithetical to certain cultures and traditions (Ansell, 2005). While the UNCRC works to promote a children’s rights agenda by focusing on the ‘best interests of the child’ and the idea of protection, participation, and provision, it may also arguably be promoting a “false global childhood” (Tisdall & Punch, 2012, p. 255). In other words, it may be failing to consider that children’s social realities are “complex and contradictory” and thus, their ‘best interests’ cannot

be universalized (Tisdall & Punch, 2012, p. 256). Furthermore, while the UNCRC and the sociology of childhood promote the idea of children's agency or the need to treat children as competent social actors or as having the ability to take part in decision-making processes, which affect them, the reality is that their agency is potentially being masked by micro and macro factors. With this said, it is important to actively consider how one's limitations to exercise their agency can positively or adversely affect their individual and collective situations.

While perhaps not intentional, when referring to diverse forms of childhood, the idea of "minority tradition becoming majoritarian" is evident when examining how images of children in the Global South are portrayed through Western contexts (Moss, 2014, p. 61). Specifically, by focusing primarily on the protection of individuals rather than on actively addressing the systemic issues at stake, many children end up being viewed through a "sympathetic Western gaze" (Ansell, 2005, p. 28). Rather than understanding a child's history, background, and societal ways of living, adults in the Minority World contexts may assume that there is a singular form of childhood, characterized by play and dependency, which all children need to follow. This is evident in the immediate need to condemn child labour and rescue street children, for example. The way in which topics, such as childhood poverty are addressed, particularly through Minority World media also promotes conformity as opposed to individuality, as any form of childhood, which is not the so-called 'norm' is often disregarded and viewed as problematic. A prime example that demonstrates this is in relation to children working. While it is important not to generalize, the idea of "poor children" working is often seen as something that should be 'fixed,' as it does not fit with the dominant form of childhood portrayed by the Minority World. However, as revealed through Olga Nieuwenhuys (1998), "a child's ability to step out of the moral economy to which they are relegated should not lead, as happens currently, to the wrong

conclusion that they have no childhood or are robbed of it” (p. 269). But, as explained later, through a critical consideration of rights-based picture books facilitated by educators, complex issues associated with diverse childhood contexts, such as children who engage in street work or other forms of labour can arguably be explored in a relational manner.

Overall, when referring to the UNCRC in totality, it is important to recognize the Eurocentric bias attached to it. As mentioned earlier, while it should not be disregarded, it is important to critically analyze how it was created and how it is being implemented in diverse contexts. The fact that children were not consulted in the production of the UNCRC demonstrates how children’s voices and experiences are often negated in social, cultural, economic, and political spheres. It is therefore important to recognize that there are multiple forms of childhood that exist based on a variety of historical, political, and economic variables and thus in order for children’s experiences to be heard and acted upon, issues of power, racial stereotypes, and generalizations need to be actively addressed in the classroom.

Contextualizing the Universalism-Cultural Relativism Debate Surrounding the UNCRC

Despite the argument of this MRP that picture books can be used as a tool for awareness raising and to teach children about the UNCRC through both educator and student-led initiatives, it is important to examine the broader global universalism-cultural relativism debate surrounding the validity of the UNCRC in order for this study to have depth and relevance at both the local and global level. Some theorists claim that by focusing primarily on the protection of individuals rather than on creating culturally relevant articles that actively address local systemic issues, the Convention may be promoting a “polarization between global childhood ideology and local practices” (Nieuwenhuys, 2012, p. 273). In other words, through its arguably vague and ambiguous articles, children who do not conform to the generalized incomplete Minority World

notion of childhood said to be characterized by play and dependency may be viewed through a pitiful lens. From an anthropological perspective, the UNCRC is also seen as exclusionary, as it is arguably inspired by Minority World or “Western individualistic rights notions and Western cultural and socio-economic realities” and thus negates “local cultures with collectivist values” (Grover, 2008, p. 62). This is in part why the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child was created, as interpretations of childhood vary between and within cultural and geographical contexts (Kaime, 2009).

Kaime (2009) claims how the UNCRC does not actively compliment the relationship between children’s rights and childhood in the African context due to Western ideologies of childhood being heavily inserted into the agenda. Similarly, when considering the idea of cultural relativism, Okyere (2013) problematizes the idea of the ‘best interests’ of the child, as it relates to the UNCRC by contextualizing the issue of the ‘elimination’ of child labour. Child labour is seen by many human rights organizations as depriving children of their ‘childhood’ as well as adversely affecting their “welfare, their development, and their dignity” (Okyere, 2013, p. 80). Specifically, Okyere (2013) argues how movements and campaigns to end child labour based on Conventions, such as the UNCRC, are not sensitive to diverse childhoods. In other words, child labour interventions often do not compliment the “socio-cultural and political realities in which children live their lives” (Okyere, 2013, p. 81). This is evident at an artisanal gold mining worksite in Ghana where children were working in conditions hazardous to their health and well-being. However, sites like these cannot be abolished without consideration of the complicated narratives of each child at the worksite. This is because many children cannot attend school due to financial means, accessibility constraints, or family obligations, and are thus required to work. With this said, interventions regarding children’s due rights need to actively

address issues of labour through informed participation at the grassroots level (Okyere, 2013). In addition, the debates must be based on “careful analysis and research and not just on emotion or impulse” (Okyere, 2013, p. 82). In other words, before practically implementing children’s rights on the ground, it is essential to understand the local contexts so that further harm is not caused to children in relation to their jobs or other means of survival.

Furthermore, Twum-Danso (2008) explains the lack of cultural relativity in the drafting, implementation, and execution of the UNCRC. She reveals how no country has fully been able to realize its provisions in part due to a lack of political will, a lack of resources, and a lack of awareness. She explains how cultural relativists argue that because “childhood is a relative concept that changes according to historical time, geographical environment, local culture and socio-economic conditions,” the UNCRC is problematic, as it has an inherent Western cultural bias associated with it (Twum-Danso, 2008, p. 399). As a result, a standardized definition of childhood, which originates from the priorities of Minority World contexts cannot effectively translated to Majority World contexts as demonstrated with the failure of the practical implementation of the UNCRC across different countries (Twum-Danso, 2008, p. 399).

Moreover, Grover (2009) uses the arguments of cultural relativity to critique the UNCRC’s idea of protection as a universal right. As revealed by Pupavac, “the protective view of childhood arises in a specific context and out of circumstances that are not part of experiences of countries outside the developed world” (Grover, 2007, p. 432). In other words, the idea of protection has been promoted based on Western models of childhood. This is indeed questionable as the idea of protection may not be seen as being in the ‘best interests’ of the child, as some families may want their children to gain independence from a young age through work and other means. The notion of protection is not a universal truth; but, rather its interpretation is

rooted in the social variables that one encompasses, which include but are not limited to: family relations, culture, race, gender, and geographical location. While it is important not to create clear-cut binaries between Minority World and Majority World conceptualizations of childhood, the institutionalization and globalizing nature of Western models of childhood has resulted in inequitable forms of implementation of the UNCRC. Specifically, Grover argues that the failure of Southern countries to ‘comply’ with Western notions of childhood has resulted in children becoming “permanent objects of outside intervention” (Grover, 2007, p. 432). In other words, the discourse on children’s rights “infantilizes the South” (Grover, 2007, p. 432).

Expanding upon the dichotomous debate surrounding children’s rights, Valentin and Meinert (2009) explain how the rights-based rhetoric has a “civilizing mission” associated with it that is rooted in historicity. Specifically, children were often viewed as “savages in the colonial world,” as they were seen as being easy to influence and manipulate (Valentin & Meinert, 2009, p. 23). Many were forced into missionary schools in order to be transformed into a “proper person” through Western ideals of dress, discipline, education, and housing (Valentin & Meinert, 2009, p. 23). The universal ratification of the UNCRC is seen by some scholars as perpetuating this “civilizing mission” of children in Global South contexts by promoting a “good childhood” through standardized development programmes (Valentin & Meinert, 2009, p. 23). While it is important not to generalize, Western ideals of a “good childhood” are characterized by the protection of parents, learning within a formal educational context, experiencing leisure time, having adequate nutrition, and not conducting work that is harmful, to name a few (Valentin & Meinert, 2009). However, this “normative civilizing project” through a rights-based agenda is problematic, as it places children into fixed and generalizable categories regarding how they should be managed. In other words, their livelihoods are “objectified” through the

institutionalization of a universal set of children's rights (Valentin & Meinert, 2009, p. 25).

A qualitative study conducted by Thelandar (2009) regarding Kenyan and Swedish school children's perspectives of the UNCRC provides a different viewpoint on the applicability of the Convention to diverse childhoods. Specifically, focus groups, semi-structured interviews, and non-verbal creative forms of expression were used to gain access to children's voices in these contexts. While the UNCRC is often seen as creating a dichotomy between childhoods in the so-called North and South, the general consensus from this group of students after reviewing the Convention is that it is a "problem-solver especially for the needy children" (Thelandar, 2009, p. 208). In other words, because these children view the UNCRC as emphasizing the concerns of the most exposed and vulnerable children, it cannot be viewed as universal. This is because through their lens, it negates children in 'privileged' contexts and is thus exclusionary, as it is not a document that can be used in everyday life settings across geographical contexts (Thelandar, 2009). However, I argue that the idea of a privileged context is ambiguous and is thus not so clear-cut, as there are so many complexities within and between varied geographical and cultural contexts. However, it is interesting to note how the UNCRC is contextualized differently based on one's paradigm, worldview, and social location.

While scholarly debates tend to consider the lack of cultural relativity in terms of the UNCRC, it is also important not to disregard the Convention as a whole. Jones and Welch (2010) argue that while the purpose of the UNCRC is to have an international scope, it is not meant to promote a sense of generalizability in a negative way. Many advocates of the UNCRC agree with the idea that children's rights do not exist "in a pure vacuum of ideal and child-centered philosophy" (Jones & Welch, 2010, p. 5). Despite the fact that the UNCRC has a set series of articles to promote the overall well-being of children regardless of social variables, it is not

meant to be based on rigid definitions of childhood. Instead, it is based on subjective interpretations and localized meanings depending on individual and societal ways of being. The child rights dynamic should therefore not be viewed as a “monolithic one-size fits all phenomenon with a basic set of commands that mean the same in every community and for every child irrespective of differences of age, gender, race, ability, or sexuality” (Jones & Welch, 2010, p. 6). I too argue that the UNCRC should be viewed as a framework rather than a rigid unchangeable document for working with children at the communal, national, and international level, such as in schools, in health centres or within international development initiatives.

Additionally, Beazley, Bessell, Ennew, & Waterson (2014) argue that the UNCRC is often criticized unjustifiably for not being culturally sensitive and for not providing clear-cut definitions of certain terms. Specifically, they explain that if “exact definitions” were provided with regard to the articles of the Convention, it would not have been ratified by almost every country in the world (Beazley et. al, 2014, p. 369). While this is debated in the literature, they also argue that the standards of the Convention are purposefully broad, as they “reflect consent on the input of governments from both North and South during the 10-year process” (Beazley et.al, 2014, p. 369). They further explain that while these are standards to be achieved, “no government was excluded from the drafting or adoption process, nor pressurized to ratify” (Beazley et. al, 2014, p. 369). As a result, the debate on cultural relativity is seen as problematic through this lens, as the UNCRC is meant to be a guideline to promote the diverse interpretations of well-being for children, not a standardized framework to follow without critical examination.

After thorough analysis of the literature, it is evident that there are numerous complexities with regard to the scholarly debate surrounding children’s rights and its applicability to diverse childhoods. Many of the theoretical frameworks discussed in this review

reveal how the UNCRC has a Eurocentric bias attached to it and thus, the articles have not translated into practice, as they do not take into account Majority World contexts. In other words, the rights of the child continue to be denied in many contexts. One reason for this could be that Convention is often viewed as being assumptive and as promoting a singular view of children and childhood. The UNCRC is also seen by some as failing to take into account the notion of moral relativism, as it does not recognize that childhoods different from those of Western contexts should not be seen as inferior or inadequate (Ansell, 2005). Many argue that the UNCRC should be viewed through a cultural relativist lens, which emphasizes the notion of intersectionality. In other words, how geographical, historical, economic, and political factors play an active role in the practical implementation of children's rights. However, as revealed in the following section, the UNCRC is also seen to be useful, as it acts as a framework for respecting diverse childhood contexts. As a result, many scholars reveal the need to move beyond the universalism-cultural relativism debate in order to equitably prioritize children's rights. Therefore, the subsequent section will highlight the importance of integrating children's rights learning into daily educational practices as doing so may help lead to greater understandings of the realities of all children.

Moving Beyond Theoretical Criticisms: Why Children's Rights Learning is *Essential* in

Ontario Elementary Classrooms

Despite the criticisms of the UNCRC as described above, the importance of children's rights teachings cannot be underestimated in Ontario elementary classrooms. From my experiences as both a student and educator in Ontario, it seem as if many Ontario elementary classrooms have shifted their pedagogical practices from traditional rote-learning methods to problem-posing, inquiry-based methods of learning where students are encouraged to take

ownership over their learning and become active agents in decision-making processes, which affect their daily lives. While standard curriculum expectations are still used in Ontario to guide student learning, the reality is that students are now explicitly encouraged to explore their curiosity through collaborative activities and choice-based assignments. However, the perception of students as active citizens worthy of respect and social responsibility is not a recent phenomenon. Well before the UNCRC was established in 1989, key philosophical and educational theorists ranging from John Dewey (1938) to Jiddu Krishnamurthi (1953) highlighted the need for children to be treated as beings in their own right, who have the ability to contribute to avenues of social justice and equity in comprehensive and sustainable ways. The purpose of highlighting these key theorists is to help bridge the gap between past and current educational philosophies, as it relates to rights-based learning.

As stressed by Dewey (1938), societies often think in terms of extreme opposites or “Either-Or” philosophies (p. 17). While it is important not to generalize, when referring to educational practices at both the local and global level, educators are often forced to choose between traditional and progressive methods of schooling. However, it is possible to have a balance between the two and in fact, as mentioned by Dewey, it is beneficial to integrate both traditional and progressive methods of education, as it will arguably lead to more holistic educational practices. When examining traditional methods of education solely on its own, it may be considered slightly problematic by some educational schools of thought, as it tends to forbid active participation amongst individuals. Students are often isolated from their peers and have minimal say in decision-making processes, which affect them. Conformity in standards is promoted while individuality is rejected. Additionally, traditional methods of education “consists of bodies of information and of skills that have been worked out in the past; therefore, the chief

business of the school is to transmit them to the new generation” (Dewey, 1938, p.17). The information being taught may seem distant to the learner, as they may not be able to connect what they are learning to their personal experiences or to their everyday actions. Furthermore, the unequal power relationship between teachers and students is evident in ‘traditional’ education, as students are often not permitted to question issues of interest or engage in dialogue with their peers. Overall, traditional education tends to promote docility, receptivity, and obedience, as children are forced to passively accept the information provided which is ultimately discouraged through rights-based learning.

Similarly, Krishnamurthi (1953) explains how “as long as education is based on cut-and-dried principles, it can turn out men and women who are efficient, but it cannot produce creative human beings” (p. 23). As does the UNCRC, Krishnamurthi challenges the ideologies present within and between societies around the globe particularly in regards to education, the government, and so-called authority figures, such as the teacher. Thus, emphasis should be placed on the need to create “integrated” human beings, rather than mechanical ones (Krishnamurthi, 1953, p. 23) Rather than passively accepting the established patterns of a given society, it is of absolute importance to allow children to critically analyze information provided to them as well as question issues which are of interest to them. Through education, students should be able to witness self-fulfilment through action and experience (Krishnamurthi, 1958). While this not a simple task as our Western society tends to function in a competitive manner where many aspects of our individual lives seem to be based on achieving domination, distinction, and self-satisfaction at the expense of others, rights-based teachings can arguable help destabilize this competitive and standardized learning atmosphere through compassion, understanding, and critical engagement (Krishnamurthi, 1958).

Relating these pedagogical practices to the importance of teaching children's rights according to the UNCRC, Howe and Covell (2005) explain how children's rights education is essential as it recognizes children as "persons and worthy citizens rather than the property of their parents or as small and vulnerable 'not-yets'" (p. 9). Children's rights education according to the UNCRC should be embraced rather than feared. It is not about relinquishing the rights of adults; but, rather it is about respecting children as active citizens who have the right to engage in social and moral responsibility, to engage in community involvement at the local and global level, and to have their diverse identities be authentically represented in the classroom. While the UNCRC may be criticized for being labelled as 'UNICEF propaganda' or as an 'anti-family' document that is grounded in Western individualism, I agree with Howe & Covell (2005) that not teaching children about their rights "is both a violation of their rights and a denial of their status as citizens" (Howe & Covell, 2005, p. 8). Additionally, the importance of educating children about their rights is necessary for the advancement of education based on democratic principles and the practice of citizenship. However, a complete children's rights education will exist only when children's rights are explicitly taught in the formal curricula and supported through the hidden curriculum of the school in aspects, such as: school structures, mission statements, and codes of conduct (Howe & Covell, 2005). A complete children's rights education translates to the idea that children's rights education cannot be seen as an isolated phenomenon but rather integral to the holistic humanitarian advancement of a school.

Relating the importance of children's rights education to the Canadian school context and more specifically to Ontario elementary settings, it is important to acknowledge that when the Government of Canada ratified the UNCRC in 1991, it made a commitment to "applying the principles of the Convention, and ensuring that all laws, policies, and practices are in keeping

with the intentions of the Convention” (UNICEF, 2010, p. 9). Naturally, schools are places where teachers can help students become familiar with their rights, offer ways to practically address their rights, and facilitate spaces for children to proactively participate in activities relating to articles in the Convention in an equitable manner, such as the right to have one’s opinion be heard and the right to non-discrimination (UNCRC, 1989). However, the general public may assume that because Canada is a Global North or affluent country and has a strong international reputation for human rights, the UNCRC is irrelevant and more suitable for children living in Global South or ‘developing’ countries (UNICEF, 2010). Perhaps people reach this conclusion because they perceive that because poverty, forms of discrimination, and a lack of access to basic necessities seem to be more visible in Global South contexts due to varied political, economic, and structural issues.

However, as argued thus far, creating clear-cut dichotomies between Global North (Minority World) contexts, such as Canada and Global South (Majority World) contexts is problematic, as it negates the complexities that exist within and between societies and masks the covert forms of human rights violations that undeniably occur within our very own classrooms in Ontario. Championing for the explicit teaching of children’s rights education in Ontario classrooms through the integrated medium of rights-based picture books may have several benefits. First, this approach may provide an entry point for young children to develop lens in addressing the inequities that exist in their community and beyond. Second, it may help promote the importance of political engagement and active participation. Third, it may us help move beyond stereotypical assumptions regarding children who encompass different social variables and facilitate a solid recognition for the *diversity* of childhoods that exist within a single classroom. The next section of this MRP research will delve into my methodological approach

regarding how children's rights can be taught through a child-friendly approach of picture books. Specifically, the chapter will justify the use of children's literature as a form of data and analysis for rights-based learning, it will provide rationale for the selection of picture books used, and it will explain the purpose and benefits of conducting a thematic analysis as opposed to an alternative method of qualitative data collection for this particular study.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Justification for the Use of Children's Literature in Elementary School Classrooms

"Books are humanity in print." (Tuchman, 1980, p. 16)

From my experiences as an educator, children's literature has been commonly criticized for representing ideas that reinforce the status quo and stereotypical representations of children and childhood. In other words, picture books may problematically portray or label children as being helpless, innocent, and voiceless or for being tokenistic. However, if examined critically and through a multi-faceted approach, literature in the form of picture books can arguably be used as a tool to empower and engage children in the realization and understanding of their rights. Kennedy (2012) defines picture books as "books in which the illustrations are as important as or even more important than the words telling the story" (p. 1). Picture books are generally around thirty-two pages long and usually have illustrations "on every page or on every pair of facing pages" (Kennedy, 2012, p. 1). Hefflin & Barksdale-Ladd (2001) explain how children's literature is an influential medium, as through it "children construct messages about their cultures and roles in society" (p. 810). As an educator myself, the influence of picture books in such disciplines as math, social studies, science, and language is indisputable, as it may ease the apprehensions children may have regarding unfamiliar material and thus may be just as powerful in the teaching of children's rights according to the UNCRC.

Additionally, children's literature can aid in creating a bridge between broader social issues and one's daily lives. Storybooks may offer personal accounts that are relatable to a child's life, it may offer non-conforming views of different cultural, political, and economic surroundings, and it may offer insights into themselves as human beings through relations with the characters in the story (Hefflin & Barksdale-Ladd, 2001). From a critical pedagogy

perspective, children's literature is ideal, as it can be used as a political tool to engage with complex overarching issues associated with the principles of the right to non-discrimination, the best interest of the child, the right to life, survival, and development, and the right to respect the views of the child as outlined in articles 2, 3, 6, and 12 in the UNCRC (UN, 1989). This is because picture books may provide a sense of realism and connection to children's daily lives through its characters, illustrations, and lively discussions and activities which arise from reading them. Additionally, while it is important not to generalize, educators may view picture books as a non-threatening way to promote the values enshrined within the UNCRC, to generate thoughtful debate surrounding issues relating to children's rights, as well as to provide a medium for students to engage in illustrations on a critical and comprehensive level. The following sections of this chapter will provide justification for the selection of specific rights-based picture books and offer detailed understandings as to my methodological approach of thematic analysis.

Selection of Rights-Based Picture Books

The picture books used for analysis in this study are identified in a resource kit entitled, *Social Justice Begins with Me* published in 2011 and located on the Elementary Teacher's Federation of Ontario (ETFO's) website. *Social Justice Begins with Me* is characterized as an "anti-bias literature-based curriculum resource kit for the Early Years to Grade 8" (ETFO, 2011, p. 1). This kit was chosen for this study due to its compilation of diverse books categorized by grade level. The literature resources compiled for this kit are divided into categories based on ten monthly themes surrounding issues of inclusion, diversity, acceptance, empathy, and human rights. Specifically, the monthly themes include: *Self-Esteem*, *Sharing Our Lives*, *Peace*, *Building Supportive Communities*, *Caring Hands*, *Untie the Knots of Prejudice*, *Local and Global Citizenship*, *True Worth and Beauty*, *Circles and Cycles*, and most importantly for this

study, *Rights of the Child*. Additionally, the kit openly addresses ‘isms’ which include but are not limited to: able-ism, anti-semitism, sexism, racism, and classism (ETFO, 2011). These books were selectively chosen by the ETFO as they serve a wide-range of purposes. However, it is important to note that there are no publicly accessible documents regarding the usage of this kit by educators or how the books were selected in terms of quality of literature.

.With this said, the ETFO (2015) outlines on its website that these books are relevant to teachings about equity, they may promote critical thinking and literacy skills, encourage both children and educators to be self-reflexive and recognize their own potential biases and prejudices, help “foster a sense of pride and self-esteem,” with cross-curricular links to broader character education objectives (ETFO, 2015, p. 1). Additionally, these books can help children recognize that knowledge is constructed from multiple perspectives and thus facilitating spaces for social justice initiatives to occur involves actively considering these myriads of perspectives.

For the purposes of this study, the picture books that I selected were from the ‘Human Rights’ booklist that align with the monthly ETFO theme of the *Rights of the Child*. These books were selected based on grade level. Specifically, there are 31 books in the Human Rights booklist, which are geared towards children from junior kindergarten to grade eight. However, because the focus of this study is primarily on picture books and children in early elementary settings, the books analyzed are recommended for children in primary/junior grades, namely children from junior kindergarten to grade six. Thus, the selection of books went from 22 out of 31, as the remaining five books were for children in intermediate grades, namely grades seven and eight. However, it is important to note that out of the remaining 26 books, only 22 were included in this study, as the four excluded were done so either due to inaccessibility or because the book was a short chapter book as opposed to a picture book.

Methodological Approach and Rationale

“Methodology is important because it frames the questions being asked, determines the set of instruments and methods to be employed and shapes the analyses” (Smith, 1999, p. 143).

This study employs a qualitative interpretive research paradigm, specifically thematic analysis (TA) to consider if and how the four guiding principles of the UNCRC (UN, 1989), namely the right to non-discrimination, the right to the best interests of the child, the right to survival, life and development, and the right to respect the views of the child can be critically taught in elementary school settings through the medium of the selected picture books. Delving into the specifics of thematic analysis, it is “a method for systematically identifying, organizing, and offering insight into patterns of meaning (themes) across a data set” (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p. 57). It is an approach to analysis that allows the researcher to make sense of collective meanings and experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2012). TA helps the researcher “uncover meaning, develop understanding, and discover insights relevant to the research problem or question” (Bowen, 2009, p. 29). The primary reason for conducting a thematic analysis as opposed to another qualitative analysis, such as interviews or focus groups, is because TA is accessible and provides flexibility as “numerous patterns can be identified across any data set” (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p. 57). While TA may not be replicable, it is beneficial particularly in regards to this study, as it provides the space for two seemingly disconnected discourses, namely the UNCRC and the teachings in elementary school settings to be studied in a coherent manner. It is important to note that thematic analyses are not necessarily replicable as “the purpose of analysis is to identify those patterns relevant to answering a particular research question” (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p. 57). However, it is a useful methodological tool, as it allows for the emergence of new insights that may not otherwise be observed through a strictly systematic approach.

The way in which thematic analysis is used in this study is both through the *manifest* content of data and *latent* content of data. Manifest data refers to “something directly observable” such as the mention of the word ‘rights’ in a picture book whereas latent data would refer to how ‘rights’ are implicitly mentioned through a text (Marks & Yardley, 2004, p. 57). While thematic analysis may provide a sense of “theoretical freedom” as a research tool, the reality is that due to this freedom, it can potentially provide a “rich and detailed, yet complex, account of data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 78). One of the primary criticisms or perceptions of TA is that it promotes an “anything goes” approach to research (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 95). In other words, because TA is based primarily on interpretation, it is seen as not being *real research*. However, this thematic analysis aims to be consistent with a rights-based theoretical framework and it seeks to be explicit in terms of justification of choices. It hopes to provide a rigorous form of analysis which offers insightful and innovative ways to examining how an elementary teaching and learning tool, such as picture books can be used to teach children about the complex, controversial yet undeniably important Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The purpose of using a TA as a methodological approach as opposed to a conventional qualitative method of data collection, such as interviews or non-verbal methods of expression, such as journaling or artwork to express ideas surrounding the importance of explicit children’s rights teaching in Ontario elementary school settings is because this study focuses on potential ways to bridge the gap between theory and practice. While it is important not to generalize, the UNCRC is often seen as being ambiguous or isolated from the everyday realities of children. In other words, the Convention may not be viewed as having tangible effects on a child’s life. This thematic analysis of picture books surrounding children’s rights will therefore work from this assumption and attempt to challenge the taken-for-granted notion that the UNCRC has minimal

realistic effects by examining how discourses surrounding children's rights actively relate to notions of power, social hierarchy, diversity, inclusivity, and whose voices are being included and excluded in decision-making processes.

When referring to the research process, it is important to note that post-modernists “reject the notion that knowledge is definite and univocal” (Creswell, 2014, p. 65). I firmly agree with this stance, as research of any calibre always involves power dynamics, and is influenced by different historical, social, political, economic, and cultural factors. While it is important not to generalize, qualitative research has been viewed as problematic by positivists and scientifically-based, biomedical models of research (SBM) due to its perceived focus on “soft scholarship” and its emphasis on writing fiction as opposed to science (Denzin, Lincoln & Giardina, 2006, p. 771). However, quantitative research is said to ignore contextual experiences, it is said to turn subjects into objects of study, and it is said to turn social inquiry into, “the handmaiden of a technocratic, globalizing managerialism” (Denzin, Lincoln & Giardina, 2006, p. 772). However, it is important not to view qualitative and quantitative research paradigms as clear-cut dichotomies. This is because research of any kind is never an apolitical process, as it tends to involve a particular agenda and biases based on the researcher's positionality. While I acknowledge the biases I have as a result of my privileged social location in academia and my background in education, children's studies, and international development, the objective of this study is similar to the views of indigenous scholar, Linda Smith in that my intentions are not to conduct research through “imperial eyes” (1999, p. 56). While it is important not to generalize, the voices, experiences, and perspectives of children are often ignored or overlooked. Therefore, rather than promoting an adult driven environment where children's voices would continue to be marginalized through institutional practices, my hope is to help destabilize the binary between

adults and children through a child-friendly medium of picture books. In other words, through a thematic analysis approach, my purpose is to “disrupt traditional ways of knowing while developing approaches to research that privilege indigenous knowledges, voices, and experiences” or those of any minority group, such as children (Denzin et. al, 2006, p. 770).

Specifically, the rights-based picture books used in this study were examined using “pre-established criteria” (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 390). As noted earlier, these four criteria were articles from the UNCRC, namely non-discrimination, best interests of the child, survival, life, and development and right to respect the views of each child (UN, 1989) These four guiding principles serve as the methodology for my analysis because according to the UN Committee (1991), they are the general requirement for all rights according to the UNCRC. Because a deductive analytical approach was used to gain insight into how these four articles are reflected in the selected rights-based picture books from the ETFO’s *Social Justice Begins with Me* resource kit, a critique or limitation of this thematic analysis could be the researcher’s interpretation of the content (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Overall, the aim of conducting this thematic analysis is to promote “a qualitative research paradigm that is committed to social justice and the promise of radical progressive democracy” (Denzin et. al, 2006, p. 769).

Chapter 4: Findings

The findings from this study were created using three distinct researcher-developed charts located in the appendices at the end of the study. Each chart is geared towards a specific research question and seeks to explore whether the selected human rights picture books from the ETFO's 'anti-bias' literacy-based curriculum kit do in fact reflect a children's rights discourse and actively touch upon issues of equity, social justice, inclusivity, and diversity that the kit prides itself on (ETFO, 2011). Additionally, the charts that are to follow are a means of presenting whether each story views children as 'rights-holders' or as 'mere objects of charity.' Specifically, the three charts outlined in the coming pages of this chapter focus on whether the picture books represent a diverse form of childhood, whether the picture books explicitly mention the word "rights," and whether picture books directly or indirectly reflect one or more of the four guiding principles of the UNCRC, namely article 2 - the right to non-discrimination, article 3 - the right to the best interests of the child, article 6 - the right to survival, life, and development, and article 12 - the right to respect the views of the child.

These four guiding principles serve as the methodology for my analysis because according to the UN Committee (1991), , the other articles in the Convention can be grouped into the four guiding principles. This is because they are broad enough to be interpreted to different geographical, cultural, and economic contexts yet still specific enough to serve as a basis for equity amongst all children. Additionally, these four guiding principles are imperative to this study, as they are representative of the diversity of childhoods that exist and they focus on varied aspects of a child's identity ranging from the attainment of basic necessities to the participatory inclusion of children in all realms. On a legislative level, these four guiding principles are imperative as they are intended to assist state parties in interpreting the obligations established in

the Convention. Thus, the specific research questions and findings which emerged from close review of each of the picture books are centred on these four guiding principles to maintain a sense of richness amongst the analysis yet still contribute to the literature regarding the importance of teaching children's rights in a universally applicable manner. The three research questions that are explored demonstrate the connection between how rights-based teachings can help complement the diversity of childhoods that exist within a single classroom.

The following pages categorize the findings into three separate headings, namely diverse childhood contexts, explicit mention of the word 'rights,' and discussion regarding the four guiding principles of the UNCRC. A narrative discussion about the three research headings will be provided followed by a visual representation which I created. It is important to re-emphasize that the picture books chosen are targeted towards children from junior kindergarten to grade six. 22 out of 26 picture books were analyzed from the kit.

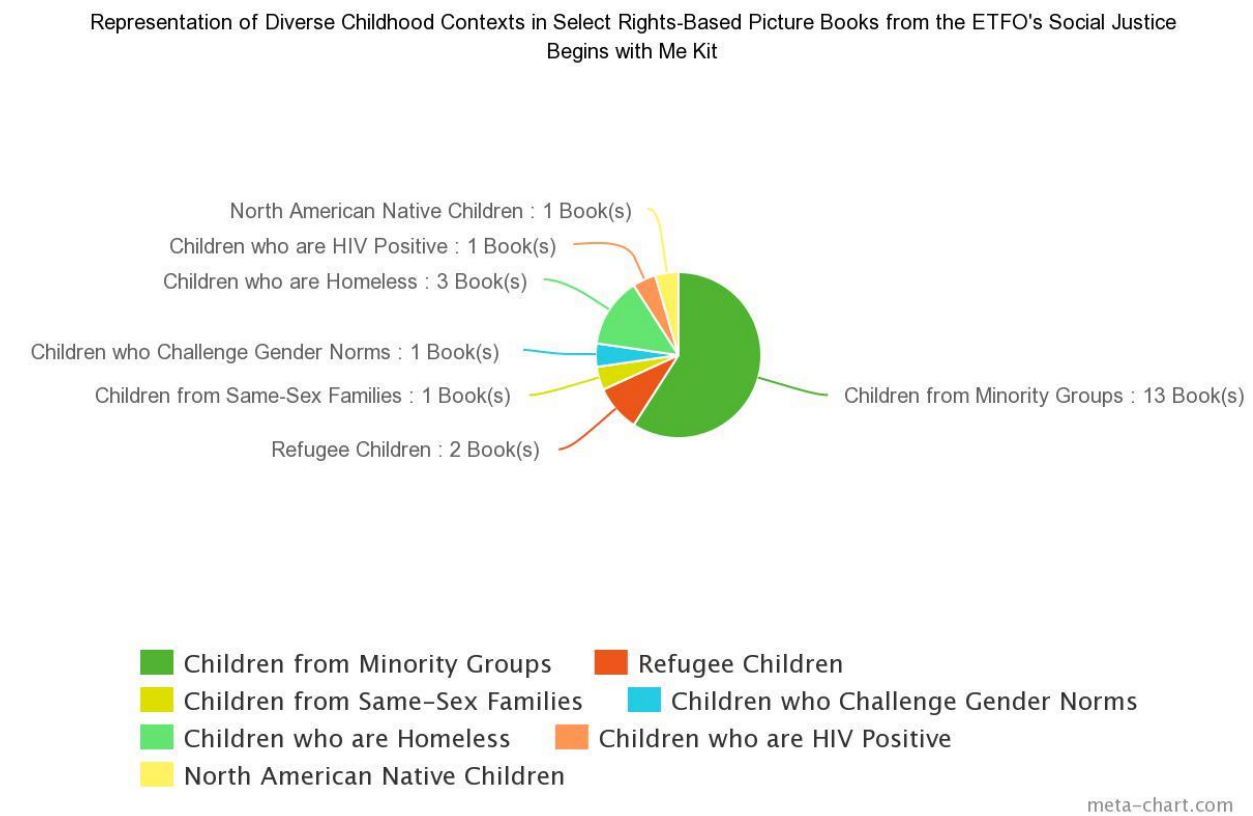
a) Diverse Childhood Contexts

Research Question # 1: Does the story represent a *diverse* form of childhood (i.e. children with disabilities, children from minority backgrounds, children with differing gender identities, children who work, children who are homeless, etc.)?

The first research question explored whether or not the picture books were representative of diverse forms of childhood as opposed to a singular one characterized solely by play, dependency, and attending school. Through Figure 1, it is evident that the stories analyzed do in fact consider the multiple realities of children both in Canada and across the globe, as 13 out of the 22 books analyzed focused on children from minority groups, such as black children and Aboriginal children. The remaining stories that were analyzed focused on children living in refugee camps, children who challenge normative gender identities, children who are HIV

positive, children who come from same-sex families, children who are homeless, and children who are adopted. However, it is important to recognize that none of the books analyzed focused on children with disabilities and should thus be considered in future children’s rights booklists in order to capture a holistic worldview of the childhoods that exist both locally and globally.

Figure 1 - Representation of Diverse Types of Childhoods in the Selected Picture Books



b) Explicit Mention of the Word “Rights”

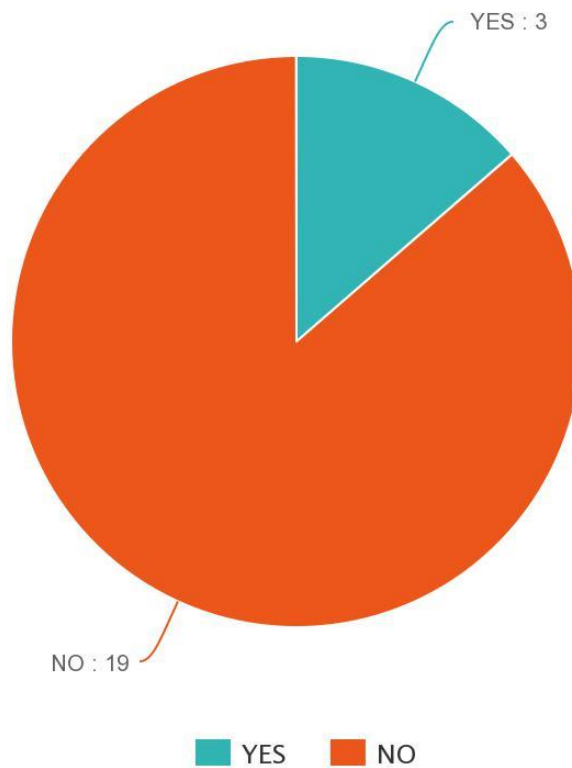
Research Question # 2: Considering the book is part of the monthly ETFO theme of the ‘Rights of the Child’ (ETFO, 2011), is there an *explicit* mention of the word ‘rights’ in the story?

The second research question explored whether or not there was an explicit mention of the word “rights” in each of the picture books, as the booklist analyzed was part of the monthly ETFO theme of “Rights of the Child.” However, as revealed through the findings, only three out of the 22 analyzed mentioned the word “rights.” Two of these books are associated with

UNICEF, namely *For Every Child* (Castle, 2000) and *If You Could Wear My Sneakers* (Fitch, 1998) and the third was entitled, *Martin's Big Words* (Rappaport, 2002). Despite the notion of children's rights not being at the centre point of the plot of each of these stories, these books can be used in creative and innovative ways to teach children not only about the four guiding principles of the UNCRC, but about the Convention as a whole. As described, it is interesting that two out of the three books which explicitly mention the word "rights" are produced by UNICEF, the global promoters of children's rights. This however raises the question of why other explicit children's rights books in the ETFO booklist are not included. It seems that there are a limited number of such books available to both educators and students. While it is important not to be assumptive, perhaps children's literature publishers are unaware of the importance of children's rights, perhaps the controversial nature surrounding children's rights is a deterrent for publishers or perhaps there needs to be more awareness about the importance of using picture books as a medium to expose children to their rights. Figure 2 on the following page provides a visual representation of the books studied that mention the word "rights."

Figure 2 - Visual Representation of Books which Mention the Word “Rights”

Is there an Explicit Mention of the Word "Rights" in Each of the Picture Books Being Analyzed?

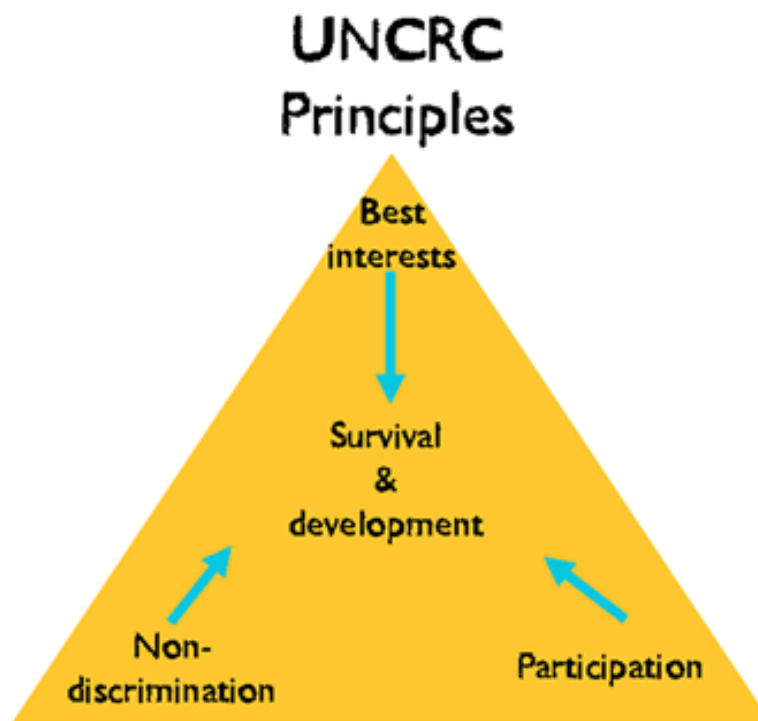


meta-chart.com

c) Reflecting the Four Guiding Principles of the UNCRC

Research Question # 3: Do the picture books from the ETFO's *Social Justice Begins with Me* 'Human Rights' booklist (ETFO, 2011) directly or indirectly reflect one or more of the four guiding principles of the UNCRC (UN, 1989) outlined in Figure 3, namely article 2 - the right to non-discrimination; article 3 - the right to the best interests of the child; article 6 - the right to survival, life, and development and article 12 - the right to respect for the views of the child)?

Figure 3 - Four Guiding Principles of the UNCRC



i) Article 2 - non-discrimination

The right to non-discrimination is directly referenced in two out of the 22 books analyzed, namely in *For Every Child: The Rights of the Child in Words and Pictures* (Castle, 2000) and in *If You Could Wear my Sneakers* (Fitch, 1998). However, the majority of the picture books do indirectly explore article 2 through their individual plots and illustrations. *The Colors of Us* (Katz, 2002) proactively addresses the issue of discrimination based on race through a non-

threatening approach of comparing skin colour to different types of food and ingredients. For example, the main character explains how her mom is the colour of French toast and her friend Jo-Jin is the colour of honey (Katz, 2002). Books, such as *Whoever You Are* (Fox, 1997), *My Princess Boy* (Kilodavis, 2009) and *Painted Words/Spoken Memories* (Alik, 1998) explain how all children should be treated equally regardless of such variables as: skin colour, geographical or residential location, language, gender identity, and home environment. Specifically, *My Princess Boy* (Kilodavis, 2009) explains how the family supports the boy because of his uniqueness as opposed to being rejected due to not following gender norms. However, it is important to note that while *Whoever You Are* (Fox, 1997) does address the issue of non-discrimination, the illustrations in the story are arguably quite stereotypical in terms of dress and the children are represented in a tokenistic manner. This is evident, as all the children have the same physical features but simply represent different skin colours thus their uniqueness and individuality is potentially being masked or negated.

Stories, such as *Baseball Saved Us* (Mochizuki, 1993) *The Story of Ruby Bridges* (Coles, 1995) and *Martin's Big Words* (Rappaport, 2002) explore how the issue of discrimination has been evident historically in different worldly contexts. While the UNCRC was not yet established during the settings of these stories, they are powerful books that demonstrate how the issue of discrimination is complex and intersects with variables, such as race, age, and geographical location. *Baseball Saved Us* (Mochizuki, 1993) can be used to teach about article 2, as the story implicitly touches upon issues of social justice by explaining how people are discriminated against based on their ethnic descent. In other words, how politics and culture conflict in a negative way but how individuals have the willpower to make the best of a difficult situation just like the main character Shorty and his father did while being forced to live in a

Japanese internment camp. Similarly, *The Story of Ruby Bridges* (Coles, 1995) highlights the segregation of white and black students and the inequitable treatment of black people in New Orleans, particularly in the 1960s. *Martin's Big Words* (Rappaport, 2002) compliments the issue of discrimination against black people in America, as it explains how segregation based on race was evident “in all Southern cities and towns in the United States” (Rappaport, 2002, p. 2). Overall, the picture books outlined provide historical and contemporary examples regarding how article 2 is violated in various contexts but how many of the characters displayed the willpower to overcome the adversities they were facing with regard to discrimination.

ii) Article 3 - best interests of the child

Article 3 is directly referenced in only one of the stories, namely *For Every Child: The Rights of the Child in Pictures and Words* (Castle, 2000) However, as with article 2, the right to the best interests of the child is indirectly explored in many of the picture books including but not limited to: *Something Beautiful* (Wyeth, 1998), *You and Me and Home Sweet Home* (Lyon, 2009), *Four Feet, Two Sandals* (William & Mohammed, 2007), and *The Roses in My Carpets* (Khan, 1998). In *Something Beautiful* (Wyeth, 1998), the community takes into account the young girls' best interests through the help of her teacher and the people in her community. The story touches upon issues of classism by explaining how a young black girl from a low socio-economic background struggles to find something ‘beautiful’ in her life. Her community actively considers her best interests by demonstrating how ‘beautiful’ is subjective. This is evident at Ms. Delphine's Diner, as the young girl realizes the fish sandwiches can be something beautiful (Wyeth, 1998). Similarly, in *You and Me and Home Sweet Home* (Lyon, 2009), the community takes into account the best interests of the main character when they all decided to work together to build her and her mother a new home, as they were living in the back room of their Aunt

Janey's apartment. This not only demonstrates article 3 but also the notion of inclusivity and how everyone ranging from the young to the elderly worked towards a common cause.

Additionally, article 3 is evident in stories about refugee children, such as *Four Feet, Two Sandals* (William & Mohammed, 2007) and *The Roses in My Carpets* (Khan, 1998). In *Four Feet, Two Sandals* (William & Mohammed, 2007), the best interests of the child is evident when relief workers provided supplies to the children and families in the story, such as Lina who fled from Afghanistan and relocated to a refugee camp in Peshawar on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border in order to seek protection. In *The Roses in My Carpets* (Khan, 1998), the best interest of the child are actively considered because even despite the fact that the main character lives in a mud house in a refugee camp and attends a makeshift school, his mother still works to fulfill his basic needs. He still had access to school, food, work, and prayer. Thus, these books along with many others outlined in the charts in the appendices demonstrate how article 3 permeates throughout majority of the storybooks.

iii) Article 6 - survival, life, and development

Article 6 is explicitly talked about in only one out of the 22 analyzed, namely in *For Every Child: The Rights of the Child in Words and Pictures* (Castle, 2000). However, as with the previous two guiding principles of the UNCRC, article 6 is also indirectly represented in majority of the books including: *Happy Adoption Day!* (McCutcheon, 1996), *As Long as the Rivers Flow* (Loyie, 2002), *In Our Mothers' House* (Polacco, 2009), and *Ryan and Jimmy: And the Well in Africa that Brought them Together* (Shoveller, 2006). Specifically, *Happy Adoption Day!* (McCutcheon, 1996) touches upon how all children have the right to be loved, be treated right, and have a home even if it is not with their birth parents. Even though the UNCRC did not exist at the time, *As Long As the Rivers Flow* (Loyie, 2002) reflects how the right to survival,

life, and development was being violated, as the children were forced to leave their homes in the rural area and attend a residential school where their right to live and develop in their own community was stripped from them. *In Our Mothers' House* (Polacco, 2009) demonstrates how article 6 is respected, as the girl explains how she receives plentiful love from her mothers and lives in a “big old brown chingle house” (Polacco, 2009, p. 9) with a sunroom and a tree-house in the backyard. Lastly, *Ryan and Jimmy: And the Well in Africa that Brought them Together* (Shoveller, 2006) demonstrates how the right to survival is not a given in many countries, as there are a lack of access to basic necessities, such as water. Thus the story demonstrates how the creation of partnerships and educating children on the plight of poverty around the globe is essential to creating sustainable changes.

iv) Article 12 - respect the views of the child

Article 12 is directly evident in two out of the twenty-two books analyzed, namely *For Every Child: The Rights of the Child in Words and Pictures* (Castle, 2002) and *If You Could Wear My Sneakers!* (Fitch, 1998) However, as with the three guiding principles outlined, article 12 is also explored indirectly through stories including but not limited to: *Fly Away Home* (Bunting, 1991), *A Shelter in Our Car* (Gunning, 2004), and *The Composition* (Skarmeta, 1999). *Fly Away Home* (Bunting, 1991) is a story about how a father and son who are homeless and who struggle for basic necessities after the mother passed away. While the father takes the bus to work as a janitor in the office in the city, the son does his best to collect money at the airport through the renting of luggage carts and offering to carry people's bags. This demonstrates how the son's desire to contribute is taken seriously. In other words, the son has taken ownership over the difficult situation he and his father are in because rather than spending the money earned, he decided to save it in his shoe, hoping that one day they will save enough to live in an apartment

again. In *A Shelter in Our Car* (Gunning, 2004), article 12 is implicitly recognized, as Zettie's mom respected her daughter's views by taking down the flag from their car window, as her peers were humiliating her because of it. This is evident when some of the kids were calling her "Junk Car Zettie" (Gunning, 2004, p. 22). Lastly, the book entitled *The Composition* (Skarmeta, 1999) demonstrates how article 12 was arguably being violated, as children are seen as inferior to adults. For example, when one of the main characters Pedro asks his parents if he is against the dictatorship, his mom says, "children aren't against anything. Children are just children, they have to go to school, study hard, play, and be good to their parents" (Skarmeta, 1999, p. 16).

Overall, with the exception of a few, these findings demonstrate how majority of the picture books selected by the ETFO for the monthly theme of 'Rights of the Child' do not explicitly talk about children's rights. However, as displayed throughout the findings, each of these stories can be uniquely used to discuss the four guiding principles in addition to other articles within the UNCRC and should therefore not be dismissed as irrelevant to children's rights learning. The beauty of children's picture books as demonstrated throughout the findings is that they can be interpreted in a myriad of ways based on one's worldview and social location. Thus, when exposing children to stories such as the ones outlined in this MRP, ongoing insights are likely to emerge regarding its relevance to the Convention. This is the primary reason why I argue that the teachings of the UNCRC should not be seen as an isolated phenomenon but rather integrated throughout daily educational activities. Having both planned and spontaneous discussions and activities about articles in the UNCRC using books such as these will arguably help develop a greater understanding of the importance of children's rights learning amongst both educators and children on both a local and global level. Additionally, the broader aspirational hope of introducing these picture books beyond surface level conversations is to

encourage the ongoing pursuit of equity and social justice amongst children, which is so integral to the injustices facing our world currently. The forthcoming chapter will provide an analysis of the findings as it pertains to the four guiding principles in the UNCRC.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This chapter will discuss the findings in an analytical manner, as they pertain to the primary research question explored in the previous chapter relating to the four guiding principles of the UNCRC. Specifically, this chapter will correlate the insights from the thematic analysis of selected rights-based picture books. from the UNCRC and critical pedagogical practices. Lastly, it will analyze how the findings from the four guiding principles of UNCRC as represented in the selected picture books are integral to the overall purpose of this MRP.

Emerging Insights: Critical Engagement with the Four Guiding Principles of the UNCRC and its Relation to Critical Pedagogy

The primary objective of conducting a thematic analysis of selected rights-based children's picture books was threefold. Firstly, it was to see whether or not the books chosen from the ETFO's *Social Justice Begins with Me* resource kit were in fact representative of a broad range of childhoods, as students should be exposed to the living realities of children apart from their own in order to develop understandings and appreciations of pluralistic identities. Secondly, it was to see whether or not there was an explicit mention of the word 'rights' in each of the picture books, as exposing children to their rights as outlined in the UNCRC (UN, 1989) in a direct manner will help accomplish article 42, namely the right for children to have knowledge about their rights. Thirdly, the purpose was to explore whether the books reflected one or more of the four guiding principles of the UNCRC, namely article 2 - the right to non-discrimination, article 3 - the right to the best interests of the child, article 6 - the right to survival, life, and development, and article 12 - the right to respect the views of the child. This analysis will now be discussed in relation to the theoretical framework of critical pedagogy.

Through children's exposure to some picture books, children can become aware about their rights in a direct manner, which may help bring to life Paulo Freire's problem-posing method of education or the idea of critical pedagogy. In other words, rather than simply telling children about their rights in an isolated and de-contextual manner, picture books may help children become more aware and potentially assert a form of autonomy and actively participate in the critically thinking of themes relating to children's rights. Through critical pedagogical practices, such as exposure and discussion of rights-based picture books, children's rich, intersectional experiences as well as the exploration of their individual identities may be included in the classroom setting with the necessary support from elementary educators. Furthermore, the findings from chapter four demonstrate how picture books can be used to introduce children's rights and support students' understandings, which may potentially help destabilize the adult-child or teacher-student binary and the dehumanizing effects of traditional rote-learning initiatives. As coined by Freire (1978), dehumanization is the process by which individuals are denied access to the political process and the sense of value and worth that comes from children participating and having their voices be heard. This is because with the banking method, children regardless of the social variables they encompass, such as race, class, age, gender, geographical location, socio-economic status, and ability are often the 'colonized beings' or the oppressed (Freire, 1978). This is because their experiences may be silenced, they may be treated as objects as opposed to subjects, and they may not be viewed as experts of their own lives. However, through "acts of love," the search for humanization and a socially just, rights-based classroom can likely occur (Freire, 1970, p. 239). Through exposure and discussion of rights-based picture books, children may be able to liberate themselves, as the multiplicity of childhoods that exist within a single classroom will likely be validated. Engaging in picture

books in a critical manner may help elementary educators and students move beyond dichotomous ways of teaching and learning, so that knowledge and creativity can truly blossom. The following sections will explore the findings in accordance to the three research questions which were alluded to at the beginning of the chapter.

As highlighted throughout this MRP, exposing children to their rights arguably has multiple long-term benefits, such as encouraging students to build equitable relationships amongst one another, enhancing one's knowledge base and world-mindedness, and developing critical thinkers who not only value but embrace diversity. The following section will discuss some of the major themes that emerged from the third research question regarding how each of the stories reflect the four guiding principles of the UNCRC. Children knowing about their rights according to the UNCRC are essential to not only the guiding principles of the Convention but to notions of protection, provision, and participation, as these 'three Ps' provide the scope of the rights in the Convention (Howe & Covell, 2003). A lack of active participation amongst children in both political and educational sectors continues to perpetuate because they are often not provided with opportunities to have their voices be heard. While the notion of 'best interests' is a relative term, it is undeniable that children remain unrepresented in many spheres including political realms thereby negating their best interests. Not being able to vote in political elections is a prime example of how children are excluded from decision-making processes, which affect their daily lives. The assumptions that adults tend to have about children are primarily the reason why they feel a sense of powerlessness. Thus, through analysis of these picture books by both elementary educators and students, narrow-minded ideologies regarding who children are may be altered, so that they are treated as active agents in society. By allowing children to remain invisible in the both educational and political processes, their rights according to the UNCRC

will continue to be violated and black and white representations of childhood will continue to permeate the realm of education. I argue that this is not only unjust but problematic, as children play an active role in the shaping of our society and the world as a whole. The following section provides an analysis of each of the four guiding principles, as they pertain to some of the books outlined in the findings from chapter four. The first guiding principle that will be discussed is article 2, namely the right to non-discrimination.

Analysis of Four Guiding Principles as Reflected through the Picture Books

1. Article 2 - The Right to Non-Discrimination

Article 2 of the UNCRC involves the following considerations:

“The Convention applies to all children, whatever their race, religion, or abilities; whatever they think or say, whatever type of family they come from. It doesn’t matter where children live, what language they speak, what their parents do, whether they are boys or girls, what their culture is, whether they have a disability or whether they are rich or poor. No child should be treated unfairly on any basis” (UNICEF, 2015, p. 1).

As explained in the findings, all of the picture books analyzed can be used to teach students about the right to non-discrimination through the characters represented in each of the stories. The right to non-discrimination is an essential guiding principle particularly when referring to classroom inclusivity, as children should be treated as citizens in their own right or on the basis of equity as opposed to equality. When it comes to children’s rights, I argue that equity trumps equality because since there are multiple, intersecting, and diverse childhoods that exist, fairness as opposed to sameness should be recognized. Specifically, books such as: *The Story of Ruby Bridges* (Coles, 1995), *Martin’s Big Words* (Rappaport, 2002) and *As Long as the Rivers Flow* (Loyie, 2002) can be used to explain to students how citizenship both historically and presently has been inequitable. There has been extreme and direct segregation of individuals based on such variables as race and culture. Aboriginal communities are a prime example of the

social inequalities that existed and continue to bear fruit in Canada. The treatment of many First Nations communities depicts how children's rights are actively being denied, as they continue to be marginalized, exploited and mistreated through a lack of access to basic necessities on reserves in Northern Ontario and beyond (CCRC, 2010). Their forced assimilation into Euro-Western culture has meant taking them out of their natural environments and placing them in residential schools. The repercussions of the forceful removal of Aboriginal children from their families have had serious consequences that continue till today. However, through critical discussions in the classroom using books such as these, students may come to know about some of the realities of governmental bureaucracy and how the political agendas of the elite can interfere negatively with the lives of its citizens they are meant to serve. This is important for children to know and become aware of, so that they may develop a critical consciousness of their surroundings and become active global citizens.

Similar to the protagonists in the picture books, teaching with these books will also expose children to the fact that their voices matter and can potentially inspire them in the future to support changes whether it is at the local, communal, national, or international level. Actively considering children's voices and experiences is essential to the right to non-discrimination and to the notion of critical pedagogy, as children themselves should be at the forefront of matters affecting them. Their voices should not only be heard but acted upon. *The Story of Ruby Bridges* (Coles, 1995) for example demonstrates how children are not powerless victims. Through stereotypical assumptions, children's lives often get made, marked, and maintained. In other words, through schools and other child-centered atmospheres, there may be an assumption that children's thought processes are static and universal as opposed to fluid and diverse. Children are often silenced by adult-controlled institutionalized spaces and thus may be reluctant to initiate

large-scale changes, such as actively promoting the cultural revitalization of indigenous peoples or raising funds to support a collective school endeavour. These books can therefore be used to not only teach children about articles, such as the right to non-discrimination but to push the envelope further and promote active global citizens who are critical, culturally-sensitive and compassionate change-makers. If children see the realism within the books they are engaging with, it may inspire them to question stereotypes and the injustices occurring both communally and globally. With this said, the second guiding principle that will be discussed is article 3, namely the best interests of the child, which compliments the right to non-discrimination in many ways.

2. Article 3 - The Right to the Best Interests of the Child

“The best interests of children must be the primary concern in making decisions that may affect them. All adults should do what is best for children. When adults make decisions, they should think about how their decisions will affect children. This particularly applies to budget, policy, and law makers” (UNICEF, 2015).

Similar to the right to non-discrimination, the right to the best interests of the child varies depending on one’s geographical location, socio-economic status, class, culture, and identity. I argue that while the term ‘best interests’ is relative, it cannot be denied as it contributes to the overall well-being of a child if their well-being is considered in a rights-respecting as opposed to paternalistic manner. Such books as: *Happy Adoption Day!* (McCutcheon, 1996) *In Our Mothers’ House* (Polacco, 2009), *The Roses in My Carpets* (Khan, 1998), and *Four Feet, Two Sandals* (William & Mohammed, 2007) each implicitly explain how the best interests of each child cannot be seen in isolation to other contextual circumstances. For the main characters in *Happy Adoption Day!* (McCutcheon, 1996) and *In Our Mothers’ House* (Polacco, 2009), it was in the best interests of both the child and the family to adopt whereas in *The Roses in My Carpets* (Khan, 1998) and *Four Feet, Two Sandals* (William & Mohammed, 2007), it was in child’s best

interests to seek the aid of relief workers and live in a temporary refugee camp in order to gain protection and a safe haven from the political and civil unrest that was occurring in their homelands. Stories like these are beneficial to share with children in the classroom in order to provide alternative perspectives about the world to children.. While it is important not to generalize, information tends to be available to children at their fingertips through technology and other means. However, through my experiences, the photographs we see and the news headlines we read about often depict children as living in a utopia, particularly in so-called developed contexts, such as Canada.

In contrast, when listening to and reading about stories of war, we rarely have the opportunity to learn about a country's cultural life, religious architecture, and the sense of community present, as these factors are often be masked by the tragedies occurring in the stories. Thus, simplifying and creating black and white representations of children's lived realities may actually negate their best interests. Despite the fact that these books are all fiction, many of them can be used to not only portray the multiple realities of children facing forms of oppression, violence, and inadequate standards of living but also to debunk some of the stereotypes associated with children who live makeshift homes, who belong to same-sex families, or who reside in refugee camps. Overall, these books can be used to educate children about how the interpretation of the 'best interests' is not universal; but, rather varies depending on where a child lives, how their familial dynamics are, and what the political circumstances are like in their designated geographical area. The third guiding principle of survival and development will now be discussed and compliments understanding of the right to the best interests of the child. Specifically, the following section focuses on article 6, which is the right to survival, life, and development.

3. Article 6 - The Right to Survival, Life, and Development

“Children have the right to live. Governments should ensure that children survive and develop healthily” (UNICEF, 2015, p. 1).

Article 6 described above is a fundamentally important guiding principle in the UNCRC because without the right to live, children would not be able to achieve any of the other rights set out in the UNCRC (UN, 1989), such as the right to freedom of expression and the right to privacy, outlined in articles 13 and 16 respectively. When used critically and creatively, stories such as *Ryan and Jimmy: And the Well in Africa that Brought them Together* (Shoveller, 2006) and *the remarkable maria* (McIntosh, 2005) can be seen as effective tools to teach children about article 6 in the UNCRC, namely the right to survival, life, and development. Specifically, *Ryan and Jimmy: And the Well in Africa that Brought them Together* (Shoveller, 2006) is a powerful story, which demonstrates how a six-year old boy named Ryan had a vision of raising funds to create a well for safe drinking water in a community in Uganda. Ryan can be seen as an example of how having a global outlook on your surroundings extends one’s learning beyond the four walls of a classroom.

However, from a critical perspective, when introducing stories like these to students, it is important to be cognizant of how we view and contextualize peoples who live in various parts of the world. For example, *the remarkable maria* can be used to destabilize some of the taken-for-granted assumptions associated with children who are HIV positive, such as they are contagious and should thus be excluded from society. However, media representation of global issues relating to children whether it be a television commercial or news article tends to project a certain image and assume that the lives of children in the African context need to be ‘fixed’ through foreign aid (Ansell, 2005). From a children’s rights perspective, this is problematic because as it may negate the children’s own perspectives on their lives and measure their life to

an ideological standard different from their own. However, rather than dismissing such important, well-intentioned books, it is important to have a conversation with children that stretches beyond the confines of the plot itself.

Ryan and Jimmy: And the Well that Brought Us Together (Shoveller, 2006) may not only be used to teach children about the right to survival through access to safe drinking water; but, it can also be a medium to help connect the adversities experienced for example in Uganda with the living conditions of many First Nations communities here in Canada. Additionally, this book can be used to teach children about proactive as opposed to reactive development solutions. In this story, Ryan was astounded at the fact that many children do not have access to basic drinking water; therefore, rather than denying this horror, he facilitated community development practices that did not reinforce victimization or dependency, but, rather promoted a sense of empowerment. Thus, stories like this can be used as an entry point to develop student social justice initiatives in the classroom. However, commitment amongst both educators and students and critical exposure to more than just these books will be needed for children's rights learning to be sustained. Specifically, as highlighted throughout this MRP, children's rights should not be seen as a stand-alone lesson or unit. Instead, rights-based learning needs to be integrated throughout daily educational activities. Perhaps ongoing teacher workshops, student-oriented workshops in the classroom, and designated rights-based resources within the classroom can help shed light on this guiding principle of the right to live. The fourth and final section of this chapter will discuss article 12, namely the right to respect the views of the child, in relation to some of the picture books.

4. Article 12 - The Right to Respect the Views of the Child

“When adults are making decisions that affect children, children have the right to say what they think should happen and have their opinions taken into account...” (UNICEF, 2015, p. 2).

As displayed in the findings chart of chapter three, the fourth and final guiding principle, namely the right to respect the views of the child is depicted in many of the stories, such as *My Princess Boy* (Kilodavis, 2009) and *Painted Words/Spoken Memories* (Alik, 1998). Respecting the views of each child is not simply about passively listening to what children have to say. Instead, it is about responding appropriately to their thoughts, experiences, and voices in an active and respectable manner. While *My Princess Boy* (Kilodavis, 2009) focuses on a young boy who is respected by his parents despite defying so-called gender norms, the main character in *Painted Words/Spoken Memories* (Alik, 1998), Maria, expresses her thoughts through the medium of art, as she faces a language barrier when moving to a foreign school environment from her small village. Both of these books demonstrate that in order for children to become active agents and have their opinions and experiences be taken into account, we as adult allies, need to treat them as individual identities, rather than collective ones. Respecting the views of the child means challenging the status quo and encouraging diverse perspectives. Furthermore, respecting the views of the child is about rejecting a single, linear story and considering how the intersection of children’s viewpoints can help facilitate rich, ongoing dialogue and new insights.

From a rights-based perspective, downgrading or ignoring children’s thoughts on their own education is problematic, as it negates their *best interests* and *respect for the views of the child* (Lansdown, 2004). The *best interests of the child* principle recognizes children as both active citizens and competent beings (Mayall, 2013). A rights-based approach to early learning involves actively hearing the unique voices that children have as well as acknowledging their

ability to shape their own social identities (Christensen & Prout, 2005). It moves beyond the “banking concept” of education or treating children as passive recipients to be filled with knowledge (Freire, 1970, p. 268). In order for children to empower themselves and have their voices be actively heard, adults need to stop treating themselves as “protectors *acting* in the best interests of the child” (Jefferess, 2010, p. 78). Instead, educators need to encourage authentic participation amongst children. Authentic participation translates to children not being “pressured, constrained or influenced in ways that might prevent them from freely expressing their opinions or leaving them feeling manipulated” (UNICEF, 2010, p. 29). Thus, books, such as *My Princess Boy* and *Painted Words/Spoken Memories* may help deal with controversial issues in a non-threatening way in order to help facilitate inclusiveness amongst all children.

Overall, these four guiding principles can be used to help bring about the realities of children both in the classroom and around the globe. Specifically, these rights-based picture books that go hand in hand with the tenants of the UNCRC can be used to question our ideologies surrounding the meaning of ‘childhood.’ The final chapter of this MRP will tie in the literature from chapter two, the findings from chapter four, and the discussion from this chapter to offer insights regarding the importance of explicitly introducing children’s rights learning into elementary school classrooms. The chapter will outline some of the limitations of this study to provide an honest account of this MRP as a whole. Recommendations for future research and practice will also be considered, as the notion of children’s rights learning should be an ongoing effort by everyone.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This study has sought to explore how the UNCRC (UN, 1989) can be effectively integrated into classroom teachings despite the criticisms that may exist regarding its validity. As demonstrated throughout this MRP, the purpose of introducing the UNCRC to our students is to facilitate spaces for critical engagement. Additionally, the study's purpose is to debunk stereotypical taken-for-granted assumptions regarding children and childhood and to help develop not only tolerance but respect and effortless acceptance for the diverse types of childhoods that exist at both the local and global level. The teaching of children's rights education through the use of picture books may also explicitly help achieve article 42 in the Convention (UN, 1989), which outlines the state party requirement "to make principles and provisions of the Convention widely known, by appropriate and active means, to adults and children alike." Furthermore, as demonstrated in both the literature review and the findings, the use of children's literature is an ideal medium to tackle controversial global issues such as children's rights as it may help soften the hierarchy present between educators and students. However, it may also provide opportunities for educators to guide the critical and undeniably important discussions which may arise from direct exposure to rights-based picture books. .

Furthermore, this study is relevant to the field of early childhood studies because if children are not informed about their rights from a young age, they will likely continue to remain invisible in political, social, and economic realms. Children need to be provided with spaces and opportunities to participate in matters affecting them, so that they can become active agents in their own lives. Participation is crucial to the empowerment and liberation of children, as it not only compliments the definition of critical pedagogy; but, it also takes into account aspects, such as freedom of expression, respect for the views of the child, freedom of thought, conscience, and

religion and access to information as enshrined within the Convention. As revealed throughout this study, it is through action and awareness that children's rights can become enforced. In order for children to become active agents and partake in the decision-making processes which affect their daily lives, we, as adult allies, need to treat them as individual identities, rather than collective ones. Universalizing children will only perpetuate unequal power relationships. We need to promote problem-posing methods of education as outlined by Paulo Freire (1978) and encourage children to question topics which are of interest to them. Most importantly, we need to transform the institutional structures, which are keeping children voiceless.

Limitations of Study

While this study aims to be diverse in terms of its analysis of rights-based picture books to facilitate a more holistic understanding of diverse childhood contexts in the classroom, it does have several limitations. Due to time, availability, and funding constraints, it is limited in terms of the scope of literature being assessed. As noted earlier, 22 out of 26 picture books outlined from junior kindergarten to grade six from the ETFO (2011)'s *Social Justice Begins with Me* resource kit are being assessed. As a result, the generalizability of this study will likely be questioned based on the restrictive number of pieces being analyzed. However, despite the limited number of books, it is important to note that majority of the books from the kit were in fact analyzed in this study to provide a comprehensive and detailed overview of how they can be translated to rights-based teachings in the classroom. In addition, because this is a thematic analysis and no human participants were involved in the study, there is a lack of perspective from individuals both within and outside the realm of education regarding their views of explicit children's rights teaching in primary/junior grades. However, in terms of its validity and credibility, this study is meant to be a thematic analysis, as it aims to contribute to the existing

literature regarding teachings of the UNCRC in elementary school settings through the use of picture books. The purpose of conducting this study is to offer a practical way for diverse groups of children to feel actively empowered rather than passively stigmatized in adult-centric realms at both the local level of the classroom and in global communal spheres. As a result, while engaging with human participants may be beneficial for future studies in order to determine take up of this kit in the elementary classroom, it would completely change the essence of this particular study, as the primary objective is to analyze data that emerges from the children's literature itself. The final chapter of this MRP will tie in the literature from chapter two, the findings from chapter four, and the discussion from this chapter to offer insights regarding the importance of explicitly introducing children's rights learning into elementary school classrooms. Recommendations for future research and practice will also be considered, as the notion of children's rights learning should be an ongoing effort by everyone.

Recommendations for Future Research and Practice

In terms of future research, it would be beneficial to consider how educators in the classroom feel about the incorporation of children's rights into the curriculum, as educators are arguably one of the primary catalysts for the exposure and growth of children's rights learning in the classroom. Rights-based learning is about the co-construction of knowledge and seeing both teachers as students and students as teachers. This is because like knowledge, children's identities are not static but rather are constantly changing with time and space. Thus, as mentioned in the previous chapter, incorporating both teacher and student-centred workshops raise awareness about the UNCRC may help to make children's rights more accessible and readdress some potential fears of educators about its political nature and provide avenues for healthy dialogue to occur about children. It may also be valuable to conduct studies on the types of books that already exist in classrooms and how those books can be used for teaching children about their rights. It would also be useful to conduct a second research study involving human participants in order to determine and assess the use in practice of this ETFO kit (ETFO, 2011) in the elementary classroom and ascertain how it supports children's rights education. Lastly, expanding our booklists to incorporate stories, which explicitly mention "children's rights" may also be beneficial to help bring alive our global map and expose students to what they are entitled to whilst keeping in mind their individual cultures, needs, and localized ways of living. Some of these books may include child-produced books, such as *The Best Part of Me* (Ewald, 2002) and *Stand Up Speak Out: A Book About Children's Rights* (Peace Child International, 2001) or stories by CitizenKid such as: *This Child, Every Child* (Smith and Armstrong, 2011) and *If the World Were a Village* (Smith and Armstrong, 2011). Including books like these may help actively address some of the articles in the Convention in a direct manner, such as the right

to participation and freedom of expression.

Overall, viewing children as rights-holders requires attitudinal shifts on the part of some educators, as educators may be fearful of introducing children's rights due to its political nature. However, children should be viewed and treated as active participants of the learning process. Through the use of the teaching medium of picture books, their values, practices, cultures, and abilities should be integrated into curricular frameworks rather than being seen as isolated factors. This thematic analysis suggests that the rights-based picture books from the ETFO's *Social Justice Begins with Me* resource kit does inexplicitly value the articles of non-discrimination, best interests of the child, survival, life, and development, and respect for the views of the child through its emphasis and commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. However, educators should consider how other articles in the UNCRC, such as the right to freedom of expression and the right to access to information can be actively integrated into elementary school settings. Treating children as 'rights-holders' rather than passive recipients will allow them to gain agency and ownership over the learning process. Overall, I argue that explicitly integrating children's rights according to the UNCRC in *all* elementary school settings through a provincial policy or incorporating teachings of rights in existing educational frameworks is essential to shift preconceived notions about who children are and what they can accomplish as a result of variables, such as age, class, and culture.

Appendix A - *Social Justice Begins with Me* ('Rights of the Child') Booklist and Summary

1. Aliko. (1998). *Painted Words/Spoken Memories*.

This story presents Marianthe's journey in both the past and present. In *Painted Words*, Marianthe uses art as a medium to express the struggles she was facing moving to a new school from a small rural village, as she had a language barrier and initially felt excluded. However, in *Spoken Memories*, a proud Marianthe uses her new words to describe her journey through sequential paintings.

2. Bunting, E. (1991). *Fly Away Home*.

Fly Away Home is a story about the struggles of a father and son after the boy's mother passes away. The father and the son live at the airport as it is seen as much better than the streets; however, they struggle not to get noticed or caught by others and work to survive by doing menial tasks to save up for their own apartment.

3. Castle, C. (2000). *For Every Child: The Rights of the Child in Words and Pictures*

This story highlights many of the articles in the UNCRC that are relevant to children's everyday lives through words and pictures. The direct article that is being talked about is located at the bottom of each double-sided illustration page.

4. Coles, R. (1995). *The Story of Ruby Bridges*.

The Story of Ruby Bridges explains how black and white children did not receive the same rights in New Orleans back in the 1950s. Specifically, it talks about a girl named Ruby who is given permission to attend a previously all-white elementary school and the outbreak of protests and discrimination that occurred as a result.

5. Ewald, W. (2002). *The Best Part of Me*.

This story captures real photographs of children answering the question "What is the best part of you?" It is a story that can be used to discuss self-esteem and body image.

6. Fitch, Sheree. (1998). *If You Could Wear My Sneakers!*

This story portrays a series of poems relating directly to articles in the UNCRC.

7. Fox, M. (1997). *Whoever You Are*.

Through vibrant and colourful illustrations, this story explains how all children should be treated equally regardless of variables, such as skin colour, geographical or residential location, language, and home environment and that we should embrace rather than reject our differences.

8. Gunning, M. (2004). *A Shelter in Our Car*.

This story focuses on an eight-year old girl named Zettie who moves from Jamaica to America after her father passes away.

9. Hathorn, L. (1994). *Way Home*.

Way Home is a story about a boy named Shane who is homeless and lives in a makeshift place on the streets. Shane befriends a cat and wants to make it his own but the challenge is making sure they both get through the night together.

10. Katz, K. (2002). *The Colors of Us*.

The Colors of Us addresses the complexities associated with differences in skin colour through a child-friendly approach of comparing skin colour to foods and ingredients.

11. Khan, R. (1998). *The Roses in My Carpets*.

The Roses in My Carpets is a story about a young refugee who longs for independence and safety in the refugee camp. He prays, eats, and attends school but dreams of being financially independent like his father was.

12. Kilodavis, C. (2009). *My Princess Boy*.

My Princess Boy is about a boy who enjoys pink sparkly accessories, tiaras, and jewelry. It is a story about social acceptance, defying gender norms, and embracing uniqueness of identity.

13. Loyie, L. (2002). *As Long as the Rivers Flow*.

As Long as the Rivers Flow is about how First Nations children in Canada were stripped from their families and forced into government-sponsored residential schools where their traditional languages and cultures would be erased.

14. Lyon, G. E. (2009). *You and Me and Home Sweet Home*.

You and Me and Home Sweet Home is about how a community comes together to build a young girl and her mother a brand new house. The story demonstrates the notion of inclusivity and how everyone ranging from the young to the elderly worked towards a common cause.

15. McCutcheon, J. (1996). *Happy Adoption Day!*

Happy Adoption Day! emphasizes the joys associated with a family who decides to adopt and the journey they all have together. It implicitly talks about how all families are diverse and all children should be loved regardless of how they enter a family.

16. McIntosh, P. (2005). *the remarkable maria*.

The remarkable maria is about a young girl named Maria and the challenges she faces socially due to the stigma of being HIV positive. She initially feels excluded from her school and communal environment but with support from her teacher and others, she is able to overcome her struggles.

17. Mochizuki, K. (1993). *Baseball Saved Us*.

Baseball Saved Us is a story about a boy named Shorty and his father both of whom are sent to Japanese Internment Camp. The book outlines the struggles faced at the internment camp but how baseball was used to help deter the mind of the challenging living situations they were facing.

18. Peace Child International. (2001). *Stand Up, Speak Out: A Book About Children's Rights*.

This book directly examines all fifty-four articles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child through testimonies, poems, stories, and illustrations of children all around the world.

19. Polacco, P. (2009). *In Our Mothers' House*.

In Our Mothers' House is a story which defies normative family constructions, as it is about two mothers who adopt and raise a child with love, care, and affection.

20. Rappaport, D. (2002). *Martin's Big Words*.

Martin's Big Words is a story about how the right to respect the views of the child was violated to the greatest extreme, as black children were seen as inferior to white children during the 1950s. However, through peaceful protests, words of love, solidarity, and Martin Luther King Jr.'s commitment, the voices of the oppressed become actively heard.

21. Shoveller, H. (2006). *Ryan and Jimmy: And the Well in Africa that Brought them Together.*

This story is about a grade one boy's desire to build a well for a community in Uganda. It demonstrates how children and in this case Ryan are working to help other children achieve basic necessities, such as a home and running water regardless of geographical boundaries, race and socio-economic status.

22. Skarmeta, A. (1999). *The Composition.*

This story explains how dictatorship was prevalent in Chile and how Pedro's father was taken away by one of the country's soldiers, as he was against the dictatorship. The repercussions resulting from his father's imprisonment serves as the basis for this story. However, it also demonstrates how Pedro used writing as a form of therapy to deal with the emotional turmoil he was experiencing while his dad was away.

23. Smith, D. & Armstrong, S. (2011). *If the World Were a Village.*

This story provides insights into the diversity of the world's people. It address complex issues of food security, energy, and health in a child-friendly manner.

24. Smith, D. & Armstrong, S. (2011). *This Child, Every Child.*

Through stories and statistics, this book provides insight into the diverse groups of children living all across the globe and the extreme disparities present between children based on such variables as cultural context and geographical location.

25. Williams, K. L. & Mohammed, K. (2007). *Four Feet, Two Sandals.*

This story is about two friends, Lina and Feroza and their journey in a refugee camp in Peshawar located on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. When relief workers provided clothing supplies to the camp they were living in, the two girls decide to share a pair of slippers that each fit them perfectly. What comes next is a beautiful story of the power of sharing and taking care of one another under the most difficult of circumstances.

26. Wyeth, S. D. (1998). *Something Beautiful.*

This story is about a young girl from a low-socio economic background. She feels as if she is a living in an unsafe and unhealthy environment until the people around her show her how beautiful her life can be and how beauty lies in the littlest of things.

Appendix B - Research Question # 1 Data Chart

Title, Author, and Suggested Grade Level according to the ETFO Website	Is there Representation of a Diverse Form or Forms of Childhood (YES, NO, SOMEWHAT)
5. Title: The Colors of Us Author: Karen Katz Suggested Grade: JK/SK	YES - Children with racial differences (children from minority groups)
6. Title: For Every Child: The Rights of the Child in Words and Pictures Author: UNICEF Suggested Grade: JK/SK	YES - Children from varying countries and cultural backgrounds
7. Title: Whoever You Are Author: Mem Fox Suggested Grade: JK/SK	SOMEWHAT- children from varying cultural backgrounds are represented; however, it is in a tokenistic manner (children's physical features are the same but their skin colour and dress is different)
8. Title: Happy Adoption Day! Author: John McCutcheon Suggested Grade: One	YES - children who are adopted
9. Title: My Princess Boy Author: Cheryl Kilodavis Suggested Grade: One	YES - children who challenge gender norms
10. Title: Painted Words/Spoken Memories Author: Alikei (Brandenberg) Suggested Grade: Two	YES - children from minority groups; children who speak a different language
11. Title: The Story of Ruby Bridges Author: Robert Coles Suggested Grade: Two	YES - children who are black (children from minority groups)
12. Title: Baseball Saved Us Author: Ken Mochizuki Suggested Grade: Three	YES - Japanese children who were forced to live in internment camps (children from minority groups)
13. Title: If You Could Wear My Sneakers! Author: Sheree Fitch	YES - children from different cultural, geographical, and socio-economic backgrounds

Suggested Grade: Three	are indirectly represented through poems relating to articles in the UNCRC
14. Title: Martin's Big Words Author: Doreen Rappaport Suggested Grade: Three	YES - children who are black (children from minority groups)
15. Title: Something Beautiful Author: Sharon Dennis Wyeth Suggested Grade: Three	YES - children who are black (minority groups); children from low socio-economic backgrounds
16. Title: Fly Away Home Author: Eve Bunting Suggested Grade: Four	YES - children who are homeless
17. Title: the remarkable maria Author: Patti McIntosh Suggested Grade: Four	YES - children who are HIV positive
18. Title: Way Home Author: Libby Hathorn Grade: Four	YES - children who are homeless (street children/runaway children)
19. Title: You and Me and Home Sweet Home Author: George Ella Lyon Suggested Grade: Four	YES - children who are black (children from minority groups)
20. Title: Four Feet, Two Sandals Author: Karen Lynn Williams and Khadra Mohammed Suggested Grade: Five	YES - children living in refugee camps
21. Title: A Shelter in Our Car Author: Monica Gunning Suggested Grade: Five	YES - children who are black (of minority groups); children who are homeless; children from low socio-economic backgrounds
22. Title: As Long as the Rivers Flow Author: Larry Loyie with Constance Brissenden Suggested Grade: Six	YES - North American Native children
23. Title: The Composition Author: Antonio Skarmeta Suggested Grade: Six	YES - children of minority groups; children living in countries of political instability (i.e. Chile)

24. Title: In Our Mothers' House Author: Patricia Polacco Suggested Grade: Six	YES - children from same-sex families
25. Title: The Roses In My Carpets Author: Rukhsana Khan Suggested Grade: Six	YES - children who are refugees
26. Title: Ryan and Jimmy: And the Well in Africa that Brought Them Together Author: Herb Shoveller Suggested Grade: Six	YES - children from Minority World and Majority World contexts (Canada and Uganda respectively)

Appendix C - Research Question # 2 - Data Chart

Title, Author, and Suggested Grade Level according to the ETFO Website	Is there an explicit mention of the word 'rights' in the story?
1. Title: The Colors of Us Author: Karen Katz Suggested Grade: JK/SK	NO
2. Title: For Every Child: The Rights of the Child in Words and Pictures Author: UNICEF Suggested Grade: JK/SK	YES - the mention of 'rights' in this story is explicit - each page in the story talks about a specific right according to the UNCRC in child-friendly language (i.e. 'In times of war do not make us part of any battle, but shelter us and protect us from all harm' - <i>Right No. 38</i>) (Castle, 2000, p. 23-24).
3. Title: Whoever You Are Author: Mem Fox Suggested Grade: JK/SK	NO
4. Title: Happy Adoption Day! Author: John McCutcheon Suggested Grade: One	NO
5. Title: My Princess Boy Author: Cheryl Kilodavis Suggested Grade: One	NO
6. Title: Painted Words/Spoken Memories Author: Alike (Brandenberg) Suggested Grade: Two	NO
7. Title: The Story of Ruby Bridges Author: Robert Coles Suggested Grade: Two	NO
8. Title: Baseball Saved Us Author: Ken Mochizuki Suggested Grade: Three	NO
9. Title: If You Could Wear My Sneakers! Author: Sheree Fitch Suggested Grade: Three	YES - this book is a selection of poems relating directly to the articles in the UNCRC - word 'rights' is explicitly mentioned in the

	'Do You Know Your Rights' section (Fitch, 1998, p. 30-32).
10. Title: Martin's Big Words Author: Doreen Rappaport Suggested Grade: Three	YES - this book explicitly mentions the word "rights" a number of times, as it talks about how Martin Luther King Jr. fought for the equal treatment of all individuals regardless of race or skin colour (i.e. "When the history books are written, someone will say there lived black people who had the courage to stand up for their rights." "Wait! For years I have heard the word 'Wait!' We have waited more than three hundred and forty years for our rights)." (Rappaport, 2002, p. 14).
11. Title: Something Beautiful Author: Sharon Dennis Wyeth Suggested Grade: Three	NO
12. Title: Fly Away Home Author: Eve Bunting Suggested Grade: Four	NO
13. Title: the remarkable maria Author: Patti McIntosh Suggested Grade: Four	NO
14. Title: Way Home Author: Libby Hathorn Grade: Four	NO
15. Title: You and Me and Home Sweet Home Author: George Ella Lyon Suggested Grade: Four	NO
16. Title: Four Feet, Two Sandals Author: Karen Lynn Williams and Khadra Mohammed Suggested Grade: Five	NO
17. Title: A Shelter in Our Car Author: Monica Gunning Suggested Grade: Five	NO

18. Title: As Long as the Rivers Flow Author: Larry Loyie with Constance Brissenden Suggested Grade: Six	NO
19. Title: The Composition Author: Antonio Skarmeta Suggested Grade: Six	NO
20. Title: In Our Mothers' House Author: Patricia Polacco Suggested Grade: Six	NO
21. Title: The Roses In My Carpets Author: Rukhsana Khan Suggested Grade: Six	NO
22. Title: Ryan and Jimmy: And the Well in Africa that Brought Them Together Author: Herb Shoveller Suggested Grade: Six	NO

Appendix D - Research Question # 3 Data Chart

Title, Author, and Suggested Grade Level according to the ETFO Website	Article 2 of UNCRC - Non-Discrimination	Article 3 of UNCRC - Best Interests of the Child	Article 6 of UNCRC - Survival, Life, and Development	Article 12 of UNCRC - Respect for the View of the Child
Title: The Colors of Us Author: Karen Katz Suggested Grade: JK/SK	INDIRECTLY - Proactively addresses article 2 or the issue of discrimination based on race/skin colour through a non-threatening approach (comparing skin colour to uniqueness and different types of ingredients/foods) - i.e. 'My mom's the colour of French toast,' 'Jo-Jin is the colour of honey')' (Katz, 2002, p. 3, 9).	INDIRECTLY - Story views the main character Lena as a rights-holder and takes into account her best interests, as the story is told through her perspective (first person).	NO	INDIRECTLY - Addresses the complexities associated with differences in skin colour through a child-friendly approach and how all children should have their views actively considered regardless of the social variables they encompass. - Diverse characters are equitably represented in the story (i.e. names, such as: Rosita, Sonia, Isabella, Jo-Jin, and Mr. Kashmir).
Title: For Every Child: The Rights of the Child in Words and Pictures Author: Caroline Castle Suggested Grade: JK/SK	DIRECTLY - The first right talked about in the story is article 2 - non-discrimination. - Evidence: "Whoever we are, wherever we live, these rights	DIRECTLY - The second right talked about in the story is article 3 - best interests of the child. - Evidence: "Understand that all children are	DIRECTLY - The third right talked about in the story is article 6 - survival, life, and development. - Evidence: "All children should be allowed to	DIRECTLY - While the story does not reference article 12, as only fifteen out of fifty four articles are mentioned, it does directly reference article

	<p>belong to all children under the sun and the moon and the stars, whether we live in cities or towns or villages, or in mountains or valleys or deserts or forests or jungles. Anywhere and everywhere in the big, wide world, these are the rights of every child” (Castle, 2000, p. 1-2).</p>	<p>precious. Pick us up if we fall down and if we are lost, lend us your hand. Give us the things we need to make us happy and strong, and always do your best for us whenever we are in your care” (Castle, 2000, p. 3-4).</p>	<p>live and to grow...and grow...and grow...until we are grown up and can decide things for ourselves” (Castle, 2000, p. 5-6).</p>	<p>13 - freedom of expression. - Evidence: “Allow us to tell you what we are thinking or feeling. Whether our voices are big or small; whether we whisper or shout it, or paint, draw, mime or sign it - listen to us and hear what we say” (Castle, 2000, p. 11-12).</p>
<p>Title: Whoever You Are Author: Mem Fox Suggested Grade: JK/SK</p>	<p>INDIRECTLY - The story explains how all children should be treated equally regardless of variables, such as skin colour, geographical or residential location, language, and home environment. - However, the illustrations are arguably quite stereotypical in terms of dress</p>	<p>INDIRECTLY - Story recognizes the importance of how as a human race, children should support one another. - Story is told from an adult’s perspective (negates children’s voices and may unknowingly perpetuate assumptions about children - i.e. they are</p>	<p>INDIRECTLY -Story talks about how all children share commonalities and deserve to live. - Evidence: “Joys are the same, and love is the same. Pain is the same, and blood is the same. Smiles are the same, and hearts are just the same - wherever they are, wherever you</p>	<p>INDIRECTLY -Story explains how children may go to different schools, speak different languages, and have different livelihoods; but, should all have their viewpoints taken into account and be treated equitably.</p>

	and the children are represented in a tokenistic manner (all the children have the same physical features but simply represent different skin colours thus their uniqueness and individuality is negated).	innocent, dependent, and need constant adult protection).	are, wherever we are, all over the world” (Fox, 1997, p. 22-26).	
Title: Happy Adoption Day! Author: John McCutcheon Suggested Grade: One	INDIRECTLY - Story implicitly talks about how all families are diverse and all children should be loved regardless of how they come into a family (i.e. through adoption or other means). - Evidence: “No matter the name and no matter the age, No matter how you came to be, No matter the skin, we are all of us kin - We are all of us one family” (McCutcheon, 1996, p. 13-14).	INDIRECTLY - Story articulates how children can offer just as much to adults as adults can to children (in terms of love, knowledge, etc.). - This is evident when the family talks about the adoption process and says: “There are those who think families happen by chance, A mystery their whole life through, But we had a voice and we had a choice - We were working and waiting for you” (McCutcheon, 1996, p. 4).	INDIRECTLY - Story implicitly touches upon how all children have the right to be loved, be treated right, and have a home even if it is not with their birth parents.	INDIRECTLY -Demonstrates how all children should be respected. - Evidence: “Whatever you learn, whoever you know, You’ve still got a home in our hearts” (McCutcheon, 1996, p. 10).

<p>Title: My Princess Boy Author: Cheryl Kilodavis Suggested Grade: One</p>	<p>INDIRECTLY - The adults in the story (particularly the Princess Boy's parents) give him the freedom to establish his own identity. -He is supported by his family because of his uniqueness as opposed to being rejected due to not following the 'norm' (important to remember than normativity itself is a social construction).</p>	<p>INDIRECTLY - Parents recognize that establishing his own identity is in the best interests of their son. - The Princess Boy redefines the meaning of normativity and takes ownership over his identity rather than have his identity be defined for him (his parents are in support of his decisions).</p>	<p>INDIRECTLY - Princess Boy is given the opportunity to develop and grow as an individual the way that he wants. - Parents and classmates respect his individuality and do not exclude him based on stereotypical norms (i.e. boys should not be wearing dresses, jewellery or tiaras).</p>	<p>INDIRECTLY - Story destabilizes taken-for-granted assumptions associated with 'boys' and 'girls.' - Acknowledges the uniqueness of a boy who enjoys dressing up like a princess (relates to issues associated with identity, respect, non-discrimination, and freedom of expression). - Princess Boy's opinions are actively taken into account (he decides what he wants to wear and how to carry himself in his community).</p>
<p>Title: Painted Words/Spoken Memories Author: Alikì (Brandenberg) Suggested Grade: Two</p>	<p>INDIRECTLY - Evident when Maria chose to express herself through art so that she would not feel like an outsider amongst her new classmates. - Maria felt a sense of helplessness and exclusion when</p>	<p>INDIRECTLY - Story indirectly explains that regardless of geographical location, all children have the right to an education (right to education aligns with the best interests of the child). - Story highlights</p>	<p>INDIRECTLY - Evident when Maria's father left their small village to earn a better life for his family and particularly for Maria.</p>	<p>INDIRECTLY -This right (article 12) was violated when one of Maria's classmates called her a 'dummy,' as she was not familiar with the language. However, through compassion and determination,</p>

	<p>she moved from her small village to a foreign school environment, as she did not understand the language.</p> <p>- However, she took ownership over her situation and used art as a way to communicate her thoughts and be part of the classroom community.</p>	<p>the difficulties that come with adjusting to a new environment where you do not know the language but how art can be used as a universal form of expression.</p>		<p>Maria expressed her grief and thoughts through paintings.</p>
<p>Title: The Story of Ruby Bridges Author: Robert Coles Suggested Grade: Two</p>	<p>INDIRECTLY</p> <p>- While the UNCRC (1989) was not created during the time Ruby Bridges was a child (1960s), this book can be used to teach students particularly about the right to non-discrimination.</p> <p>- This is evident in the segregation of white and black students and the inequitable treatment black people were receiving in New Orleans during this time.</p>	<p>INDIRECTLY</p> <p>- Story explains how in 1960 a judge “ordered four black girls to go to two white elementary schools” (Coles, 1995, p. 6). While it may have been in the best interests of the child, there were problematic effects, such as protests and direct discrimination that resulted from this decision.</p>	<p>INDIRECTLY</p> <p>-The story of Ruby Bridges is set in a historic time (around 1957) when black and white children did not have the same rights as other human beings in the United States and particularly in New Orleans (their basic human rights were being violated including their right to life and development).</p>	<p>INDIRECTLY</p> <p>- Despite being treated as an inferior citizen as a result of her race, Ruby Bridges continued to attend school even though the classroom was empty (no white students attended when Ruby Bridges started to attend).</p> <p>- When there was a protest outside of the elementary school to help prevent any black children from attending an all-white elementary school, Ruby</p>

				<p>continued to pass by the angry crowds in order to nurture her right and desire to an education (she had the willpower to excel despite race being a determining factor in her success).</p> <p>- Rather than using anger as a way to express her emotions, she decided to pray.</p>
<p>Title: Baseball Saved Us Author: Ken Mochizuki Suggested Grade: Three</p>	<p>INDIRECTLY</p> <p>- Even though the UNCRC was not created during this time, this story demonstrates how the right to non-discrimination was being directly violated.</p> <p>- Story implicitly touches upon issues of social justice by explaining how people are discriminated against based on their ethnic descent (how politics and culture clash in a negative way but how individuals have the</p>	<p>INDIRECTLY</p> <p>-Story demonstrates how ‘Shorty’ the main character and his dad decided to use baseball as a way to overcome the grief they were experiencing as internees (took ownership over a problematic situation).</p> <p>- The dad worked towards the best interests of his child ‘Shorty’ by providing a medium such a baseball to help deter his son’s mind from the challenging</p>	<p>INDIRECTLY</p> <p>- Story is set in the 1940s when the United States was at war with Japan. The U.S. Army sent people of Japanese descent (American citizens) to internment camps because they assumed that these individuals might be loyal to Japan (right to adequate survival, life, and development was being inhibited through life in an internment camp).</p>	<p>INDIRECTLY</p> <p>-Story demonstrates how people of Japanese descent were not being respected (evident when they were forced to live in internment camps).</p>

	willpower to make the best of a difficult situation).	living situation they were in while at an internment camp.		
<p>Title: If You Could Wear My Sneakers!</p> <p>Author: Sheree Fitch</p> <p>Suggested Grade: Three</p>	<p>DIRECTLY</p> <p>- The poem entitled, "If You Could Wear My Sneakers!" is explicitly about article 2 ("all rights apply to all children without exception" (Fitch, 1998, p. 6)</p>	<p>NO</p> <p>- While the story does not explicitly reference article 3, through poems such as 'To Each a Home,' 'And Who Are You?' and 'The Giraffe Who Could Not Laugh,' the author talks about how children have the right to a standard of living adequate for their mental, spiritual, moral, and social development (article 27), the right for children to have a name and nationality (article 7), and the right for children to have the highest standard of health and medical care attainable (article 24), to name a few (Fitch, 1998, p. 10, 11, 18).</p>	<p>NO</p> <p>-Story explicitly talks about 15 of the articles in the UNCRC through a child-friendly method of poems; however, article 6 is not referenced.</p>	<p>DIRECTLY</p> <p>-The poem on entitled, "The Eloquent Young Elephant" explicitly references article 12.</p> <p>-“children have the right to express their opinions, and to have these opinions taken into account in matters affecting them” (Fitch, 1998, p. 24).</p>
Title: Martin's	INDIRECTLY	INDIRECTLY	INDIRECTLY	INDIRECTLY

<p>Big Words Author: Doreen Rappaport Suggested Grade: Three</p>	<p>- Despite the UNCRC not being present when Martin Luther King Jr. was a child, he saw signs in his hometown stating “WHITE ONLY” (Rappaport, 2002, p. 2). - Segregation based on race was evident “in all Southern cities and towns in the United States” (Rappaport, 2002, p. 2).</p>	<p>-Martin Luther King Jr. worked towards the best interests of all children and regardless of race by reading the Bible, by listening to his father’s sermons, by becoming a minister, and by studying the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi, as he too believed that “hate cannot drive out hate. Only love can do that” (Rappaport, 2002, p. 7).</p>	<p>-Article 6 was violated, as the story explains that while Black Americans all over Southern United States protested for equal rights, they were “jailed, and beaten and murdered” (Rappaport, 2002, p. 17). -Another example in the story which violates the right to survival, life, and development is when it says: “Many white Southerners hated and feared Martin’s words. A few threatened to kill him and his family. His house was bombed. His brother’s house was bombed. But he refused to stop...” (Rappaport, 2002, p. 19).</p>	<p>-The story explains how the right to respect the views of the child was violated to the greatest extreme, as black children were seen as inferior to white children during the 1950s. - However, through peaceful protests, words of love, and solidarity, their voices became heard - finally, “after ten years of protests, the lawmakers in Washington voted to end segregation. The WHITE ONLY signs in the South came down” (Rappaport, 2002, p. 20).</p>
<p>Title: Something Beautiful Author: Sharon Dennis Wyeth Suggested Grade: Three</p>	<p>INDIRECTLY - Story touches upon issues of classism by explaining how a young girl from a low socio-economic status</p>	<p>INDIRECTLY - The community takes into account the young girl’s best interests. -When the young girl sees the</p>	<p>INDIRECTLY -Article 6 is depicted, as the young girl felt that she was living in an unsafe and unhealthy</p>	<p>INDIRECTLY -The young girl’s views were respected when she went to members of her community and asked them what</p>

	<p>(SES) background struggles to find something 'beautiful' in her life.</p>	<p>word 'DIE' on the front door of her apartment building, she takes initiative and works to overcome her fear of living in that neighbourhood through the help of her teacher and the people in her community.</p> <p>- Evidence: at Ms. Delphine's Diner, she realizes the fish sandwiches can be 'something beautiful;' her friends said a 'jump rope, beads,' and 'new shoes' can be 'something beautiful' (Wyeth, 1998, p. 11-13).</p>	<p>environment until the people around her showed her how beautiful her area really is and that beauty lies in the 'little' things.</p>	<p>they think is beautiful in their life. Each person willingly responded</p> <p>- Evidence: Mr. Lee responded stating that his fruit store was "something beautiful" (Wyeth, 1998, p. 14).</p>
<p>Title: Fly Away Home Author: Eve Bunting Suggested Grade: Four</p>	<p>INDIRECTLY -Story explains how a father and son struggle after the mother passed away.</p> <p>- The father and son live at the airport as it is seen as much better than the streets; however, they struggle not to get noticed or caught by others.</p> <p>- The book</p>	<p>INDIRECTLY - The father does everything in his power from working long hours to providing a temporary shelter for his child.</p> <p>- Article 27 (the right to an adequate standard of living) and article 28 (the right to an</p>	<p>INDIRECTLY - The father and son are struggling to survive by making sure they do not get noticed while 'living' at the airport and by purchasing minimal foods from the airport cafeteria.</p>	<p>INDIRECTLY -While the father takes bus to work as a janitor in the office in the city, the son does his best to collect money at the airport through the renting of luggage carts and offering to carry people's bags.</p> <p>-This demonstrates how the son's</p>

	touches upon issues of social justice in an implicit way (can be used to talk about how a social safety net may not exist resulting in the father and son having to live at the airport - discrimination based on socio-economic status).	education) are also being denied.		desire to contribute is taken seriously - he has taken ownership over the difficult situation he and his father are in - rather than spending the money earned, he decides to save it in his shoe, hoping that one day they will save enough to have an apartment again).
Title: the remarkable maria Author: Patti McIntosh Suggested Grade: Four	INDIRECTLY - Maria explains how she had a feeling that her uncle did not want her, her mother, and her sister to live at his house after her father passed away. - Evidence: "He made us eat off separate dishes and stay in a different part of the house" (McIntosh, 2005, p. 2). - Article 2 is also evident when people did not want to surround themselves with Maria as they were afraid to get	INDIRECTLY -Through assistance from adult-allies in the story, such as the lady Maria lived with after her parents passed away named Mrs. Mackenzie and Maria's teacher, Mrs. DeGroot, Maria realized that she is a remarkable individual who can work towards any dreams of hers (i.e. becoming a doctor, teacher, or president) despite her illness.	INDIRECTLY -This is evident when Maria was welcomed into an orphanage after her parents passed away (here, she had the opportunity to play, dance, and go to school).	INDIRECTLY -Explains how children should not be treated differently or inferiorly based on assumptions (Maria is HIV positive and initially felt excluded from her school and communal environment because parents feared that their children would catch the sickness from her).

	sick as well (through knowledge and understanding, they realized that Maria's condition of being HIV positive is not contagious and that everyone should be treated with compassion and respect).			
Title: Way Home Author: Libby Hathorn Suggested Grade: Four	NO	INDIRECTLY -This story about Shane, a boy who is homeless and lives in a makeshift place in the streets. He befriends a cat and wants to make it his own but the issue is making sure they both get through the night together. His best interests were being jeopardized, as he did not have any adult protection, he was living in a makeshift place, and he did not have adequate food or shelter.	INDIRECTLY -Article 6 is evident in this story, as Shane struggles to survive by himself on the streets.	INDIRECTLY -The story is not told from the first-person (in the eyes of Shane); however, it demonstrates Shane's resilience to get through the night all on his own with a cat he found (moving through the bustling night streets, saving a cat, and trying to get to his 'home' which is built of cardboard).
Title: You and Me and Home Sweet Home	INDIRECTLY -The main character and her	INDIRECTLY -The main character lived	INDIRECTLY - along with the right to survival,	INDIRECTLY - Because the story is written in

<p>Author: George Ella Lyon Suggested Grade: Four</p>	<p>mother were treated equitably despite their financial troubles (they were not discriminated against based on race or socio-economic status).</p>	<p>with her mother in the ‘back room’ of their Auntie Janey’s apartment until the entire community decide to work together to build her and her mother a new home (demonstrates the notion of inclusivity and how everyone ranging from the young to the elderly worked towards a common cause).</p>	<p>life, and development, the story implicitly explains the importance of having an adequate standard of living along with an education (coincides with articles 27 and 28 respectively).</p>	<p>the first-person, there is a sense of powerfulness as her journey to building a new home is told from her own perspective. - However, the people in the community tell her that “kids aren’t allowed to work construction” (Lyon, 2009, p. 9). - This demonstrates the protection that adults have over children. - Another example is when the girl’s mother says, “School is your job. I go to work, you go to work. Other folks will keep building the house” (Lyon, 2009, p. 22). When the girl was reluctant to hear this, her ‘mama’ said she could help build after school.</p>
<p>Title: Four Feet, Two Sandals Author: Karen Lynn Williams and</p>	<p>INDIRECTLY -Article 2 is evident when both Lina and Feroza shared one</p>	<p>INDIRECTLY -Article 3 is evident when relief workers provided</p>	<p>INDIRECTLY - Article 6 is evident when the children in the refugee camp,</p>	<p>INDIRECTLY -Article 12 is evident when Lina and Feroza took each other’s</p>

<p>Khadra Mohammed Suggested Grade: Five</p>	<p>pair of sandals they received from relief workers amongst the two of them (they shared the pair of sandals despite the giggles they received from classmates at the refugee camp they were staying at).</p>	<p>supplies to the children and families in the story, such as Lina who fled Afghanistan and relocated to a refugee camp in Peshawar on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border in order to seek protection.</p>	<p>such as Lina went to school and shared basic necessities, such as their footwear despite the difficult circumstances they were living in (story also demonstrates how Lina's family was able to relocate to America as their name made the list thus bettering their chances for survival).</p>	<p>views into account and decided to share the one pair of sandals they received from the relief workers amongst the two of them.</p>
<p>Title: A Shelter in Our Car Author: Monica Gunning Suggested Grade: Five</p>	<p>INDIRECTLY - Zettie was discriminated against by some of the peers at her school based on her socio-economic status - This is evident when Zettie asks her mom to drop her off at the corner behind her schools because "mean boys say our car is fold and junky. They make fun of the flag in the window" (Gunning, 2004, p. 14).</p>	<p>INDIRECTLY -Story shows Zettie's willingness to continue to go to school despite the personal hardships she was facing and the bullying she was experiencing as a result of her lack of finances and a home.</p>	<p>INDIRECTLY -Story is about a girl named Zettie who lives with her 'Mama' in their car in America (they moved from Jamaica after Zettie's father passed away). -Story reflects a children's rights discourse, as it implicitly shows how many of Zettie's rights were violated including the right to survival due to circumstances rather than mistreatment - Evidence:</p>	<p>INDIRECTLY - Zettie's mom respected her daughter's views by taking down the flag from the window of their car, as her peers were humiliating her because of it - Evidence: some kids were calling her "Junk Car Zettie" (Gunning, 2004, p. 22).</p>

			Zettie's mother worked to provide for her; however, she because she was unable to earn a steady income, they were forced to live in a car and eat non-nourishing foods.	
<p>Title: As Long as the Rivers Flow</p> <p>Author: Larry Loyie with Constance Brissenden</p> <p>Suggested Grade: Six</p>	<p>INDIRECTLY</p> <p>-Despite the UNCRC not being present during this time (1944), this story shows extreme human rights violations towards North American Native children (they were forced to leave their roots, traditional culture, and ways of life to attend a residential school far away from their families).</p>	<p>INDIRECTLY</p> <p>-This book reflects a stark contrast between children as 'rights holders' and children as 'objects of charity.'</p> <p>-When the children cared for the baby owl and engaged with nature, they could be considered as 'rights-holders;' however their freedom, language, and culture was stripped when they were forced to attend a residential school.</p>	<p>INDIRECTLY</p> <p>-Even though it did not exist at the time, this story reflects how article 6 was being violated, as the children were forced to leave their homes in the rural area and attend a residential school where their right to live and develop in their own community was stripped from them.</p>	<p>INDIRECTLY</p> <p>-The children's views were completely disregarded, as they were taken away to a residential school by force not choice</p> <p>- This is evident when it states that, "the strange men lifted the crying children one by one onto the truck. Papa watched, his face angry, his fists clenched" (Loyie, 2002, p. 30).</p> <p>*Additionally, article 30, namely the right for minority/ indigenous children to learn about and practice their own culture, language, and</p>

				religion was also violated.
<p>Title: The Composition</p> <p>Author: Antonio Skarmeta</p> <p>Suggested Grade: Six</p>	<p>INDIRECTLY</p> <p>-Discrimination is evident in this story when Pedro's father was arrested because he was against the dictatorship.</p> <p>- The repercussions that resulted from his imprisonment is evident but Pedro used writing as a form of therapy to deal with the emotional turmoil he was experiencing with his dad gone.</p>	<p>INDIRECTLY</p> <p>-Story explains how dictatorship meant that Pedro's father was taken away by one of the country's soldiers (Chile) and the struggles the family goes through as a result (negates the best interests of the child).</p>	<p>INDIRECTLY</p> <p>-Story explains how the right to survival, life, and development was being inhibited because the country of Chile was under dictatorship (the people/civil society had no say in any decision-making processes).</p>	<p>INDIRECTLY</p> <p>-Book demonstrates how children are seen as inferior to adults.</p> <p>-When Pedro asks his parents if he is against the dictatorship, his mom says. "children aren't against anything. Children are just children, they have to go to school, study hard, play, and be good to their parents" (Skarmeta, 1999, p. 16).</p>
<p>Title: In Our Mothers' House</p> <p>Author: Patricia Polacco</p> <p>Suggested Grade: Six</p>	<p>INDIRECTLY</p> <p>-Story reflects diversity and inclusivity as it focuses on same-sex families and how despite all families being different, they should be equally accepted (defies normativity, as normativity itself is a social construction).</p>	<p>INDIRECTLY</p> <p>-Article 3 is evident when it states how the girl's mothers "walked across dry hot deserts, sailed through turbulent seas, flew over tall mountains and trekked through fierce storms" in order to bring her home (Polacco, 2009,</p>	<p>INDIRECTLY</p> <p>-The right to survival and development is evident when the girl explains how she lives in a "big old brown shingle house" with a sunroom and a tree-house in the backyard and receives lots of love from both her mothers (Polacco, 2009,</p>	<p>INDIRECTLY</p> <p>-Article 12 is evident when the girl explains how her mothers, Marmee and Meema made sure that "everyone talked about everything. Politics, sports, music, and art" (Polacco, 2009, p. 23).</p> <p>- She further explains that</p>

		p. 1).	p. 9). This also aligns with article 27 - the right to an adequate standard of living).	what she loves most about her family is that everyone could speak their hearts - Evidence: “We never measured words” (Polacco, 2009, p. 23).
<p>Title: The Roses In My Carpets</p> <p>Author: Rukhsana Khan</p> <p>Suggested Grade: Six</p>	<p>INDIRECTLY</p> <p>-Article 2 is evident because despite being a refugee, the boy still had access to school, food, work, and prayer.</p>	<p>INDIRECTLY</p> <p>-The best interests of the child are actively considered because even though he lives in a mud house in a refugee camp and attends a makeshift school, his mother is still trying to fulfill his basic needs.</p>	<p>INDIRECTLY</p> <p>-Boy may be seen as an ‘object of charity’ as he is a ‘sponsored child’ or ‘foster child.’ - However, the boy takes ownership over his situation by saying, “soon, I will be a master craftsman and my sponsor’s money will not be needed. I will hold my head high for the sake of my father who died ploughing our field in the war. He would never have taken aid from a sponsor” (Khan, 1998, p. 12).</p>	<p>INDIRECTLY</p> <p>-The boy’s views are not respected in the sense that he is required to attend school even though he would rather weave carpets. - Evidence: he reveals how the school is “full of restless boys” and “we sit on rough mats that rub my ankles raw” (Khan, 2008, p. 8).</p>
<p>Title: Ryan and Jimmy: And the Well in Africa that Brought Them Together</p> <p>Author: Herb</p>	<p>INDIRECTLY</p> <p>-Story demonstrates how children are helping children achieve basic</p>	<p>INDIRECTLY</p> <p>- While this story may have noble intentions in considering the best interests of</p>	<p>INDIRECTLY</p> <p>-Story demonstrates how the right to survival is not a given in many</p>	<p>INDIRECTLY</p> <p>-The people in Ryan’s community, including his family supported</p>

Shoveller Suggested Grade: Six	necessities, such as a home and running water regardless of geographical boundaries, race, and socio-economic status.	the child, it may be viewed as a 'charity' case or an example of a white-man's burden (people in the Global North helping those in the Global South through fundraising initiatives). -However, because it is from a child's perspective, it can also demonstrate the importance of working with our fellow human beings to help everyone achieve their potential (through the attainment of basic necessities).	countries (there are a lack of access to basic necessities, such as water and thus the creation of partnerships and educating children on the plight of poverty around the globe is essential to create sustainable changes).	him and his desire to make the impossible possible (to raise funds in order to provide safe, clean drinking water for those in need).
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