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Trauma and Education in Lebanon: A Decolonial Perspective

Avery Gonzales

Supervised by Liam Gearon

The University of Oxford, Department of Education

MSc Education (Comparative and International Education) Dissertation

27 August 2021

Word count: 19,680

Formatted according to *APA Publication Manual* (7th Edition)

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Glossary

ACE – Adverse Childhood Experiences

ADHD – Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder

Alif School – Pseudonym for informal, residential school outside Beirut for former street children

APA – American Psychiatric Association

ATEL – Association of Teachers of English in Lebanon

AUB – American University of Beirut

CERD – Center for Educational Research and Development

CIE – Comparative and International Education

CUREC – The Central University Research Ethics Committee, The University of Oxford

DSM – The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders

GDP – Gross Domestic Product

IDREC – Interdivisional Research Ethics Committee, The University of Oxford

Insha'allah – Arabic for 'God willing;' colloquially used as 'hopefully'

LBP – Lebanese Pound, or Lira (£)

LU – Lebanese University

MEHE – Ministry of Education and Higher Education

MENA – Middle East and North Africa

NGO – Non-Governmental Organization

OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

PISA – Program for International Student Assessment

PTE – Potentially Traumatizing Event

PTG – Post-Traumatic Growth

PTSD – Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

TFL – Teach for Lebanon

Thawra – Arabic for ‘revolution’ or ‘uprising;’ in Lebanon, the *thawra* refers to the mass demonstrations against the ruling class that began on 14 October 2019, also known as the October Revolution, which continued until national lockdowns began in late February 2020, then revived in the aftermath of the port explosion on 4 August 2020

TIE – Trauma-Informed Education

UN – United Nations

UNHCR – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

USD – United States Dollar (\$)

Wasta – Arabic concept translated as ‘connections’ or ‘social lubricant’

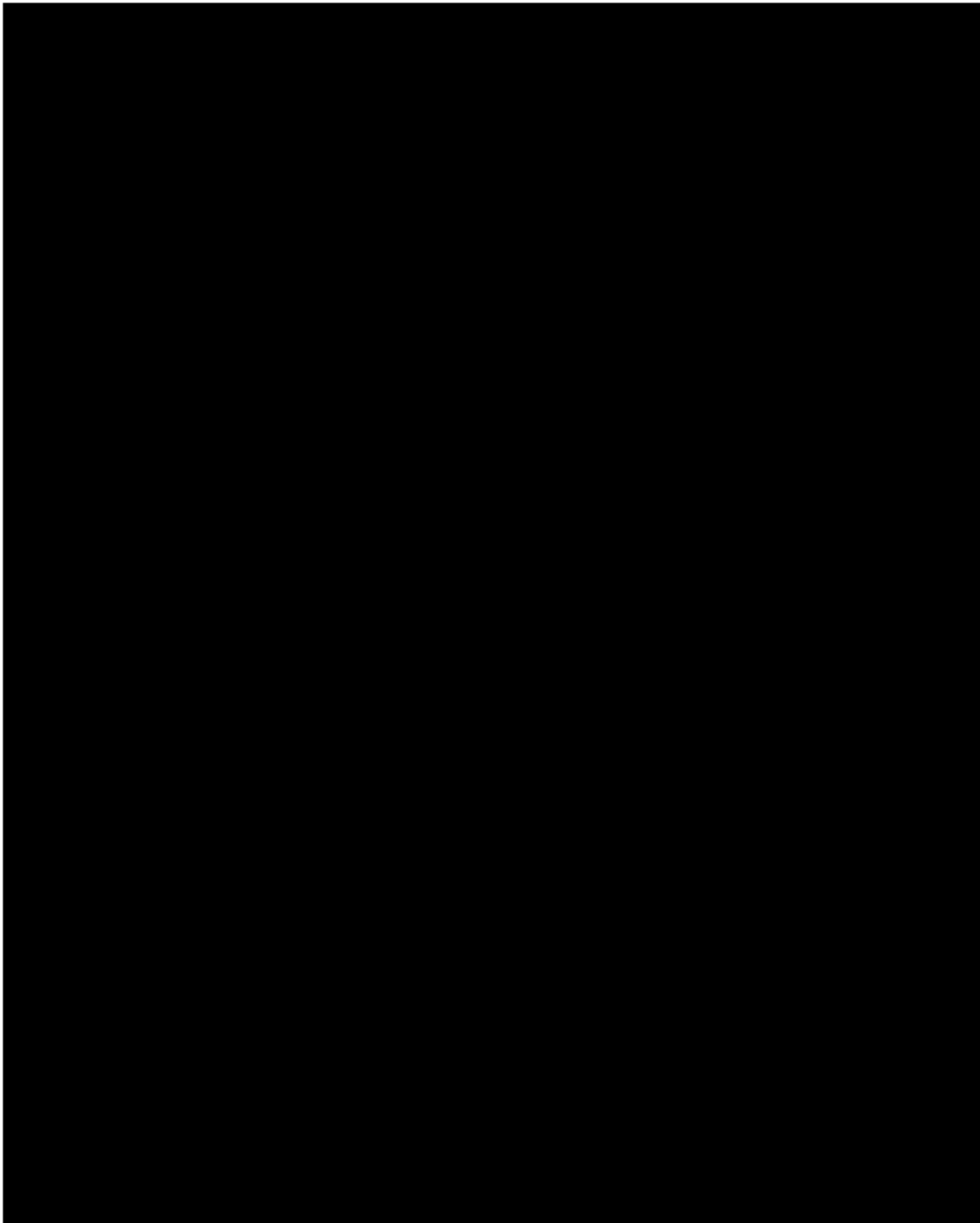
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Map of Lebanon

From Wikimedia Commons, a free media repository.

Note: The Bekaa region shall be spelled Beqaa throughout this dissertation.



Abstract

This dissertation explores the experiences of Lebanese educators between October 2019 and June 2021, a period of sustained disruption and hardship. Academic and professional literature about trauma in educational spaces originated in Western contexts, limiting its applicability in Lebanon, which suffers from volatile political, economic, health, and security conditions. Through a series of 17 semi-structured interviews conducted in May and June 2021, educators in Lebanon recounted their personal and professional experiences during a period of political unrest, economic collapse, the global COVID-19 pandemic, and the explosion of the Beirut port.

Findings illuminate the tensions between Western and Lebanese assumptions about trauma and its treatment. Through a decolonial lens, the ways in which Lebanese educators manage stress and trauma in their students are discussed, illuminating the importance of locally-embedded knowledge, such as shared experiences and communal resilience. This study demonstrates that local discussions of trauma in education evade dominant discourses of clinical trauma psychology, including Trauma Informed Education (TIE). Educators draw on locally embedded knowledge to generate their own framework for managing trauma in their classrooms. This study's empirical and methodological advancements are transferrable to other contexts of education during periods of prolonged disruption.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I owe a debt of gratitude to the 19 Lebanese educators who generously offered me their time and attention in May and June 2021. Despite the difficult living circumstances, they found participation to be worth their energy, and I sincerely hope I adequately represented their thoughts and feelings in their dissertation. Prior to interviews, I spoke with Mikey Muhanna, the Founder and Executive Director of the *Afikra* network. His comments prompted me to critically reflect on the purpose, aims, and ethics of this study. He pushed me to consider the history, power dynamics, and epistemology of trauma beyond the requirements for ethical approval from the University of Oxford. For this, I am grateful.

This dissertation was made possible by the continuous support and encouragement of many people: my supervisor, Liam Gearon; my mentor, Sultan Sooud al-Qassemi; my Oxford course mates, particularly Minoli Wijetunga and We'am Hamdan; my family and friends for the emotional support during a period of global uncertainty; and many others who read my drafts and offered comments. Lastly, I wish to acknowledge the late Charles Hill, who continuously advocated for me during my time at Yale University. This dissertation would be woefully different if not for these individuals.

Chapter 1: State of the Nation

Lebanon is situated in one of the most geopolitically volatile regions in the world (Syria to the East, Israel and Palestine to the South). Prior to 2019, Lebanon held an external reputation as a regional keystone, a bastion of stability in the Levant (Salibi, 1988; Salil, 2020). Beirut, the capital city, boasted thriving artistic communities and bustling universities including the American University of Beirut (AUB) and the Lebanese University (LU). Since 2019, multiple overlapping political, economic, health, and security crises have shaken the foundations of Lebanese society, causing widespread uncertainty about the future.

The events preceding the October Revolution in 2019 rehashed the deep-seated corruption and myopia of the ruling class. In early October, reports of Prime Minister Saad Hariri sending USD \$16 million to a South African bikini model circulated in international news media (Rose, 2019a). Meanwhile, conversations about national debt repayment were percolating in public discourse (Redd & Hassan, 2019). The state's three (donated) firefighting helicopters had fallen into disrepair, the public learned, and proved to be of no help when over 100 wildfires ignited in Lebanon's mountainous regions on 15 October, killing at least 70 (Azhari, 2019a). While Cyprian, Greek, and Jordanian planes managed the blazes, the Lebanese government announced new taxes on WhatsApp (the most popular communication application in Lebanon), gas, and tobacco to raise revenue (Hodges, 2019). On 17 October, people took to the streets in all major Lebanese cities to protest government corruption, austerity measures, and poor public services.

By the third day, demonstrations were held in more than 70 cities (*Lebanon Protests*, n.d.), and drew 1-2 million participants (Rose, 2019b), nearly one-third of Lebanon's population.

Frustrations bridged sectarian divides and brought Christians, Muslims, Druze, and secularists to the same streets. Many students participated in demonstrations, as well (Azhari, 2019b; “Protests in Lebanon,” 2019). On 29 October, former Prime Minister Saad Hariri announced the resignation of the government (G. Azar, 2019). The announcement was met with hesitant celebration, because Lebanese knew the absence of a government was no better than a corrupt one. From 2009-2017, political turbulence rendered the state incapable of providing basic public services, once culminating with the “Garbage Crisis” of 2015 (A. Taylor, 2015; Yee & Saad, 2019).

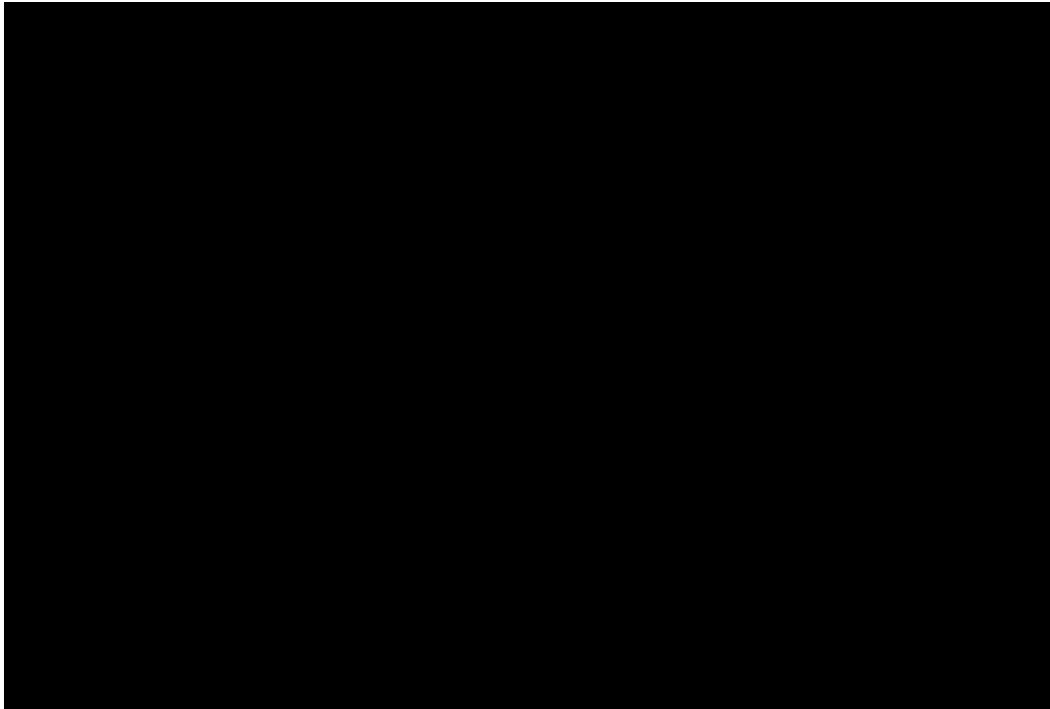
My most recent visit to Lebanon was in December 2019. I traveled to conduct interviews for my undergraduate thesis about the sociocultural dynamics surrounding public and private schools. As I wandered the Beirut waterfront with my notebook and recorder, I was aware of the resigned postures of the women watching their children play, of men selling balloons and sweets, and of young couples leaning against the railing watching the sea. I suspected that education was among the least of their concerns. Indeed, many of my interviewees spoke not of education but of the condition of the nation: “look outside, you see what is happening;” “people can’t eat, let alone afford private schools;” “the world is choking.”

Political protests were staged every night in Martyr’s Square, a plaza between East and West Beirut commemorating the martyrs of the Civil War (1975-92). One evening, as I rode home in a taxi from dinner, the driver urged me to roll up my window and accelerated the car. He handed me his phone to record a video as we sped through a cloud of tear gas that had been launched beyond the protesters in Martyr’s Square and onto the road below.

Later that night, I met a friend at a popular bar, Captain's Cabin. Founded by the father of the current owner (and sole employee) in 1964, Captain's Cabin has a legacy of stability. It remained open through the Civil War and the Syrian occupation in 2006, only to experience its first prolonged closure in 2020 due to COVID-19 restrictions. My friend had come directly from Martyr's Square—he and a group of likewise unemployed, highly skilled graduates of AUB had been the intended recipients of the stray tear gas canister. He jovially recounted that cigarettes and onions do, in fact, negate the effects of tear gas, and that one of his acquaintances had been struck in the buttock by a rubber bullet. Since October 2019, *Human Rights Watch* has documented repeated instances of excessive use of force by the state against largely peaceful protestors (Majzoub, 2020) and journalists (*Lebanon: Police Violence*, 2020). Protests like these continued until 22 January 2020, when a new government was elected (Geldi, 2020).

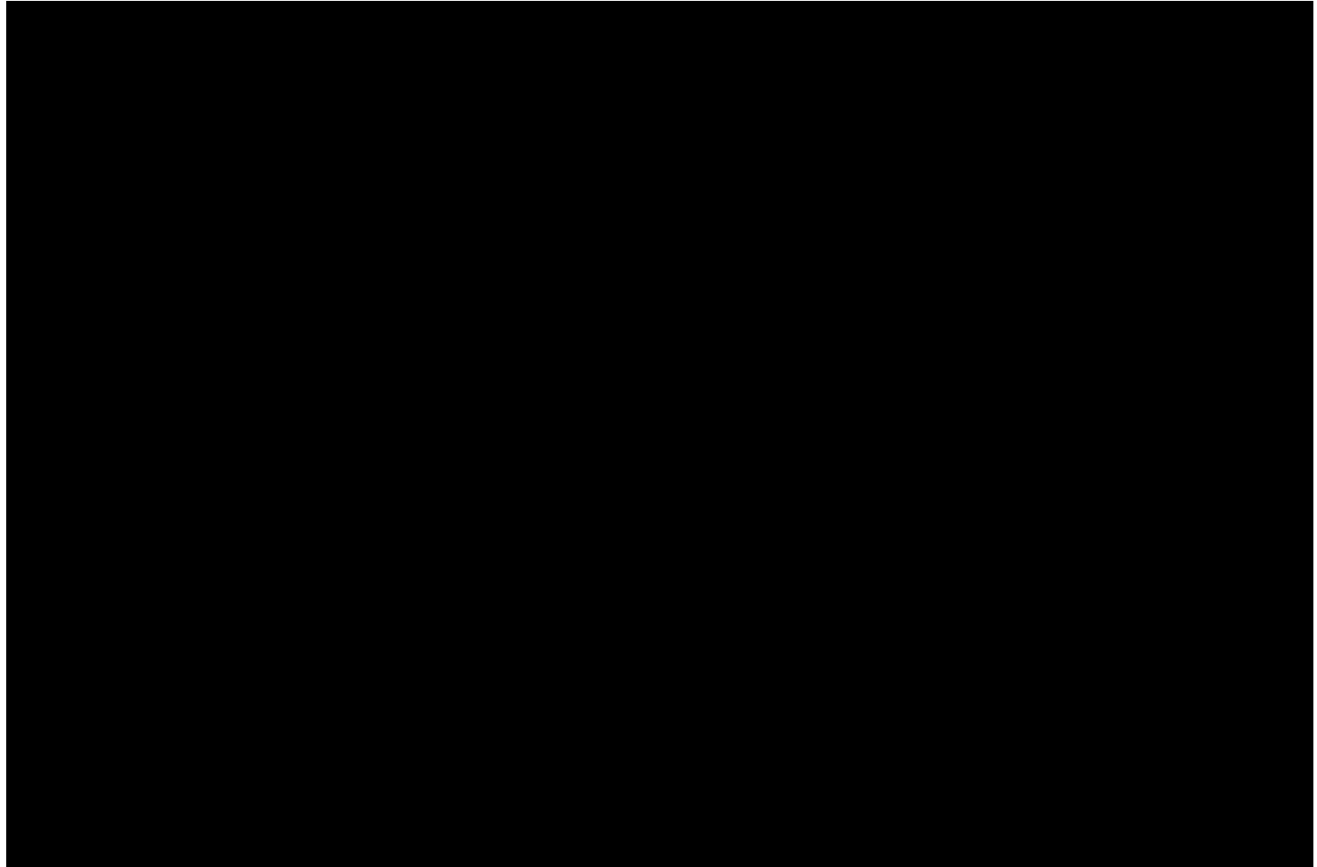
Lebanon has the third highest debt-to-GDP ratio of all countries, meaning it relies heavily on loans to function (Hodges, 2019; Redd & Hassan, 2019). In November 2019, S&P Global Ratings downgraded Lebanon's sovereign credit ratings from 'B-/B' to 'CCC/C,' reflecting the high probability of Lebanon defaulting on current and future loans ("S&P Downgrades," 2019), and ultimately making it more difficult for Lebanon to attract foreign investment and qualify for international loans. This severely weakened confidence in the value of the Lebanese Lira (LBP), evidenced by a departure from the long-time exchange rate of USD \$1 = LBP £1,507.5 (*Lira Rate*, n.d.; *Figure 1*). In July 2020, Moody's Investors Service, another large international credit rating service, downgraded Lebanon's credit rating to a 'C,' the lowest possible rating ("Lebanon Receives Moody's," 2020).

Figure 1: “Black-market” exchange rate shows the departure from longtime rate shortly after July 2019 (Lira Rate, 2021)



Banks imposed an unofficial USD \$300 monthly withdrawal limit on personal accounts (World Bank, 2021), causing problems for families relying on remittances, exported goods, or remote work compensated in USD to pay rent, tuition, or other sizable bills (Al-Mahmoud, 2020). The country itself was short on USD, which are necessary to import petroleum to fuel the electricity grid, among other goods. Power cuts across the country gradually lengthened, in some regions lasting as long as 12 hours each day (“Lebanon’s Lights,” 2021). Queues formed outside bakeries and fueling stations (Dadouch, 2021; “Lebanon Raises Price,” 2021), reminiscent of scenes from the Lebanese Civil War. Universities announced tuition increases, spurring student protests (Azhari, 2021). In mid-August, the LU Student Union reported that LU, the only public university in Lebanon, will not have a 2021-22 academic year (LU Student Union, 2021).

Figure 2: City-wide blackout in Beirut, 19 April 2021. Permission obtained from Dylan Collins, photographer.



Lebanon's first COVID-19 positive patient was diagnosed in late February 2020. The government responded by promptly closing schools, shops, and other public places (Bosqui, 2020). In mid-March, a nation-wide lockdown was imposed, enforced by heavy police and military presence. The loss of income caused by lockdowns, combined with rapid price inflation and an under-resourced healthcare sector put many families at risk of life-threatening hardship (Devi, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic caused a public health emergency, and it exacerbated extant economic woes. The World Bank reported that Lebanon's real GDP growth contracted by 20.3% in 2020 and inflation reached triple digits (World Bank, 2021). The poverty rate nearly doubled from August 2019 to August 2020, growing from 28% to 55% (*Poverty in Lebanon*, 2020).

Just as the COVID-19 outbreak was being reigned in, the “most powerful non-nuclear explosion of the 21st century” struck Beirut (Amos & Rincon, 2020). On 4 August 2020, a forgotten stock of 2,700 tons of ammonium nitrate caught fire in the Beirut port (Salil, 2020). A fireball leveled the port and surrounding neighborhood, killing over 200 people and injuring thousands. A toxic cloud blossomed over the city (Sly et al., 2020), contributing to a suffocating atmosphere, both literally and metaphorically. Windows up to ten kilometers away were shattered by the shock wave (Amos & Rincon, 2020). 183 schools in Beirut were structurally damaged or destroyed by the explosion (*Increased Support*, 2020).

The ammonium nitrate had arrived at the port in 2014 for the purpose of manufacturing fertilizer (Salil, 2020). An oversight of this magnitude seemed beyond the scope of even the most incompetent government. Beirutis took to the streets once more, first to help their neighbors, and then to protest (Sherlock, 2020). And once more, public pressure succeeded in forcing the resignation of former Prime Minister Hassan Diab and his cabinet just eight months into their term (Salil, 2020). Evidence has implicated top members of government in willful negligence, yet they remain protected from the Lebanese judicial system by immunity laws (Fakih & Majzoub, 2021).

At the one-year anniversary of the Beirut port explosion (4 August 2021), Lebanon took stock of the past year. In Beirut, residents commemorated the explosion through art (Harris, 2021; “Lebanon Artist Creates,” 2021; Shehadi, 2021; Talass, 2021), community solidarity (Abi Raad, 2021; “Creating the Conditions,” 2021; *One Year After*, 2021), and continued demands for accountability and structural change (“Families Of Beirut Blast,” 2021; “Rage in the Streets,” 2021; Saleh, 2021). Living conditions are as difficult as ever. *Save the Children* reported that

47% of Lebanon's population cannot afford essential goods, and that many families have resorted to cutting back on food, education, and medical expenses, as well as selling furniture or taking on crippling debt (Save the Children, 2021b). As of August 2021, structural change remains beyond the horizon; billionaire businessman and former Prime Minister (2005 and 2011-14) Najib Mikati has been re-appointed, and is forming a cabinet with the hopes of meeting international conditions for monetary aid (K. Chehayeb, 2021b).

State of Education

Throughout Lebanon's crises, the education sector has suffered on all fronts. Lebanon's education sector is a point of pride for the country, producing English and French-educated graduates that reputedly find success abroad (Dahan & Creidi, 2021; Pukas, 2018). However, by international standards, Lebanese education has lagged behind global averages. In the 2018 PISA international examinations, Lebanese students' mean scores in reading and science ranked 73rd of 76 countries and 71st of 77 countries, respectively (OECD, 2018). Furthermore, educational disparities in Lebanon rank among the largest of PISA-participating countries: the mathematics score difference between the top and bottom 10% of students was the second highest of 77 countries. Students in Lebanon reported weak positive feelings (rank 68 of 69), indicating poor student well-being.

Educational disparities may be partially attributed to the inequality in resource allocation between public and private schools. The most recent statistics published by the Lebanese Center for Educational Research and Development (CERD, 2020) show that roughly 70% of students in Lebanon attended private educational institutions. Private schools have experienced an exodus of students as a result of families' inability to pay school fees (Astih, 2019; Babin, 2020; Osseiran,

2019). Former Education Minister Akram Chehayeb reported in December 2019 that 36,000 pupils had moved from private to public schools (Osseiran, 2019). This trend has likely continued throughout 2020 and 2021. The migration of students to the public system threatened the financial viability of some private schools (F. Azar, 2019; A. Chehayeb, 2019; *Private Education Pensioners Ordered*, 2019; *The Financial Crisis Ravages*, 2019). Every private school has lost between ten and 40 teachers since 2019 because of lay-offs, emigration, or family obligations (Dahan & Creidi, 2021).

Concurrently, public schools are oversubscribed and underfunded, with 350 schools having implemented a two-shift system to accommodate Syrian refugee students that have lived in Lebanon since 2011 (Aoun, 2020; *Lebanon: Education*, 2021). The UNHCR (2021) estimates that 221,000 Syrian refugees were enrolled for the 2017-18 academic year (just 45% of school-age Syrian refugees in Lebanon). The impacts of tens of thousands of Lebanese students moving from private to public schools have yet to be reported, but no additional funds or staff have been allocated; Chehayeb announced, “The pressure will increase on public schools [...] we can’t hire new teachers, while 1,400 retire every year” (Osseiran, 2019). Save the Children (2021a) estimates that up to one million students in Lebanon could be excluded from schooling in the 2021-22 school year because of the parallel phenomena of unsustainable private schools and overburdened public schools.

Informal schools operated by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have also been impacted by economic constraints (Aoun, 2020). In 2019, I lived and taught at a residential, informal school for undocumented children in Lebanon. I will refer to this school by a pseudonym, Alif School, throughout this dissertation. Most students had been subjected to abuse

or neglect, and often showed symptoms of severe traumatization. All teachers were trained in psychosocial support strategies. In February 2020, the school closed with the first nation-wide lockdowns, and has since been unable to reopen. Alif School was my first exposure to the intersection of trauma and education, and this study is largely motivated by my work there.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In light of the crises affecting Lebanon, this chapter will explore literature informing conceptions of trauma in educational spaces, and the state of mental healthcare in Lebanon.

Trauma-Informed Education (TIE) is the preeminent model of managing trauma in educational spaces that is rooted in Western psychology. Critical discourses of trauma challenge the presuppositions of TIE, and propose the collective dimensions of trauma as the more correct basis for theory and practice. Mental healthcare in Lebanon relies on clinical models of treatment, which denies the role of schools in the national scheme of mental healthcare. Finally, I will identify a gap in literature at the intersection of trauma and education in Lebanon.

The Origins of Trauma-Informed Education

Our earliest literature attests that trauma is as old as time: the Tale of Gilgamesh, the book of Deuteronomy, Herodotus, and Hippocrates all recount the psychological aftereffects of witnessing violence (Campbell & Tritle, 2017; Crocq & Crocq, 2000). Symptom-based diagnoses, such as shell-shock, hysteria, and ‘female maladies’ were commonly given by doctors and psychologists (Thompson, 2021, p. 102). As a category of disorder, however, trauma remained an abstract concept until the late 20th century.

Trauma entered popular and professional lexicons alongside the return of American fighters from Vietnam in the 1970s. Although previous wars had instructed the U.S. military on the proper procedures to treat acute trauma on the battlefield, the delayed responses to combat exposure slowly tore into the American social fabric via high rates of drug abuse and psychosis among veterans. An estimated 700,000 Vietnam veterans required psychological help—nearly

one of every four individuals deployed to Vietnam between 1964 and 1973 (Crocq & Crocq, 2000).

At the behest of the Vietnam veterans' lobby in the United States, the American Psychiatric Association (APA) defined Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) as a diagnostic category in 1980 (APA, 1980; Matthies-Boon, 2018; Thompson, 2021). Consequently, the specifications of PTSD reflected the particular experiences of a particular demographic: the horrors of the Vietnam War for American men. Moving forward, the diagnosis struggled to accommodate varieties of trauma that were unrelated to war (Davis, 1999; Lafrance & McKenzie-Mohr, 2013; Lang, 2018; Marecek, 1999).

Particularly in contexts where sustained or extreme instability occurs, the PTSD diagnosis becomes untenable. It is not hyperbolic to claim that nearly every individual in Lebanon has experienced at least one traumatic event, or “catastrophic stressor that was outside the range of normal human experience” (APA, 1980)¹, since the beginning of the *thawra* in October 2019. Repercussions of political unrest, the economic crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the explosion of the Beirut port have redefined “normal human experience” for residents of Lebanon, including children.

Dominant views of childhood trauma are underpinned by *neurosequential development*, a concept originating from Jean Piaget's model of child development (Inhelder & Piaget, 1964), in

¹ The DSM-5 (APA, 2013) redefined traumatic event to be less subjective. Instead of “outside the range of normal human experience,” DSM-5 specifies the new criteria for a traumatic event as “actual or threatened death, serious injury or sexual violence.” See Pai et al. (2017) for an account of the changes made to the PTSD diagnosis in DSM-5.

which a child progresses through different stages of cognitive development that correlate with certain skills and mental abilities. Trauma is therefore now understood as a disruption of the developmental sequence, precluding or slowing further mental development until trauma is effectively managed (Brunzell et al., 2016; Sherin & Nemeroff, 2011).

The therapeutic model of treatment, pioneered by Sigmund Freud (1953; originally published 1917), is the foundation of contemporary mental healthcare. Freud held that virtually every afflicted individual needs to review “each single one of the memories and hopes which bound the libido... to the non-existent object” (p. 154), facilitated by a “therapist.” For trauma-affected children, therapeutic interventions are viewed as essential for clearing any developmental blockage created by trauma (Brunzell et al., 2016). Humanitarian psychological aid projects in Lebanon and around the world are predicated on this model (Bonanno, 2004; Moghnieh, 2016; Wessells, 2009).

The neurosequential model of trauma and the Freudian model of treatment have produced the vast field of “trauma-informed” research and practice, expanding into education, healthcare, and social work (Thompson, 2021). TIE has delineated the impacts of trauma on students and the potential for educators to therapize trauma-affected students in their classrooms (Bath, 2008; Brunzell et al., 2016; Cole et al., 2005; Downey, 2007; van der Kolk, 2003)

TIE posits that the classroom is the ideal field for addressing the complex needs of trauma-affected children for three reasons. First, students lack adequate emotional support in their homes. In fact, the home environment may be a primary source of traumas, such as neglect, family violence, or unstable relationships (Bloom, 1995; de Arellano et al., 2008; Downey, 2007; Wolpow et al., 2008). Second, classrooms often represent the most stable environment for

children. As such, they are the ideal setting to rebuild relationships and continuity (Perry, 2006). Third, it is best to assume that most students are affected by trauma (Venet, 2018). This stance is informed by the seminal CDC-Kaiser Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) Study, which collected data on the relationship between childhood abuse and neglect and later-life health and well-being between 1995 and 1997 in the U.S. (Felitti et al., 1998). This study found that ACEs were more prevalent than previously assumed.

TIE professional literature and has gained popularity in the past two decades. Instructional materials have been developed to equip educators with practical social-emotional learning strategies (for example, Brunzell & Norrish, 2021; Nicholson et al., 2018; Thierry, 2016). Thierry's *The Simple Guide to Child Trauma* (2016) was required reading prior to my work at Alif School. A recent meta-analysis of 82 interventions involving 97,406 primary and secondary school students demonstrated that TIE practices have been successful in raising students' "social-emotional skills, attitudes, and indicators of well-being" (R. D. Taylor et al., 2017, p. 1156; see also de Arellano et al., 2008).

Critical Discourses of Trauma

This section will present critical responses to Western trauma psychology. First, two foundational critical theorists will be introduced. Scholarship reveals a white, male, colonial history of trauma psychology which underpins modern trauma theory and psychiatric practice (Lang, 2018; Milich & Moghnieh, 2018; Thompson, 2021). The tendency to pathologize trauma invalidates interpersonal, collective, and political coping mechanisms, which are often central to cultural identities and collective action in the Middle East (Afana et al., 2020; Bosqui, 2020; Thompson, 2021).

In *Wretched of the Earth* (1963), Franz Fanon (a revolutionary and a French-educated psychologist) argued that mental healthcare, by virtue of its Western origins, suffered from dissonance, unable to treat the disorders resulting from the trauma of colonial violence. He writes, “There flourishes in Algeria a pathology of atmosphere, a state which leads medical practitioners to say when confronted with a case which they cannot understand, “‘This’ll all be cleared up when this damned war is over’” (p. 234). Although Lebanon achieved its independence in 1943, the current crises contribute to an atmosphere akin to that of colonial violence: political inefficacy, capital controls, and state oppression, for instance. Fanon therefore provides a framework for understanding psychological outcomes as contingent on national conditions.

Edward Said, in *Orientalism* (1978), critically examined the Western model of the “Oriental world,” stressing the exoticizing and patronizing tendencies of Western scholars, politicians, and the general public. He argued that the latent Orientalist epistemology in Western societies carries significant implications for political ideation and popular consumption of the non-Western world that are ultimately dehumanizing, imperialistic, and detrimental.

With regards to trauma theory, Said’s framework inspires a critical inspection of the historical origins of dominant theory and practice. Few scholars have interrogated the applications of Western trauma theory in non-Western contexts, let alone in educational spaces.² Milich & Moghnieh (2018) note that, despite “high rates of trauma and PTSD among the

² A thorough literature review yielded only one article that examined TIE in non-Western contexts; see Wyatt et al., (2018) for a study of TIE in Cambodia.

populations of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), there has been until recently a lack of locally embedded research on trauma and the politics of suffering in this region” (p. 5). Studies of community resilience, collective trauma, political trauma, and transgenerational trauma have recently surfaced (Afana et al., 2020; Bosqui & Marshoud, 2018; Mahamid, 2020), but few have posed epistemological challenges to trauma theory. One notable exception is *Decolonizing Trauma Work: Indigenous Stories and Strategies*, by Renee Linklater (2014). This dissertation extends Linklater’s decolonizing work into the field of education.

The Western model of trauma is founded on naturalistic notions of the individual human experience (Lang, 2018; Thompson, 2021). Literature shows that PTSD in American soldiers absorbed other conceptualizations of trauma from the public mind (Davis, 1999; Lafrance & McKenzie-Mohr, 2013; Lang, 2018; Marecek, 1999). In the discipline of literary studies, Cathy Caruth’s (1995) collection of chapters from respected psychologists and sociologists, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, supported the notion that trauma was a well-defined psychological disorder with absolute causes, symptoms, and treatments, as presented in the DSM-III (APA, 1980). Firmly rooted in the Freudian psychoanalytic tradition, the authors present a version of trauma located in the completed past, often called “event-based trauma” (Visser, 2015, p. 252).

Complex stress and trauma are typically excluded from clinical psychology because psychology is a highly medicalized field (Tseris, 2019) which is predisposed to reducing “complex social phenomena and den[ying] the inextricable connections between individual psychological functioning and broader socio-political conditions” (Thompson, 2021, p. 104). In other words, the neurobiological dimension of trauma tends to flatten diverse and contextual

human experiences into a single diagnosis. Read (2005) characterizes this tendency as “a colonisation of the psychological and social by the biological” (p. 597).

Rothberg (2008) and Visser (2015) emphasized the need to unravel the compound meanings of trauma within social, political, and historical contexts, and thereby decolonize trauma theory. Recent work in international humanities and cultural studies have attempted to substitute the individualistic, event-based model of trauma with an approach that is sensitive to the political and communal dimensions trauma (Brykalski & Rayes, 2018; Milich & Moghnieh, 2018; Saul & Simon, 2016).

In the MENA region, collective traumatic memory is a source of revolutionary sentiments (Afana et al., 2020; Fanon, 1963; Sader, 2021; Saoud, 2021), a dimension of trauma that is often minimized in humanitarian discourse in favor of the passive, helpless victim (Lang, 2018; Milich & Moghnieh, 2018). Linguistically, collective trauma is embedded in the Arabic language, which is well-researched in the Palestinian context. The word *somoud*, translated as strength in adversity or steadfastness, comprises a range of political and symbolic meanings related to resistance against Israeli occupation and colonial violence (Giacaman et al., 2011; Marie et al., 2018).

Beyond the MENA region, research in conflict-affected populations has consistently demonstrated the strong effects of interpersonal relationships (Bosqui et al., 2017), social support (Besser & Neria, 2012), collective cohesion and action (Afana et al., 2020; Greenley et al., 1975; Milich & Moghnieh, 2018), and social equality and justice (Burns & Esterhuizen, 2008), through organic processes of community resilience (Doron, 2005; Nuwayhid et al., 2011; Saul, 2013).

Despite abundant evidence supporting the efficacy of community resilience, humanitarian interventions remain rooted in methods developed in non-crisis-affected countries (Betancourt et al., 2013; Bosqui & Marshoud, 2018; Zuilkowski & Betancourt, 2014). Wessells (2009) argues that the frameworks and tools developed by psychologists for application during international emergencies cause unintended harm because they are often contextually insensitive to security, humanitarian needs, and cultural norms surrounding mental health. These faults are partially the result of general assumptions of “a certain level of current safety, a clear distinction between pre- and post-trauma, and that hypervigilance and a sense of current threat are maladaptive symptoms” (Bosqui, 2020, p. 1; Ehlers & Clark, 2000; Foa et al., 1989), as well as Western assumptions of cognitive and behavioral “normality” (Thompson, 2021).

Summerfield (2000), in the context of non-Western war zones and refugee communities, finds that psychological interventions disrupt natural reactions to potentially traumatizing events (PTEs; see also Bisson et al., 1997; Bonanno & Kaltman, 1999; Mayou et al., 2000; Moghnieh, 2016). Scholars of Post-Traumatic Growth theory argue that individuals and communities commonly employ cognitive and action-based coping mechanisms to achieve positive mental health outcomes after adverse events (Bonanno, 2004; Hobfoll et al., 2007; Westphal & Bonanno, 2007; see Appendix A). Similar themes are supported by the fields of Resilience Theory (Ledesma, 2014) and Positive Psychology (Gable et al., 2005).

Communal resilience is applicable to the Lebanese education system. In an informal school for Syrian refugee children in Beirut, Greaves et al. (2019) found that the psychosocial support strategies utilized by the two teachers (also Syrian refugees) arose organically, from personal and shared experiences. While findings closely aligned with the recommendations of

TIE (Brunzell & Norrish, 2021), common experiences with students guided innovative and context-sensitive teaching methods, such as peace-building activities (Kuppens, 2018; Nykiel-Herbert, 2010), low-volume classroom management techniques, and non-authoritarian pedagogies. For these reasons, the school studied by Greaves et al. (2019), as well as Alif School, intentionally sought teachers from the same demographic as the students.

Collective trauma and communal resilience also entail a structural shift in the dynamics between teacher and student. At a critical moment in Lebanese history, the radical pedagogies of Ivan Illich, Paulo Freire, and Guevara in Latin America provide insight into the methods educators use to teach in revolutionary contexts (Donoso Romo, 2021). Educators' imperative to empower students politically was a common thread through many interviews, and will be further discussed in Chapter 5.

Mental Healthcare in Lebanon

Generalizations about the effects of trauma of Palestinian and Syrian refugees abound in the social sciences and news media (Milich & Moghnieh, 2018). Accordingly, humanitarian and government policies have prioritized vulnerable groups (Segal et al., 2020). However, literature reveals that all residents of Lebanon face barriers to mental healthcare delivery, despite differences in material and legal status.

One recent study found that 51.6% of 254 individuals sampled from Lebanon's Shatila Palestinian refugee camp screened positive for mental illness,³ of which only 11.4% spoke to a physician about mental illness or had a medical record reflecting psychological problems (Segal et al., 2020). Access to mental healthcare is not integrated into refugees' conception of medical care for reasons including:

Lack of access to a provider for advice and assistance—a communication issue in service provision that may be partially attributable to their newness and limited availability of the service, as well as significant self-stigma, and compensation by reliance on their [religious] faith to enable their coping with their psychological issues. (p. 8)

The rate of treatment for mental illness among Lebanese citizens is similar to the rate for refugees discovered by Segal et al. (2020). In a national survey (E. G. Karam et al., 2006), 17% of respondents (n = 2857 adults) met criteria for at least one disorder per the DSM-4 (APA, 1994).⁴ Of that population, only 10.9% received mental health treatment. Although the rates of mental illness vary between refugee and Lebanese populations, the proportion that receives healthcare is universally low.

This congruency indicates that Lebanese citizens face barriers to receiving mental healthcare just as refugee populations do. Rabih El Chammay (2016), the director of Lebanon's

³ Segal et al. (2020) used the K6 measure of General Mental Health Symptomology for Severe Mental Illness; the Primary Care-PTSD screen (PC-PTSD); and, The Mini International Neuropsychiatric Interview (MINI) for Non-Affective Psychosis to identify patients with mental disorders. Only the K6 method had been previously validated in Lebanon (pp. 2-3)

⁴ E. G. Karam et al. (2006) used the WHO Composite International Diagnostic Interview (CIDI, Version 3.0) to identify patients with mental disorders.

national mental health program, explained that residents of Lebanon are accustomed to an inaccessible, irrelevant mental healthcare system, saying, “historically, mental health services were dominated by the private sector providing psychiatric services, psychotherapy or hospitalization” (p. 564).

Another recent study by Ruggeri et al. (2021) confirmed that subjective well-being did not significantly differ between refugees and Lebanese citizens. The equal rates of treatment for Lebanese citizens (10.9%) and refugees (11.4%) may be partially explained by the fact that, despite discrepancies in rates of diagnosed mental illness, the two groups evaluate their need for formal care at equal levels.

For those who do seek mental healthcare services, the current economic crisis has made treatment even more inaccessible. Journalist Kareem Chehayeb (2021a) interviewed 22-year-old Jinan about her experiences:

“The deteriorating situation in the country certainly amplified the personal issues that eventually led me to seek professional help,” she told [*Middle East Eye*]. “But by January [2021], I couldn’t find [my medicine] anywhere.” When Jinan asked pharmacists to tell her where all the medicine went, she only received one of two answers: delayed shipments and - a Lebanese classic reply - “this is how the country is”. Her psychiatrist reluctantly prescribed her an alternative medication with unpleasant side effects.

Jinan’s experience demonstrates that treatment options are limited—another potential reason residents of Lebanon rarely seek mental healthcare.

In collaboration with international groups, the Lebanese government began a reform of its mental healthcare system in 2016 (El Chammay, 2016; E. Karam et al., 2016; Kerbage et al.,

2016). Some goals included training more than 600 front-line staff in psychological first aid, publishing a unified psychotropic medication list for specialists, and piloting an e-mental health service based on the WHO Problem Management Plus program (E. Karam et al., 2016; Kerbage, 2017). No documents mention school-based interventions or support for educators as a part of reform efforts.

Chemali et al. (2018) draw attention to the stress associated with psychological fieldwork with trauma-affected populations in Lebanon that leads to high burnout and poor long-term mental health. A parallel discussion about educators has not yet appeared. Teachers work with trauma-affected students on a daily basis, yet there is no targeted provision of mental health support for Lebanese teachers.

Bosqui (2020) writes that in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, mental healthcare systems around the world “will grapple to function if they maintain provision at the individual level and neglect the wider ecological systems of family, community, and country” (p. 3). Community-based mental health interventions have proven to be effective in Lebanon (Abi Ramia et al., 2018; Adams, 2011; Doron, 2005; Nuwayhid et al., 2011), yet the 2016 national mental health system reform plan neglects the potential benefits of community development, instead preferring the expansion of clinical services.

Evidence of sustained trauma from the port explosion is beginning to arise, though no scholarly studies have been conducted on the topic to date. *The Daily Star* reported that one man finds a new piece of glass in his body nearly every month: “There will continue to be glass in my body for several years [...] But physical scars are a secondary problem” (“‘Wounded Soul,’” 2021). A new debris-based art installation at the still-decimated port publicly commemorates the

catastrophe (“Lebanon Artist Creates,” 2021), demonstrating how a lack of reconstruction contributes to public traumatic memory, or an “infrastructure of suffering” (Barakat & Masri, 2017; Milich & Moghnieh, 2018, p. 8; Sader, 2021).

There is, therefore, a gap between theory and practice at the intersection of trauma and education in Lebanon. Discourses of clinical psychology guided the national plan for mental healthcare reform in 2016, which critical theory and empirical studies prove to be misguided for the Lebanese context. This research applies a decolonial methodology, platforming educators’ lived experiences to exemplify the ways in which trauma is managed in educational spaces, thus bridging the divide between theory and practice in crisis-affected contexts.

Chapter 3: A Decolonial Perspective

This chapter explains what decolonial methodologies are, why a decolonial approach is necessary and appropriate for this research, and how it contributes to the field of Comparative and International Education (CIE). Then, the methods and ethics of the study will be presented in light of the decolonial methodological approach.

Methodology

Decolonial methodologies operate within transformative research frameworks (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017) which seek to detach what counts as knowledge and who produces, owns and benefits from it from colonial power structures (Edwards & Brannelly, 2017). Recognition and validation of local knowledge is central to decolonizing knowledge (Smith, 2012). Because decolonizing studies often take place in with historically marginalized communities, as well as at the margins of academic discourses, they must be both “culturally appropriate and methodologically sound” (Blodgett et al., 2013; Kara, 2015, p. 10).

Literature has demonstrated that contemporary theories of trauma suffer from “colonisation of the psychological and social by the biological” (Read, 2005, p. 597) which has become embedded in the Lebanese mental healthcare plan (E. Karam et al., 2016) and international aid schemes (Wessells, 2009). Tania Bosqui (2020), a professor at AUB, writes, “The snowballing crises and collective distress in Lebanon, serve to demonstrate the limitations of individualistic clinical models and the strengths of a community and systemic public health approach” (p. 3). TIE literature propagates the Western therapist-patient model of treatment, which is incompatible with realities of collective trauma and communal resilience.

A decolonial approach to this topic facilitates a paradigmatic shift by validating naturally-generated, contextual teaching practices. The aims of this study are to document the experiences of educators in Lebanese schools between October 2019 and June 2021, and to explore educators' strategies for managing students' trauma. Building on Fanon's (1963) claim that mental health is inseparable from national conditions, this study adopts an ecological model of education, which realizes the influence of societal conditions on students, and the influence of students on society (Bronfenbrenner, 1976). A deep understanding of the broad societal conditions in which educators live and work was essential to culturally appropriate research. This approach was achieved through a thorough review of recent history, personal involvement in Lebanese education in 2018 and 2019, then through acquaintances and media from 2020 until present.

This study is situated in the field of CIE, though it stands alone in many regards. Research on education in *post*-colonial and *post*-conflict zones abounds, but very little research about education *during* large-scale, protracted crises exists beyond journalistic sources (the exception being Palestine). The epistemology of TIE has not yet been critically evaluated in non-Western contexts. In general, discussions of trauma in educational spaces are absent from CIE literature. This study contributes to CIE by presenting a timely, contextual, and decolonial examination of educational practices *in situ* that has relevance in other crisis-affected contexts.

Nikro (2018) writes, "there has been an excessive amount of trauma theory, all the while neglecting to develop discussions around methodology" (p. 17). Such neglect is apparent in the phenomenological limitations of trauma theory for educators in non-Western contexts, and the ambiguity of the trauma-education nexus within the academic landscape.

Nikro (2018) continues:

The question of the value of theory cannot be limited to questions of epistemology, but has also to entertain its phenomenological implications. Edward Said [1991] had something like this limitation in mind when in the first of his traveling theory essays he writes about what he calls “resistances to theory” [p. 242]. By this he means that any theory transported from one place to another has to be sensitive to people’s own hermeneutic capacities to embody and make sense of themselves and their circumstances. (p. 24)

There are many apparent “resistances to theory” in this study. For instance, TIE and critical literature represent two divergent views of trauma and how to treat it, and both clash with realities encountered by Lebanese educators in some regard.

Methods

Conducting interviews with educators in Lebanon during a period of national instability was ethically fraught, necessitating continuous reflection on the part of the researcher. Issues of gaining access, informed consent, power relations, and researcher responsibilities were carefully negotiated at every stage of the research. This section will detail the process of designing and conducting an ethically sound project that is consistent with decolonial methodology.

This study was approved by the University of Oxford’s Interdivisional Research Ethics Committee (IDREC, via the CUREC 2 application; see Appendix C). The Committee certified that the research was “judged as meeting appropriate ethical standards,” including institutional best practices (CUREC, 2014, 2020a, 2020b, 2021) and international ethical guidelines for social science research (Cohen et al., 2011; *The Belmont Report*, 1979). Ethical considerations

extended beyond institutional approval. Conversations with individuals in Lebanon prior to data collection prompted further reflection on the research purpose, my own positionality, and the choices made throughout the research process. For further discussion of ethical reflection and reflexivity, see Appendix B.

To encompass different geographic and socioeconomic experiences, interview participants were recruited semi-selectively: four through a personal contact at a private school in Beirut; four through Alif School; one through Teach for Lebanon (TFL), a national teaching fellowship for recent university graduates; and eight through the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE). Nominated participants were contacted initially in Arabic through WhatsApp to confirm interest, then sent the Participant Information Sheet and Oral Consent Form via email in both English and Arabic (see Appendices D, E, and F).

Association with The University of Oxford was likely advantageous in the recruitment stage. Beyond my personal contacts at one private school and Alif School, I sought participants through more traditional gatekeepers, TFL and the MEHE. Hett & Hett (2013) discuss the ethics of access in the Syrian context, which resembles the bureaucracy often encountered by researchers in Lebanon. *Wasta*, an Arabic term often translated as ‘connections’ or ‘social lubricant,’ is the key “to gain[ing] almost anything in life from a job, to a reduced gas bill” in the MENA region (p. 501; see also Radsch, 2009). The global renown of The University of Oxford acts as a form of *wasta*, likely prompting quicker reply emails and broader reach into a notoriously opaque system.

Recruitment materials noted the psychological risks of participation at multiple points in both English and Arabic (Appendices D, E, and F). No participants had questions or hesitations

about this. Interested participants were invited to schedule a 30-minute virtual interview hosted on Microsoft Teams, the official virtual meeting platform for both The University of Oxford and the MEHE.

Participants' data was pseudonymized in accordance with Oxford's best practice guidance (CUREC, 2020a). Identifying information was removed, and only information pertinent to the research aims was retained (i.e., geographic region, school type, teacher subject, etc.; see *Table 1*). Data was handled securely in accordance with Oxford guidance (CUREC, 2020a).

17 semi-structured qualitative interviews (Braun & Clarke, 2013; see *Table 1*) were conducted over six weeks in May and June 2021. Schools were either in the final weeks of instruction or the first days of final examinations. Some participants joined from their school buildings, to which they had recently returned, or from their homes. All interviews were individual, save Interview 14, which consisted of the school's headmaster and two teachers.

Table 1: Interview Information, also included as Appendix G

Interview Number	Pseudonym	Role	School Location	School Type	Grade Level	Teacher Subject	Experience (years)	Interview Language
1	Michael	teacher	Beirut	private	2	French general education	6	English
2	Noor	teacher	Beirut	private	preschool-2	General education	25	English
3	Lina	teacher	Beirut	private	2	French general education	33	English
4	Khaled	teacher	Beirut	informal	All ages	Drama	5	English / Arabic
5	Hana	teacher	Beirut	private	2	French general education	25	English
6	Hussein	teacher	South	semi-private	4-7	Mathematics and science	5	English / Arabic
7	Jamila	teacher	Beirut	private	1-5	Special needs	5	English
8	Christy	counsellor	Beirut	private	N/A	N/A	N/A	English
9	Mirna	teacher	Tripoli	public	1-2	General education	5	Arabic
10	Hind	headmaster	Tripoli	public	N/A	N/A	6	Arabic
11	Zahra	headmaster	Chouf	public	N/A	N/A	4	English
12	Riwa	teacher	Chouf	public / private	Unknown	English Language	9	English
13	Rawan	teacher	Beirut	private	2-3	Mathematics	4	English
14	Hadi, Sara, Diana	headmaster, two teachers	Beqaa	public	N/A	N/A	N/A	Arabic
15	Alaa	teacher	Beirut	public	7-8	French	Unknown	Arabic
16	Natalia	teacher	Beirut	public	7-8	French	16	Arabic
17	Rabab	teacher / counsellor	Beirut	public	6-8	Health	2	Arabic

I read the Oral Consent Script (Appendix F) in the language preferred by the participant at the beginning of each interview. All participants consented without hesitation. The majority of participants indicated that they had carefully read the participation materials beforehand, as well. Then, I shared a brief introduction about myself, focusing on my familiarity with Lebanese education, Arabic language, and current events. Shared vocabulary and knowledge allowed me to efficiently build rapport with my participants at the beginning of the interview (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Cohen et al., 2011; Hett & Hett, 2013).

Of the 17 interviews, six were conducted entirely in Arabic, two in a mix of English and Arabic, and nine entirely in English. Because I am a non-native speaker of Arabic, and many Lebanese are near-native speakers of English, participants were more likely to choose English. Interviews ranged from 13 to 55 minutes in length, averaging 29:15 in duration. The interview schedule (Appendix H) was usually completed within this time frame.

In total, interview data was collected from 14 teachers, three headmasters, and two school counsellors (one of whom was a professional psychologist). Seven participants were associated with private schools, nine with public schools, one with a semi-private school,⁵ one with both a public and private school, and one with an informal educational organization. 11 participants were affiliated with schools in or near Beirut, one from Southern Lebanon, two from the Chouf

⁵ Semi-private is a designation for privately-operated schools funded by the state. They are free to students. Because they are subject to the same funding restrictions as public schools, Hussein will henceforth be referred to as a public-school teacher.

region, and three from the Beqaa Valley. Taught grades ranged from preschool (age three) to grade eight (age 13).

Interviews conducted in English were initially transcribed using Microsoft Team's transcription functionality. I reviewed these transcriptions by hand, correcting punctuation, Arabic words used in conversation, and other mistakes. The remaining eight interviews were translated into English and transcribed by myself. This process of correction, translation, and transcription allowed me to familiarize myself with the interview data. As I acquainted myself with the data, I noted patterns and themes that informed initial codes. This phase was what Braun & Clarke (2013) call "immersion in the data" (p. 204). Hours spent listening to interview recordings and re-reading transcripts prompted me to "read the data as data," and step back from the emotionally exhausting interview phase.

Transcribed interview data was imported into NVivo 12 for coding and thematic analysis (Al Yahmady & Al Abri, 2013). "Complete coding" was applied (Braun & Clarke, 2013, pp. 206–207), tagging each relevant data with an initial code. The coding process was recursive and iterative. As sub-themes emerged, the initial codes were revised. Some major themes were compiled after the first round of coding: Hardship, Teacher Practice, Student Attributes, Distance Learning, External Support, Teacher Attributes, Family, Teacher Training, and other notable

statements (see *Figure 3*).

Figure 3: Coding Hierarchy



Themes were restructured into four main themes of Environment, Students’ Stress and Trauma, Educators’ Stress and Trauma, and Classroom Support Strategies, which are presented in the following chapter.

Chapter 4: Findings

In this chapter, the themes of Environment, Students' Stress and Trauma, Teachers' Stress and Trauma, and Classroom Support Strategies will be presented. In addition to building a critique of Western trauma theory in non-Western educational spaces, this chapter's purpose is documentary, as well. Participants corroborated many recent events discussed in Chapter 1, and further explained their implications for students, schools, and society.

Findings ultimately reveal that educators generate their own contextual frameworks for supporting students that are anchored in locally-embedded knowledge, such as shared experiences and communal resilience. Findings will be further discussed in light of the literature and theoretical framework in Chapter 5.

Environment

Participants spoke extensively about the environment they lived and worked in between October 2019 and June 2021. This section documents educators' experiences during the *thawra*, economic crisis, COVID-19 pandemic, and port explosion, and the ways in which societal and school conditions were impacted.

The *thawra*, beginning on 14 October 2019, brought Lebanese residents to the streets of every major city. Participants reported that city-clogging demonstrations and road closures were the main impacts of the *thawra* on their school. Michael, a grade two teacher at a private school in Beirut, told me:

The whole country shut down basically. We were out of school for I think three weeks and we never knew what was going to happen. Like each night we would have to wait till like 8:00 PM or 11:00 PM to find out if we were going the next day. But for three weeks,

everything ended up being cancelled and we had nothing in place. So basically, the students didn't learn for three weeks. Then we started going back, but it would be like we would go back for a day. Then we would have to close for a day because roads would be blocked. It was like very on and off for a while. And this continued kind of until after winter break. Like even in January, I think we missed a couple days because of protests and then that eventually simmered down and it went back to "normal" [air quotes].

Hussein, a public-school teacher in Southern Lebanon, spoke of similar uncertainties:

"Everything was changing and moving. Every day you woke up not knowing if you were going to school or not. During the revolution we were not doing online classes."

The *thawra* prompted some private schools to expand their distance learning capacity. Michael reported, "We had already dealt with [disruption] during the *thawra*, and at the end of the *thawra* we had started developing some ways of teaching online, like plans for how to deliver instruction." Public schools were less likely to attempt distance learning during this period.

The *thawra* was both a response to and an exacerbation of the economic crisis in Lebanon. For educators, the economic repercussions were more tangible than the *thawra* itself. Rising unemployment and inflation were associated with four primary negative outcomes: underfunded schools, increased uncertainty, flight from private to public schools, and school dropout. Noor, a private-school teacher, discussed the impacts of uncertainty and underfunded schools:

It's not easy, and parents are really concerned about the future of their kids, about what's going to happen next year. Is it going to be like, are we going to go back online? Is the school going to stay open? Plus, everything is just so very expensive and the minimum

wage is just nothing. So, it's a big mess economically. It's bad. The country is in a bad situation [...] And even if you [...] want to photocopy, print is expensive, papers are expensive, stationary is super expensive nowadays. So, all these are things which schools are not—they're going to be worried about. Plus, they cannot ask the parents for additional fees because of the economic crisis.

All participants commented on the crippling effects of the economic crisis on schools. On 8 July 2021, just two weeks after interviews concluded, the MEHE cancelled the national middle school (*Brevet*) exams under pressure from parents and teachers. Rene Karam, the head of the Association of Teachers of English in Lebanon (ATEL) commented to *Reuters*, “The minister wanted to conduct exams but didn't he know that in Lebanon there is a shortage of paper and ink and teachers can't work for free and schools can't operate without fuel for electricity generators?” (Dahan & Creidi, 2021).

Although two governments have been ousted since the *thawra* (Hariri in October 2019 and Diab in August 2020), hopes of economic stability remain unfulfilled. Public-school teacher Mirna narrated:

The economic crisis began, which is still going on now. The revolution started something, but the results have not arrived yet—not just for the students or the families or the teachers, but for the whole society. This affected the atmosphere, not just individuals. The economic crisis remains the most impossible issue for Lebanese families, which seems to become more arduous each day. Negative “atmosphere” was mentioned in two other interviews, depicting a sense of subsuming melancholy. In the group interview, Diana said, “The whole world [...] has this same atmosphere. There is a crisis upon every person.” In a serious tone,

headmaster Hadi continued:

These other events merely exacerbated the economic crisis to the point that it affected everyone in the country. The poverty rate in Lebanon in 2018 was 28%. In the end of 2020, the rate was closer to 55% of the residents of Lebanon [...] This directly affects the children in schools, all our students in all our schools, in all our programs [...]

Throughout the economic crisis, our public schools were unable to absorb the students that came to us from private schools. The families were unable to pay the fees that rose drastically [...] We don't have a high capacity to absorb students. This led to what we call "school leakage," where a large number of students stay at home without doing their daily lessons.

School dropout (or "leakage") is considered the largest threat to Lebanese students if the current crises do not abate (Save the Children, 2021a). Mirna, a public-school teacher in Tripoli, described her firsthand experience:

One of the biggest effects is that families have stopped sending their kids to school because of the economic situation. This is because families can't or won't pay for the bus. Our school is a little far, it isn't on a main road. If you took a taxi, it would be a little more expensive. There are people who just can't pay.

At the same time, Mirna's school welcomed about 100 children from nearby private schools in the 2020-21 academic year who were unable to afford the fees.

Interview participants demonstrated acceptance of school closures as part of national lockdowns. Mirna reasoned, "The *thawra* stopped because health is ultimately more important than money and the other problems we were going through. If your health is gone but you have

wealth and resources, everything will still be bad.” All teachers acknowledged the negative repercussions of the national lockdown on learning outcomes, but none indicated that social distancing measures were unnecessary.

Some teachers expressed frustration with the indecision of the MEHE about school closures during the 2020-21 school year. According to Michael, school started in-person in September 2020:

And then in November we went back hybrid mode. So, then we started having to follow the Minister of Education who’s completely incompetent, doesn’t know anything about teaching, just makes random decisions at the last minute that make everyone else miserable. So, like we would go back to hybrid for a week, then he would decide no more hybrid. We would have to go back to online for a week [...] From December break till Monday, we were online, and just Monday we went back into hybrid mode. And hybrid means the class is split in half; half come one day; half come the other.

The summer of 2020 was utilized by many schools to prepare for the 2020-21 school year. The opportunity to plan and train reduced teachers’ stress about distance learning. Lina, a colleague of Michael, said:

The ‘19-20 [academic year] was very stressful because we weren’t equipped with all the tools that we needed for teaching. And then we continued this year—2021—online, but we were more equipped for that and we were more prepared for—or we had a plan at least—to deliver learning to students.

Teachers agreed that trainings for online learning platforms, such as Seesaw, Microsoft Teams, and Zoom, were beneficial, but all teachers expressed a desire to return to fully in-person instruction.

No teacher mentioned that students or their families were directly affected by COVID-19. Rather, indirect impacts of the pandemic, such as social isolation and increased awareness of health risks, took precedence. Mirna commented, “Concerning COVID-19, families were worried about sending their children to school. Because of this, there were some students that just didn’t show up. This was the largest effect.”

Finally, the explosion of the port on 4 August 2020 caused additional disruption. Educators and students in Beirut were directly affected by the explosion: countless homes and 183 school buildings were damaged (*Increased Support*, 2020), thousands of people were injured or killed (Salil, 2020), and many individuals, children and adults alike, developed symptoms of PTSD.

Concerning damage to structures in Beirut, Natalia shared:

In our school, we experienced lots of destruction. The administration was working very hard on organized projects in the school [over the summer]. Then the explosion came and wiped away all their work, sent them backwards. Also, many students in the areas near us dealt with damage or destruction of their homes and cars, and also teachers. Of course, this affected everyone.

The windows of Natalia’s school’s library were shattered by the shock wave of the explosion. Outside Beirut, Noor attested to the magnitude of the blast:

It was huge, enormous; like I live in the mountains and I could like—I felt it. It was so scary, so freaky. I live almost I think it's one hour and a half driving distance and it's like, my home was really far and I could feel it and even some houses in my village had broken windows, so it was really dramatic.

The effects of the port explosion will be discussed in more detail in the following sections.

Teachers' verbal irony (italicized below) hinted at their sentiments toward the government. Michael stated, "I can't get the money out now—the money I saved over the past four years—*because the banks gave all the money to the politicians. Umm, so that happened.*" Noor concluded a thought by saying, "Plus, ahead of that, *our lovely government also, and all of its decisions or whatever.*" These statements were accompanied with a dismissive chuckle or smirk, indicating that corruption and incompetence of the government are almost comical topics.

More seriously, the theme of self-reliance was raised in relation to current hardships.

Lina opined:

We don't have a government to really back us up, so the laws are not in favor of people. You always have to get what is yours. And you always have to stand up on your feet again to move on. We're used to [...] facing certain problem and then looking for solutions ourselves [...] We don't rely on the government to help us out. We are used to being in trouble, and we are used to this situation, and we are used to looking for solutions ourselves. We don't expect much from the government, though it should be the government's job.

This indicates that Lebanese people have lost faith in the ability of the government to support them through crises.

This section has documented the environment inhabited by Lebanese educators between October 2019 and June 2021. Interviews reveal that educators were frustrated by disruptions, and that all strata of Lebanese society have been directly and indirectly affected by multiple PTEs.

Students' Stress and Trauma

Participants recounted the stress and trauma children experienced between October 2019 and June 2021. Distance learning, participation in public matters, and changes in behavior were the three most prominent topics identified by participants. Students' reactions to national events demonstrate a high level of political and social awareness, even among younger students. Nonetheless, educators recognized the need to support their students in most instances.

Distance learning posed an assortment of challenges to students. Limited resources and an unstable learning environment were the most common challenges identified by participants. General classroom behavior and attitude was impacted by distance learning, as well. Public school teachers like Jamila spoke of the difficulty of retaining grade one and two students through the transition to distance learning:

Some students left the school because they weren't OK with learning from home and online; it was a new step for them [...] They have the choice if they want to attend the class or not, and we don't have these strict rules, and sometimes they forgot how to do their homework, and they if they have homework or not.

While distance learning pushed some students out of school, Hind observed another factor pulling students out of school: "Because of the economic crisis [...] some students had to earn a secondary income. I have students that started working in shops. They left the school forever."

Public-school teachers spoke more of issues with pupil retention and attendance during distance learning than private-school teachers. This is potentially explained by the fact that public-school students were more likely to experience financial hardship than private-school students. Mirna said:

In some ways, [distance learning] is good because we are learning new ways to teach. But people forget that there are students that don't have an iPad or a phone. The phone that they use is the shared family phone, and they don't have access to it all day. People forget these issues. Sure, bravo for developing new models of learning, especially because we were closed for such a long period of time. Bravo, but if you want to implement this, you have to think about the material limitations that affect us.

Lack of devices and reliable internet was a significant barrier to students' participation. Sara, a public-school teacher, recounted:

I remember that I had a student whose mother called and told me that he couldn't attend online because his family couldn't afford to buy him a phone. After about three months, while I was sending the mother the lessons, the family saved enough money to buy another phone so that their son could join us in the online class. Throughout this period, many students like him were unable to attend their classes because the economic crisis was so bad.

Notably, no private-school teachers reported issues with pupil retention as a result of material difficulties. Private schools were able, in some cases, to offer devices to students in need of one, whereas public schools were not.

Within the home environment, students were often assisted by a parent or sibling throughout the day. Participants thought this was harmful to the students' education:

The problem was that there were many students on the phone with their mothers working.

They couldn't give their students the work to do. They thought their student's work was too much for them, and this was a big problem. (Hind)

Rawan attributed the educational disparities she observed after one month back in-person to resource inequality and parental intervention. She said, "You can imagine the big distance between kids at school now."

Students also felt isolated throughout national lockdowns. Hana explained:

When I asked them, "What did you feel when you were at home all day?" it was for them like a nightmare. They told me, "We cannot stay any more in front of the computer, sitting on the chair all day. We need to talk to each other. We couldn't talk to anyone."

Natalia thought their nightmare was a result of not fully comprehending the stakes of the lockdown:

They knew there was a virus, but they didn't know the importance of staying at home.

They thought of themselves as imprisoned. They were told over and over that they would go back to school and to their regular environment.

Distance learning was a challenging period for students in Lebanon, particularly those in public schools. Many lacked the resources or home environment necessary to succeed academically. Increased dropout rates were observed in public schools, primarily for economic reasons. Educational disparities widened during the periods of distance learning. Finally, all students felt "imprisoned" during the national lockdowns.

Some educators identified an increase in students' critical thinking and participation in public life as a result of the crises that affected them and their families. This guided the ways in which educators interacted with their students. Mirna, a grade one and two teacher, narrated:

The *thawra* started, and during the first two weeks, the students started to be more aware, to understand the state of the country better, to demand things—for instance, they stopped studying the old curriculum, and they began participating in the revolution, going down to the streets [...] It was about rights, and schools closed and students stopped coming because of it. They called “*thawra, thawra*” because it became important to them; they wanted change, they wanted to do something. I can also tell you that they don't care about studying if, in the end, it's all about nepotism. “We no longer want nepotism; we want to access jobs by merit.” They want to compete based on the competencies, not based on *wasta* like we have now. They wanted something to be real, not just to work from dawn to dusk when they grow up for LBP £500,000 [USD \$333 at pre-*thawra* exchange rate], just this. They want more, but the results are slow.

Hana supported the notion that young students can still be aware of large issues and participate in the public sphere. Among her grade two students, she noted:

You can feel that the students, they are aware of the economic crisis; they're aware of *thawra*; they went to the downtown; they all went to *thawra*. They are aware of the change [...] They talked about it. But it's affecting their families, it's affecting their daily life [...] They don't talk politics, no. They don't know what is happening, like the facts happening, but they see their parents; they see that there is something that has to be changed. They were happy that they went to the downtown [...]

I remember also that even after *thawra*, and when we had the explosion of the port, many students of [school name redacted] helped by doing community service. They did bracelets; they collect the clothes to donate to people they lost their house; they collect money to get food before they did. They were very helpful. They showed empathy. It was like a positive impact on them.

A middle school in the Beqaa region facilitated student participation, as well:

When the explosion of the Beirut port happened, the administration, under Mr. [Hadi], along with some students, went down to Beirut to help remove the rubble and help the people affected by the blast in every part of the city. (Sara)

Rawan acknowledged that her students (grades two and three) were full members of society, deserving of the right to participate in the *thawra*. She said, “We closed the school to give them the space to participate because it’s their right.”

Conversely, some participants said their students did not increase in awareness or public participation. Zahra, a public-school headmaster from the rural Chouf region, felt that there was not a large effect of the *thawra* because her school consists only of grades one through nine, so the students are younger and did not participate directly. Michael, in his grade two classroom, observed that students were reluctant to share their personal experiences during the *thawra*: “They knew they shouldn’t.”

The stress caused by events from October 2019 to June 2021 brought about behavioral changes in students. These ranged from increased “naughtiness” to “PTSD symptoms.” The national lockdowns meant students spent every day in close proximity to their family. This had both positive and negative implications. Parents were able to support students throughout

distance learning, but students lost social skills. Most teachers were happy to accommodate students' behavioral aberrations when they returned to in-person classes. Hussein said:

I changed the rules to be a little easier for them, since they were in their houses for five months. I did it because this period of time was sort of a vacation for them. They have lots of energy, and my rules are just here to direct it. They were inside for five months. Some of them didn't ever come to online classes, so they were basically on vacation. The students don't really want to learn that much.

Students were happy to be back at school, but not always for positive reasons. When I asked if behavioral issues had increased since returning to in-person instruction, Mirna responded specifically about her Syrian students:

They are more naughty, more than normal. It can be a fun time, too. But their problem is that their families beat them. Because of this, the children come to us broken, you know? They will say, "Enough, I'm afraid of everything." Even his father and mother. I know that in the home, parents hit their children, there are beatings. Because of this, they feel that they are safer with us, like they have a space to vent. School is a place where they can breathe more.

School is therefore an important refuge for Syrian students from harmful family dynamics. Hadi argued that distance learning will have societal ramifications if the negative impacts are left untreated:

There are about 1.2 million children that have been forced to stay in their homes this year. And you know that students staying in their home can lead to increased family

violence, increased societal distress, and this is what causes deviance, God forbid, in many ways, and causes instability in the region.

While homes were essential to students' academic success in the previous school year, they were also a potential source of stress and trauma for students.

Hind observed that once students returned to in-person instruction, behavioral problems decreased relative to her experience before COVID-19. She remarked, "Even in difficult situations, they empathized with each other. If, for example, one doesn't have food, like he doesn't have a sandwich for lunch, other students would give him food. Problems didn't increase—actually the opposite."

For students in Beirut, the port explosion caused a variety of psychological problems. Former school psychologist Christy explained:

After the explosion, a lot of kids developed acute stress symptoms, and some of them even PTSD symptoms, such as being afraid of loud sounds, such as not wanting even to go down the stairs. Especially those children who were in the area of the explosion, and they had to evacuate their buildings, so going down the stairs reminds them of what happened during the explosion where they had to go down the stairs and run for their lives. And then also some kids not wanting to go out at all, or wanting to stay with their parents all the time, or not wanting to even approach windows because all windows during the explosion exploded, not wanting to go into certain rooms in the house, and of course, sleep disruptions. All their routine is messed up, their food intake, as well. Yeah, this is how a lot of children react. Some of them, it was just for a few months and then they were OK, and some of them now, until today, they still have anxiety symptoms.

She estimated that “most of the kids [...] experienced, at some point, acute stress symptoms,” and that between two and four students per class of thirty (or 7-13%) showed PTSD symptoms. Rawan acknowledged delayed responses to stress, saying, “in the coming year, we will also notice more and more about the effects of the past year. Nothing will be hidden.”

Outside Beirut, participants still spoke strongly of the effects of the explosion. Riwa, a teacher from the Chouf region, added that the “explosion in Beirut, you know, it affected only the students in Beirut. But it affected the students here [in the Chouf region] because, you know, some of them, they lost members of their families or they lost their friends, and they were separated.” Mr. Hadi, the headmaster of a public school in the Beqaa region, added:

The explosion didn’t reach us in a direct way—in the school buildings or our students. But it affected us in an indirect manner, a very strong manner. The students who saw the size of the explosion and the disaster, and the victims and deaths, when they saw this on top of the stress of the economic crisis, they suffered from the explosion in a direct way. Students from regions outside Beirut experienced the explosion through news and social media, through family and friends who were directly affected, and through the economic repercussions of the explosion.

In some instances, teachers noticed students suffering from acute stress or trauma since returning to in-person teaching in May. In Hussein’s class, a student inexplicably (to Hussein) became overwhelmed, who then ran out of the room crying. Rawan had one student with separation anxiety:

Probably because she left her home to a new home [because of the explosion], so when they want to leave school, she doesn’t go by bus their parents come and pick her up. So,

while I'm waiting with her for her parents to pick her up, she's always worried: "Will they come and pick me up? Will you stay with me?" So, she has this trauma about leaving a place or being alone or being lost, for example.

One of Lina's students lived in a neighborhood that was severely affected by the explosion of the port in August 2020. She told:

I have a student who is very stressed because his house is in Ashrafieh and he always seems stressed since the beginning of the year. He's a little bit—he doesn't like to be in the spotlight. So, I talked to the parents and I asked the mom if there's anything that I should notice or I should know about. And you know, she kept me in the picture about his emotional stress related to what happened [i.e., the port explosion]. And now he's scared about his father leaving the house because he's scared that something might happen. In addition to that, his mom works at the hospital, so it's double stress from both sides because his mom is under the stress of COVID.

Participants identified distance learning, increased awareness and public participation, and behavioral changes as the dominant causes and effects of recent events on students in Lebanon. Findings reveal that, despite resilient and adaptive outcomes, students are still in need of psychosocial support in the classroom.

Educators' Stress and Trauma

Teachers acclimated to unprecedented circumstances between October 2019 and June 2021: the *thawra* disrupted the academic year in major cities, and the COVID-19 pandemic forced schools to transition to online platforms in February 2020. The explosion of the Beirut port was a PTE for all, and teachers were expected to accommodate students' diverse needs in

the aftermath. Furthermore, public-school teachers were paid just half their regular salary for some time, and the rapid devaluation of the Lira meant a teachers' annual salary was worth only USD \$150-\$180 as of June 2021. During this period, teachers were supported by trainings, personal support networks, and feelings of hope and resilience. This section will explore the stressful and traumatizing experiences reported by participants and the sources of support that they found helpful.

Nearly every participant felt that recent events have affected adults as much, if not more than children. The *thawra*, economic crisis, COVID-19 pandemic, and port explosion have all contributed to forms of individual and collective trauma. In an exasperated tone, Hussein said:

I got traumatized from the Beirut explosion, from COVID; all of us experienced trauma, it's not like it's just the children. Really, it was difficult. I am one of the people that was least affected, but I still don't like to think about the topics.

Sara, a public-school teacher, confirmed, "We as teachers had to deal with our suffering, too. Me and my colleague, or all the teachers that taught through the disruptions. We are all human beings, and we were becoming aware of the huge stresses on us."

The end of the 2019-20 school year was particularly stressful for teachers at both public and private schools because they felt unprepared for delivering instruction online. Riwa, a private school teacher, said about this period:

We were left to struggle alone, you know? We struggled by ourselves, and we struggled to get to the students. We also got worried that that these students are not getting enough information. You know, you have like the year plan, you have the month plan, and you're not doing anything. You were supposed to finish, for example, this number of units, and

we're not finishing anything. They're not getting, they're getting like 20% of what they're supposed to get. So that was very stressful.

At another private school, Lina related:

We did not receive any guidance at all. Actually, the administration was overwhelmed with so many things to take care of. You had so many new things that came up: the whole online teaching is something that is new, so I think they were overwhelmed with all of that. But it was up to the teachers' experience and common sense to deal with the students.

Some teachers felt a tension between their role as an educator and as a supporter of the *thawra*. Khaled, a teacher at Alif School at the time, detailed:

The *thawra* started, and we, as teachers, as young teachers, as new generation, we were of course with the *thawra*. So, of course we started to do something. We want to go to the streets. We want to shut it down. We should stop everything in Lebanon to go and protest. But at the same time, as a teacher living and working with kids, we saw that they don't have anyone to be with [...] So I was, inside, lost between two things: a) I want to stop everything, I don't want to go to work, I don't want to do anything because I want to go and protest and follow the goal of the *thawra* [...] But also, I wasn't able to leave the kids because the kids were part of the future that we should work on.

Khaled's dual responsibilities—to his country and to his students—influenced the ways in which he dealt with sensitive topics in his classroom, which will be discussed in the following section.

In the summer before the 2020-21 school year, schools prepared their teachers to deliver instruction online. Private schools, in particular, had the capacity to facilitate their teachers'

transition to distance teaching. Hana recalled, “We did workshops on computer programs and we started having online every day and [school name redacted] gave us the computers, laptops, and they gave us like wireless [router].” Teacher trainings will be discussed further in the following section.

Prior to the start of the 2020-21 school year, the port explosion added increased uncertainty to the coming school year. Participants spoke powerfully of their experiences during the blast, including Hana, a private-school teacher in Beirut:

This period of time was not very, very easy for everyone. Even for us, as a teacher. Me, for example, my house is in front of the port. So, I lost my house and I moved to another city [...] I’m back now. We repaired everything. It took us around the last six months to repair the house and now I’m back.

Educators relied heavily on emotional support from their families and coworkers. Some participants found solace in ritual practices, such as mindfulness meditation or religion. Furthermore, many teachers appeared surprised when asked about their personal sources of support, signifying that it may be an uncommon topic of discussion. Diana, a public-school teacher, summarized the importance of personal support:

The administration, the teachers, everyone in this sector has his own psychological support. He has the ability to find this support so that he can continue to do his job.

During this very bad economic time, how are you going to find enough to keep moving forward? This situation has been going on for a year and a half, almost two years when we come back this fall. If they were coming back to a good livelihood and a good economy, then we might be able to give support to the students. But if a teacher doesn’t

have personal comfort, no matter how hard he tries, he will not be able to give mental comfort to the students.

For Diana, personal solace was prerequisite to educators' ability to support students. Noor supported this notion:

I am already a very peaceful person, so it's already within me. I can like take on a lot. But sadly, not all teachers can do that. It's going to be a lot for them. It's going to be like faking it. And if you fake with the children, better not to do it. It's a skill that you should have it within, like built within you or you just don't do it. So, it's not easy. It's not easy to deal with emotions.

Most participants identified their families as major sources of support:

I receive emotional support particularly from my mother. My father has passed away, so she is my source of complete emotional support. We are all in need of support, behind us. It is the source of emotional support and strength to keep going. We are supported and thus support others, as they say. (Rabab)

Lina felt that strong familial ties counterbalance social instability:

The security we get is from our smaller environment: from our families, from our homes, you know? We are a solid system within the home. Much more than it's a solid system within the law and the general governance of the country. (Lina)

Other teachers described their relationships with their colleagues and students as mutually supportive:

Like anyone, I get support from my family, especially from my mother. And from my sisters, and of course from my husband and daughter. And from the joy of work, I

frequently get support from our students. I love them and I need them, too. And from my friends in the school, from the administration, the inclusion team, we all support each other. (Natalia)

Alaa incorporated spiritual practices into her response:

I depend on prayer. Every day, I am praying. Prayer gives me the strength to do my job. I take care of my elderly father and mother. [My students] give me support. They talk to me like I am their friend. They are my support. They are my future. Without them, I would not make it. They give me the push forward every year, onward, onward. I'll tell you something. Today, for instance, the second class came before the afternoon to tell me "*Merci*." Every one of them brought me a red rose. They said, "You were my aunt during the time of COVID-19, and from what you gave us, we benefitted. Thank you, Madame, for giving us this." This really got to me today. I really didn't do anything; I was just doing my duty. They said, "No, Madame. You did more than your duty." This is the best support, I feel.

Noor, a teacher with more than 25 years of teaching experience combatted uncertainty with personal practices:

Back when I was in the lockdown, I reached a phase when I was so very down I couldn't even perceive my future. And that gave me a lot of agitation. I was like no, I need to control that. So, the only thing that really made me kind of calm down is connecting to nature. Nature is our mother, it's like the only thing that we all share together.

She found that yoga and time outdoors brought her emotional stability throughout the crises.

Conversely, Mirna felt like she did not have adequate support in her life:

I don't practice many things like mindfulness or anything. Mostly, I'm frustrated, honestly. Even during the crisis and COVID, I was working with students and not going home until late at night. But the biggest thing for me is dancing. This eases my mind some. When I'm angry, I don't go to see my family, because I can't stress them like that.

Teachers held optimistic visions of education in tension with their nervousness over the future of Lebanon. They found sources hope and resilience embedded in Lebanese culture and lore. Alaa stated:

Yes, we fell down, but we need to get up on our legs and keep moving forward [...] In class, we are learning, but in life we are also learning how to move forward [...] This is perhaps our duty, as teachers, to raise the next generation.

Rabab echoed Alaa's generational perspective on the challenges of the past two years, stating that teachers in Lebanon "transitioned to online learning in order to prevent the students from missing the school year. Because, in the end, they are the future of the country." She later continued:

I know that if a family didn't care for their children, they would not put them in school. We see many children on the street, working in shops. This is very saddening, but we know that the families of our students are putting them in school, are sending them to school. So, this is a very positive thing.

Hope and optimism often arose from a cyclical view of national history. Lebanon has been afflicted by destabilizing events nearly every 15-20 years, a regularity that is sometimes joked about by Lebanese old enough to remember the previous event: the 1948 Palestinian Nakba, the 1967 Six-Day War, the 1975-92 Civil War, the 2006 July War, and now, the 2019

thawra. Teachers have the confidence to assure their students of better futures because they have lived through the 2006 July War, and some through the Civil War.

Communal resilience is embedded in Lebanese self-identity. Hana evoked the image of the phoenix, a popular symbol of revitalization: “Lebanese, you know, they raise from the ash, like we say that they want fight and fight and they want to prove that everything is going to be fine with time.” When asked from where children learn resilience, she said:

Because it’s the parents are the models, you see? They see their parents—the house was destroyed; the parents build it again. Resilience, they saw it everywhere in the spirit, you see? The day after the explosion, all the young came because my house is there. They came, they started cleaning, and, you see, they started cleaning up. And they start rebuilding again and again. So, you see, I remember, also, my parents during war, they passed through the same experience. Maybe I learned this from my parents. And you see now, if you come to Lebanon now, you can see that it’s like a contrast. You can see people going back again to life, nightlife, going back again in this dramatic situation, trying to adapt in one way or another.

Lina, the most senior teacher in the sample, spoke more extensively about the culture of resilience and transgenerational resilience:

We’re very resilient people. Not because we are very resilient people, it’s because of the situation we live in. And we feel like we are strong because you don’t rely on anybody [...] So, it makes us a little bit more resilient, not to expect anything from outside, but it makes you like, “OK, So what?” This is something we were usually used to. It’s not like we’ve been living in paradise and, “Oh, look what happened.” No, we’ve always lived

like this. I lived through the whole Lebanese [Civil] War, and I used to have to pass through explosions and bombs, and we used to be at the beach and then the bombs would just fall down next to us in the water. Then we'd run and hide, and then after half an hour would go back to the beach and put our towels and sunbathe again. I mean, you get used to these things and it's part of, "So what? What can we do? We have to live with it." And we live with it, you know?

Notably, Lina spoke of resilience as a learned trait, suggesting that children experiencing the current crises will develop similar resilience.

In the interview with Christy, the former private-school psychologist, I asked about the identity of community resilience. She said:

I think now my view of things has changed a little bit since I moved [abroad]. I mean, Lebanese are definitely, all of us, we are very resilient people. [...] And this is also something that is built in all families across Lebanon [...] It's true that we are raising kids to think, "You know what? Yes, you've been through a lot through this year. Imagine that! You've been through COVID—you're only six years old. You've been through COVID. You've been through the explosion. You've been through so many things, and how strong it made you."

Changing tones, she continued:

If I had kids, and if I was allowed to say also this to kids, I would tell them that sometimes, you need to realize when you are in a toxic environment, and you need to leave when it becomes very overwhelming. Just like when you're in a toxic relationship; OK, you love that person. He's amazing—Lebanon is amazing. The people are amazing,

everything is amazing, but you are in a very toxic relationship with the government that is very corrupted. And it's OK sometimes to leave the country for your own good [...] This is actually what I'm doing at the moment. But yeah, I do believe that as Lebanese, kids and adults are very resilient, and it's something that we teach culturally.

Returning to the topic of a cyclical national history, she said the following:

I mean, we've been through a lot, and Lebanon was never stable. There were always ups and downs. If you go back to the history, through the very very beginning of history, the geographical location of Lebanon and the surrounding countries and the political dynamics across the region makes it a country that goes ups and downs depending on the political vibe going on around, all around. So yeah, the war, the political unrest, everything we've been through of course made us stronger across the years and through generations. But it also transmitted a transgenerational trauma. And this is why, again, I'm leaving the country, for example on a personal level; it's also to stop this transgenerational trauma. I don't want my kids to live in a country that is corrupted and for them to experience the cuts of electricity and cuts of everything. And being deprived of their basic needs. No kid should live this. And so yeah, with resilience comes this transgenerational trauma that is passed from one generation to another.

Christy's experience reveals that communal resilience and transgenerational trauma are two sides of the same coin. Hana and Lina presented typical, powerful accounts of resilience in Lebanese culture, whereas Christy posited a link between resilience and transgenerational trauma. The ability to "stop this transgenerational trauma" is largely contingent on the financial

resources to emigrate, perhaps explaining why Christy's perspective was unique among participants.

Findings reveal that educators draw support from families and colleagues, as well as ritual practices. Furthermore, themes of hope and optimism are evidence of a strong culture of communal resilience, while resilience is also connected to transgenerational trauma.

Classroom Support Strategies

Educators demonstrated a wide variety of approaches to supporting students throughout the past two years. Some teachers were well-versed in psychosocial support techniques and literature, and indicated that they applied learned techniques in their classrooms. However, formal trainings fell short of equipping educators with the strategies necessary for managing collective trauma. In response, participants developed their own frameworks for psychosocial support in the classroom. Some teachers perceived their job as a mandate to protect students from stressful or traumatic topics, while others assumed a more active, critical role by engaging students in sensitive topics. Findings reveal that psychosocial support strategies are often derived from locally embedded knowledge, including shared experiences and communal resilience.

All participants received technology trainings, but only about half indicated that they received professional training concerning stress or trauma in response to crises. Private schools frequently employed a school psychologist or counsellor that supported students with unmet mental health needs. Teachers generally indicated that they would welcome professional development in psychosocial protection strategies.

In the aftermath of the port explosion, educators at both public and private schools received trainings pertaining to trauma, often facilitated by external organizations. For instance, TFL offered year-long support to its fellows, including trainings after the port explosion:

They invited all teachers that teach in schools with TFL teachers to participate, and gave them training in psychosocial support. They gave a certificate to motivate teachers to participate. They taught us how to deal with the students, how to cope with the stress.
(Hussein)

Hana enrolled in an online training five years prior through a non-Lebanese institution:

I remember when I worked on the emotional intelligence it was through Yale University. They have a department for emotional intelligence and it's very, very—I gained a lot of experience; reading, reading, reading. They have many strategies that I apply in the classroom, helping students to manage and to control their emotions [...] It's very interesting, and it helped me as a person and it helped my students too.

Hana found the strategies gleaned from the course taught by Yale University beneficial to her classroom and teaching practice. Another teacher, Rawan, was pursuing her Master's degree, investigating Neuro-Linguistic Programming (see Bandler & Grinder, 1979) and its implications for trauma-affected children:

You would choose the good thoughts. Those good thoughts will give us the happy feelings, and happy feelings will give us good behavior, and the cycle will go on [...]
[My] study says, if those thoughts are given to kids, will this change their feeling despite all the circumstances and all the environment that they are living in to end up with good behavior? Does this have a good result with traumatized kids or not?

Rawan was also one of four participants who previously taught at Alif School. Rawan, Noor, Khaled, and Jamila all indicated that their previous experiences with trauma-affected children informed their practices in other settings, and that trainings conducted by the school were beneficial. Noor said:

I assume [all teachers] should be doing [training]. It's like, even we did lots of training at Alif School back then that really were effective. So, I think they should be working more on the well-being of the children after this phase we're living—chaotic phase.

Participants who had the support of school counsellors and psychologists expressed appreciation for their roles in the aftermath of the port explosion. Christy, a former school psychologist, spoke about her role after the explosion of the port:

I just prepared like a presentation to walk [teachers] through. “What is trauma? What symptoms they could be experiencing. What to expect, and how to deal with the kids, and what to tell them if the subject is ever brought up in in class.” So, try to give them the support and the means, and give them, if you want, a sense of control. Especially when it happened and they were really worried and not knowing how to deal with everything they are going through, and dealing also with the kids and their families [...] It was normalizing emotions and then building resilience and then building a sense is also of togetherness between, and a rapport and bond between the teacher and the kids.

Beyond supporting the students, Christy emphasized the importance of psychosocial support for teachers, as well:

I don't think they ever received training talking about trauma like this, like what is trauma clinically? [...] It is normalizing the symptoms that they had, especially after the

explosion. When you're very sensitive to loud sounds. When you wouldn't want to sit next to a window, where you always want to open the windows in your car, because making sure that the air pressure is not—when you don't want to close your windows because if anything happens, your windows will blow up. So, everyone had these symptoms and we talked about it during the workshop. And teachers were expressing all of the distress that they were experiencing, so it was their first time talking about it. And I remember very well that they loved the session, and probably that's the support because they knew that they were not alone, and as a community. So, we wanted to build a sense of community when we did this workshop, for them not to feel alone and for all the teachers to know that they are all experiencing the same, and we are all in this together. In addition to normalizing reactions and emotions to PTEs, Christy's training opened a space for teachers to build trust with students and families. Michael, who received this training, spoke highly of it:

We had one-on-one meetings with every child and family to check in about how they were doing. And in these one-on-one meetings, the school counselors, who are amazing, prepared a list of guiding questions that were really, really helpful. [...] And some of the questions were directed at the student, and some—for each kid, we would ask the kid to leave the room a bit—we talked to the parent one on one about how the kid was doing, too, just to check in with the explosion. And during this week I learned like a lot of my students lost their houses; maybe half lost their houses, or more.

Michael was instructed to direct the names of his students who were most affected by the blast to Christy, who provided targeted interventions.

Public schools, however, did not employ school counsellors or psychologists in most cases. Mirna commented, “We [teachers] are all their counsellors, honestly.” Hussein felt that he was incapable of filling this role himself:

They still need a lot of support, honestly. The parents don’t... I don’t have [enough support] in my grade, honestly. 500 students I teach, and I want to sit and talk with each one of them, but they definitely need [emotional support].

On average, participants spoke highly of the trainings offered by their administrations or outside groups. However, Michael, a teacher from the U.S., felt that Lebanese teachers were not as receptive to training as they may say. About one training at his school, he recalled the following:

These Lebanese teachers were like pushing back and fighting back and saying like they could not handle being told “what to do” [air quotes], even if, in my opinion, it was good advice. And it was Lebanese person training us—it wasn’t like some American coming from America and telling us what to do, but my colleagues cannot handle changing anything and they—sometimes they—I love them to death—but they think they know everything. So, I don’t know if [more training] would be well received, but I think it’s much needed, honestly.

Beyond formal trainings, educators developed their own frameworks for working with stress and trauma-affected students. These frameworks arose from personal experiences, recognition of student experiences, and implicit understandings of what trauma is and how it ought to be treated. Participants aimed to both protect and engage their students using different

classroom management strategies, rooted in locally embedded knowledge of shared experiences and communal resilience.

Participants protected their students from stress and anxiety using a variety of protection strategies, which I identified as the instances in which teachers sought to relieve stress on students by creating a safe environment for them. This entailed reducing academic workload during stressful times, avoiding sensitive topics, and establishing routine.

Even before the pandemic, academic expectations weighed heavily on Lebanese students. Michael is a teacher from the U.S. who has taught at a private school in Lebanon for four years. He spoke about the cultural expectations for Lebanese students, in comparison to his experiences teaching in the U.S. Because students had not returned to class at the time of the interview, Michael could only hypothesize that students would experience “the same anxiety, but just even more, and you would need to be even more calm, more reassuring, you know, more positive to combat that.”

Reducing academic workload for students was a common protection practice among participants. Riwa contributed the following:

We play games all the time. And I really, you know what I think? I think that this book doesn't matter, you know, as long as—and even if they made some noise during the class, and I couldn't hear anything, I just smile, you know. Because I take it easy and everything will be alright. So, I feel very happy when they laugh and when they share some things with me. Because the times we were going through are already very hard, so why make it harder?

Mirna felt that content delivery was less urgent than in other years:

I change the expectations based on what they can do. If they can take one or two pieces of information away from an hour, that is better than if you give them all the information and they don't remember anything in the end.

Zahra, a headmaster, echoed Mirna's sentiment; she took on students with "special cases" throughout the year, reducing expectations according to their challenges. This practice stemmed from an acknowledgement of the negative effects of academic pressure on their mental health, signaling to students that national circumstances superseded academic expectations.

Another protection strategy teachers practiced was avoiding sensitive topics. Lebanon's political and sectarian atmosphere is heterogenous, and teachers expressed hesitation to prompt discussions that could lead to disagreements. While Hussein wanted to engage with current events in his class, he said:

The biggest thing was to focus on empathy [...] I think it's important to talk about these issues, but at the same time, if one of the students goes home and tells his parents, it can be a problem for the school.

Rabab attempted to redirect energy toward academic goals:

We know that these topics cannot be breached because there are differences in opinion. We focus more on the program that we want to deliver. So, the focus was on the students completing the program that is required for them, giving them all the information that they will need, and also, nearly all of us were living in the same reality. As best we can, we are trying to focus on the positives in order to give them distance from these negative facets of their lives.

Sometimes, schools had policies preventing discussion of issues relating to politics. Michael shared his comparative perspective:

It's something I did a lot in the U.S., even with grade one students: every day we would talk about social justice issues. But in Lebanon, at least in my school, it's totally different. Like it's actually forbidden to talk about political things at school because we have so many different interests represented in any given class. Literally no one talks about it. Among teachers too, we just don't address it.

Politics are engrained in every current event in some way, making it nearly impossible for teachers to invite open discussion about matters affecting their students' lives. The cultural and institutional aversion to political discussion allows educators feel more control over their classroom environment.

In some cases, teachers rationalized avoidance by holding students as less capable of navigating the complex realities they inhabit. Rawan, a grade two and three teacher, opined, "It's not an open space to discuss the issue about the revolution in details. In addition, I teach small, young kids, you know? They don't know as much as the older kids about what the revolution is." To the contrary, other teachers credited their students with high levels of awareness and critical thinking. Alaa, a grade seven and eight teacher at a public school in Beirut, recalled:

The library was closed most of the year because of COVID and the explosion—the library windows were all shattered. They asked me, "When can we go visit the library?" But I didn't want to take them to see the library in this state. I hid this all from them, but they still knew. They laughed because I was hiding it from them.

As discussed in the Students' Stress and Trauma section, students often demonstrated high levels of critical thinking and public awareness, which supported teachers' efforts to embed empowering messages in their lessons.

The final technique teachers used to create a safe space in their classroom was establishing routine. Some teachers used their personality to anchor their class. Alaa's class shared:

They told me that, "We have never seen you not laughing." This is something I stress more when they are studying with me. People don't really like French; they don't put in that much effort. But in my head, I think my only duty is to laugh in front of them.

Teachers expressed pride in being able to express joy in front of their students, even during personal hardship—Alaa described it as her "duty." Other teachers felt that it was not so simple:

Some people are able to completely separate their feelings and their daily lives from their work. Some people can't separate like that. This goes back to the person, themselves. So fundamentally, I try as much as I can to avoid expressing my negative feelings that I have. But the general atmosphere, the students' atmosphere, the conversation among them, negative points in class were being forced. (Sara)

In other words, some teachers do not have the psychological resources to separate their stress from their work. And despite teachers' efforts to maintain a positive disposition, students direct the class toward the issues that affect them.

Participants concurred that routines contributed to a sense of stability and rhythm for students, particularly during the disruptive periods of distance learning:

Routine gives them some peace, some peace and some order in their life. [...] We try hard to keep them in routine, so they get back to order [...] I always smile at their faces, and I always start my lessons with some kind of a joke or song. And I sometimes let them host the meeting, you know, I let them share some research I asked them to do, we celebrate their birthdays, I ask them about the movies they watched, about some new books they read. (Riwa)

Routines were important for building trust as well as stability, reported many participants.

Just as strong relationships can build trust and reduce stress and anxiety, breaking routines can counteract these benefits, according to Khaled:

If you are doing healing and it is cut off, usually the children—this trauma is undone, which is very bad. It is bad. If you cut your arm and there was a big, open cut, and I put medicine on it for the first day then I left, the cut will not go away, it will open more, possibly. But if I am treating it every day, it will go away.

Relationships between educators and students were weakened by the past year of distance learning, although many teachers found new ways to connect with their students virtually.

These excerpts exemplify the ways in which teachers and administrators seek to reduce students' stress and anxiety by curating a protected environment for their students. Teachers reduce expectations, avoid sensitive topics, and establish routine in order to make the environment safe and stable.

These practices were held in tension with educators' desire to engage students' prior knowledge and critical faculties. Engagement strategies refer to the ways in which teachers actively facilitated students' critical thinking, reflection, and engagement with sensitive topics

ranging from national crises to family hardships. The two most common engagement strategies were employing creative modes of expression and discussing sensitive topics in a simplified or mediated way. Engagement and protection strategies were not mutually exclusive; many of the teachers who discussed the need for protection shared alternative ways in which they engaged with their students.

Few teachers advocated open engagement with complicated issues, such as the *thawra* or the explosion. Only two private schools explicitly sanctioned discussion or activities regarding sensitive topics. Noor recounted:

We just let them express and talk it out to express their feelings. And we actually did kind of the kind of demonstration [after the explosion], like peaceful demonstration at school just for us to share and have them live that in a positive way [...] You should listen to the child, you should open up to him. Maybe he doesn't know what to say. You should always listen.

Listening was a means of engaging with students' past experiences and validating their emotions while remaining within the cultural and institutional norms of neutrality:

And how can we provide the safe environment? By being a good listener. As a good listener, you are not there to judge the kid about anything. You're just listening to him and trying to understand him from his point of view. Because kids are not white papers. Kids, they have much and it passed through much. There is a phrase I like that they say at [school name redacted]: you bake the cake, and at school we cut it. So, at school you discover what's there in the kids' minds. (Rawan)

Rawan felt that even grade two and three students have full awareness of their environment, and thus deserve a space to express their experiences and emotions. Michael, however, observed that his students had internalized the cultural norm of avoiding political topics at grade two:

Even after the *thawra*, [...] the admin told us, “You can bring it up in the morning and ask them if anyone wants to share anything.” [...] You know, during these weeks, and at least half of my students said they didn’t want to say anything. Like they opted out of answering. Even at that young age they knew they shouldn’t. Of course, a couple students said things, but others knew they weren’t supposed to talk about it.

Michael’s experience demonstrates the limitations of engagement strategies in a culture where political topics are taboo. Nonetheless, participants expressed a desire to instill a sense of empowerment in their students. Mirna felt that responding to students’ concerns was pertinent to their immediate future:

If someone asks you, of course you answer them with something appropriate. You won’t answer them, “No, you can’t talk about those things.” For example, they might be talking about the *thawra*, this and that—points one, two, three. But tomorrow you will grow up and get a job. So, you are studying, and I will teach you something that will benefit you in your life.

Zahra, a public-school headmaster, endeavors to teach students that “change is good,” but to avoid indoctrination by teaching this indirectly. One method of mediating sensitive issues was demonstrated by Khaled at an informal school:

I could not talk to them about the [*thawra*] directly, but I was doing it through stories about a country or a village: the whole world lived in a village, and how problems arose,

and how we can live together, and how one can simply come to power if he has money, or power as politicians. How, then, should it be? What should we do? Then, as a group, as a whole group, as one team, we can change a lot of things [...] So I'm also trying, step by step, to let them change, to let them see the bright thing, to not become like their parents, or like the older generations, to be better and better. But slowly. Maybe the kids, through stories and the big ones through role play.

This practice was guided by an acknowledgement of boundaries for younger children, as well as an intent to disrupt transgenerational trauma. Khaled continued:

They need to know what happened. But of course, their brains aren't able to absorb everything. Not everything. I cannot say about politicians or money things. No, but I can do small things just to let them know.

Likewise, Hussein advocated mediated engagement with the topic of the *thawra*, stating, "You try to prepare them to deal with these issues. They need to understand that we have to make a change, but I cannot explain it in a direct way. You have to do it in an indirect way." He used role-play and drawing with his grade seven and eight students to navigate restrictive school policies.

Creative modes of engaging with sensitive topics were a popular practice for teachers wishing to engage with sensitive topics within cultural and institutional norms of avoidance:

They draw and it has a very big effect on them, according to the realities they have lived and the war they have seen. If a person doesn't have language to express what is in his head, he can certainly draw it. If you bring a small child a pen and paper, and he has lived a life of suffering, he will draw himself and his family, but he will draw himself as

neutral from his family, if he feels that way. If he has problems with his family, if they don't care for him. So drawing is very important for children, especially for young children, it has a large effect on them. (Mirna)

Drawing prompts students to reflect on their experiences and desires in socially acceptable ways.

Similarly, writing opens a space for students to express themselves:

If I told them, for instance, that we were going to write a novel or a story, the story will involve something about an accident, about the explosion. I read the stories without comment on them, because if I were to comment on them, someone might start crying in class, or another student might start talking about it. I let them express in written form, and I see that they are able to express what is in their hearts with paper and pencil. I think this is better than leaving it trapped in their hearts. (Alaa)

Participants often approached sensitive topics using simplified language and optimistic themes:

We can't avoid talking about it because we all live together. We talked about it, but in a simplified way. We simplified the issues as much as we could. We used some books by people who had written about explosions, but only what was appropriate for their age. So, we simplified things for them. (Natalia)

For Sara, addressing sensitive topics was in service of academic goals:

In order to deal with the stress, we tried, as much as we could, to be a door to hope for the students. We told them, "Our lives are like heartbreak. It's not always positive, it's not always negative. So, days are like this and that. These times that we're suffering in are temporary. Someday, these crises will end and wealth will return, happiness will return to

our lives.” All of us, here in our own place, we try to soothe the students’ wounds and give them reward for their work so that they can complete their studies.

Educators like Sara tempered their optimistic narratives with realism—recognition of good and bad. These conversations often highlighted the temporality of the nation’s current hardships, and assured that better times lay ahead. Natalia helped students process recent events by emphasizing that, “something really happened, but it’s over and it won’t happen again.”

Since students returned to class in May, teachers have remained alert to students’ reactions to sensitive topics. Lina, a grade two teacher in Beirut, said:

I always keep an eye on their emotions in class, or how sensitive they are, or how traumatized they might be with certain topics, for example with loss of people, with, you know? When there’s a topic that comes up, I tend to call on them, check on [...] where their thinking is and what they’re feeling about that.

Protection and engagement strategies were deployed hand-in-hand to create a classroom environment in which students were able to learn in a stable environment and while processing the events affecting their lives alongside their teacher and peers. In most cases, teachers acted as mediators, directing topics of conversation, simplifying complex issues, or employing creative media. The cultural norm of avoiding sensitive topics pervaded the classroom, and was even internalized by students. These practices shed light on the underlying tensions teachers negotiate in their work, and will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

This chapter documented participants’ experiences between October 2019 and June 2021, the stress and trauma negotiated by students and educators during this period, and the classroom support strategies adopted by educators. Findings substantiate the notion that trauma is a

collective phenomenon, and that educators managed uncertainty within their own framework, which prioritized locally embedded knowledge. Although formal trainings and psychological support staff were deemed helpful by participants who received them, resources such as trainings and school psychologists and counsellors were inequitably distributed among public and private schools. Nevertheless, every participant supported their students in personalized and contextual ways, irrespective of their relative circumstances.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

Central to decolonial research methodology is the recognition and validation of local knowledge (Edwards & Brannelly, 2017; Linklater, 2014; Smith, 2012). Consistent with this approach, the final chapter will summarize the major themes discussed by participants in relation to literature, identifying incongruencies and tensions with TIE and building upon critical discourse. A brief conclusion will suggest directions for future research and general recommendations for improving theory and practice in crisis-affected contexts.

Findings from 17 interviews with Lebanese educators reveal that the intersection of trauma and education is complex, contextual, and collective. Personal hardship and PTEs were widely acknowledged, but implications for students' mental health were infrequently mentioned, and Western imperatives of therapeutic treatment were absent from teacher narratives. Furthermore, traces of Western trauma theory appeared in some conversations, but themes of communal resilience were most prevalent, consistent with findings from neighboring Palestine (Afana et al., 2020; Giacaman et al., 2011; Mahamid, 2020). Therefore, findings reject the Western model of individual, event-based trauma (Milich & Moghnieh, 2018; Thompson, 2021).

In 12 of 17 interviews, participants raised the topic of personal trauma or hardship, problematizing the expectation for teachers to act as therapists to their students, per the TIE model (Brunzell et al., 2016). Educators' capacity to therapize is compromised by their own trauma and circumstances: "I am not able to do it right now. I can't really help them," said Hussein about one particularly affected student in his class. Zahra, a public-school headmaster, emphasized that "students have a right to learn," which takes precedence over psychosocial support because "we do not have the luxury of time."

Themes of adaptation and persistence took precedence over healing and therapy, a consequence an atmosphere of continuous stress and trauma. This reality posed a unique challenge for educators, who were unable to trace their students' needs to a one-time, "event-based" trauma (Visser, 2015). Educators listed a variety of potential effects on students' mental well-being, including family financial situation, PTSD symptoms from the port explosion, awareness of political tensions, and more. In response, teachers employed a range of protection and engagement strategies which recognized the political, transgenerational, and communal dimensions of trauma.

Engagement strategies often sought to fortify a sense of empowerment and collective agency in students. Many participants recognized increased awareness of public issues and participation in the public sphere in their students. Similar to the radical pedagogies of Ivan Illich and Paulo Freire in Latin America (Donoso Romo, 2021), Lebanese educators embraced the political and collective dimensions of education, focusing on preparing students for a tumultuous, changing future.

Educators negotiated the complex needs of students in their classrooms based on personal and collective knowledge. Many participants indicated that a personal connection with their students and students' families was integral to their practice. Contextual knowledge about shared experiences and communal resilience mechanisms informed teachers' practices. Consistent with the findings of Greaves et al. (2019), teacher practices primarily arose from shared experiences rather than from formal training in TIE or psychosocial support strategies.

These findings challenge the three fundamental tenets of TIE, which are, in brief:

1. Homes are unstable environments,

2. Classrooms are stable environments, and
3. ACEs are more common than presumed.

To the first point, participants reported that homes were often the most stable environment for children in Lebanon. Throughout national lockdowns and the aftermath of the port explosion, participants recalled the centrality of familial support for students. This is consistent with anthropological studies which have revealed that the strength of familial ties in Lebanon exceed Western norms, partially in response to chronic instability (Kazarian, 2005; Khalaf, 1971). One participant identified the home as a source of PTEs for Syrian students, though this was not the norm for the vast majority of participants.

To the second point, findings confirm that classroom stability is contingent on the stability of the greater school ecosystem. Educator well-being, school infrastructure, and material resources have the potential to ensure or disrupt continuity that may be taken for granted in Western contexts. Many participants described uncertainty surrounding education, including headmaster Hadi, who went so far as to say, “There might not be a [next] school year.” Educators at public schools were less likely to have support from a school psychologist or counsellor, and often felt overwhelmed by their own circumstances.

Lastly, ACEs (or PTEs) are widely acknowledged for children, but rarely for educators. There is a recognized need for psychosocial support for students, but a lack of support for educators. Despite the recognized need for psychological support for fieldworkers in Lebanon (Chemali et al., 2018), educators have not received equivalent attention from policy or scholarly circles. Findings demonstrate that educators generate their own framework for providing support to their students, including protection and engagement strategies informed by shared experiences

and communal resilience.

As residents of Lebanon continue to navigate overlapping political, economic, public health, and security crises, the role of educators in managing childhood trauma must not be neglected. This study documented and explored educators' conceptualizations of trauma and teaching practices. Findings revealed that Western models of trauma and treatment, namely TIE, are inappropriate for the Lebanese context. Educators lack psychological support, and thus struggle to meet their students' psychosocial needs. Collective dimensions of trauma, such as political, transgenerational, and communal dimensions, are essential parts of educators' approaches to managing trauma in the classroom. Mental healthcare infrastructure and humanitarian psychological aid interventions must be updated to validate and utilize well-documented and effective pathways to community resilience and positive mental health outcomes, including educators in discourses of mental healthcare.

This study demonstrated the utility of a decolonial approach to trauma in educational spaces. The Lebanese case has demonstrated the incongruencies of TIE and lived experiences in situations of prolonged political and economic uncertainty. Further research is needed in the field of CIE to situate trauma in academic discourse, both empirically and methodologically. Other case studies of education during prolonged periods of disruption are essential to expanding decolonial research methodology and to refining models of TIE to accommodate non-Western experiences.

Appendix A: Post-Traumatic Growth Theory

A divergent discourse has arisen within academic studies of trauma. Post-Traumatic Growth theory (PTG) accounts for the mental mechanisms that individuals naturally deploy in response to stress or trauma, and critiques the tendency of clinical psychology to pathologize trauma in every instance. Adjacent to the field of Resilience Theory (Ledesma, 2014) and under the umbrella of Positive Psychology (Gable et al., 2005), PTG posits that individuals exhibit high rates of positive outcomes after adverse experiences (Westphal & Bonanno, 2007).

The assumption that accurate perceptions of the self were essential to one's mental health was first challenged by Shelly Taylor (1983) and Jonathon Brown (S. E. Taylor & Brown, 1988, 1994). Positively biased self-perceptions, they argued, promote psychosocial well-being. Particularly in situations of extreme hardship or challenge, positive illusions allow individuals to function at a higher level of mental health than their circumstances would warrant (Vedantam & Mesler, 2021).

George Bonanno is widely considered the architect of PTG theory in its contemporary form, building upon Taylor and Brown's pioneering studies of positive self-bias. Bonanno's (2004) foundational essay, "Loss, Trauma, and Human Resilience: Have We Underestimated the Human Capacity to Thrive After Extremely Aversive Events?", challenged the assumption that clinical treatment is necessary and appropriate for all trauma-affected individuals. Bonanno writes, "Trauma theorists and practitioners have at times assumed that virtually all individuals exposed to violent or life-threatening events could benefit from active coping and professional intervention" (p. 21).

Overreliance on clinical models of trauma and recovery paints personal responses to extraordinary events in a single stroke, obscuring the complexity and contextuality of trauma. Evidence shows that blanket applications of psychological debriefing (a technique for treating potentially traumatized persons immediately after a critical incident; see Mitchell, 1983) are ineffective (Rose et al., 1999) and can hinder organic recovery processes (Bisson et al., 1997; Mayou et al., 2000), or even cause further harm (see G. A. Bonanno & Kaltman, 1999). Particularly in contexts where therapeutic interventions may be inappropriate or infeasible, a deeper understanding human resilience forces a reevaluation of Western clinical psychology by validating natural responses to adverse events (Bonanno, 2004).

There are four pathways to resilience within PTG, as defined by Bonanno (2004, pp. 25–26):

- Hardiness: purpose in life, belief in agency, belief in personal growth
- Self-enhancement: overly positive biases in favor of the self can be adaptive and promote well-being
- Repressive coping: avoiding distressful thoughts and situations
- Positive emotion and laughter: seeking positive emotions in the face of grief or trauma

In contrast with TIE literature, PTG captures the complexity of trauma, and therefore validates natural responses to extraordinary events. These four pathways to resilience will be revisited in Chapter 5.

Some PTG theorists claim action is necessary for individuals to re-assert control over their circumstances, and thus realize the resilience associated with PTG. Hobfoll et al. (2007) note, “As clinicians often leave therapy off at the cognitive level, and seldom promote social

action in therapy, they may inadvertently fail to promote the kind of PTG that is most beneficial: taking action” (p. 370). However, action requires psychosocial and economic resources, which would preclude individuals who are resource-poor, so to speak, from achieving positive psychological outcomes.

Bonanno & Westphal (2007) respond, “in many situations meaningful action may not be feasible or warranted,” and “cognitive coping strategies such as benefit-finding, radical acceptance, or self-enhancing appraisal of events may provide a respite from negative emotions and protect from destabilising feelings of demoralisation and frustration that can result from forced inaction” (p. 424). Evidence from survivors of the September 11th terrorist attack (Bonanno et al., 2005), the Civil War in Bosnia (Bonanno et al., 2002), and other instances of bereavement and loss (Bonanno, 2005; McFarland & Alvaro, 2000; S. E. Taylor, 1983) indicates that cognitive coping mechanisms significantly improve the behavioral elasticity, or adaptive flexibility (Bonanno, 2005), of trauma-affected individuals. This is a useful revision of previous literature about PTG because it widens the theory to accommodate individuals who perceive structural barriers to action-oriented resilience.

In Palestine, the Israeli apartheid state has restricted Palestinian freedoms since 1948 (Shakir, 2021). Simultaneously, Palestine has been one of the richest examples of community resilience and cognitive coping strategies (Afana et al., 2020; Elbedour et al., 2007; Mahamid, 2020; Milich & Moghnieh, 2018). In Palestine, residents’ perceived ability to act for meaningful change has been quashed by repeated instances of political inefficacy and constant economic and security concerns. Cases of sustained disenfranchisement reveal that individuals are indeed capable of achieving positive mental health outcomes through cognitive coping mechanisms.

Appendix B: Reflexivity and Ethics

The decision to research a sensitive topic at a sensitive time was not taken lightly. As Cohen et al. (2011) write, “The researcher has to consider whose interests are involved in, or at stake in, conducting the research.” My background working with severely trauma-affected children in Lebanon at Alif School and my personal network in Beirut precluded my research from being impersonal or dispassionate. My concern for the well-being of Lebanon influenced decisions to select a diverse sample of participants, allow for flexibility in the topics discussed during interviews, and to center participants’ lived experiences during data analysis. Therefore, this study inherits an interpretivist axiology.

Ethics extended beyond the formal CUREC 2 process. Mikey Muhanna, the founder of the *Afikra* network of Arab scholarship and art, offered many critiques of my project over a video call in February 2021. The most powerful was his challenge to historically situate my study, and therefore to avoid exoticizing or patronizing Lebanon (per Said, 1978). He pointed out that Lebanon is often exploited by researchers because it is one of the most accessible countries in the region, and that Lebanon is neither the first nor the last country to experience periods of prolonged disruption.

Mikey’s comments caused me to pause and reevaluate my research, even though I had the approval of Oxford’s IDREC to begin interviews. I reformulated the research aims to focus on the transferrable aspects of Lebanon’s situation, and updated the interview schedule accordingly. This process was immensely valuable to the research because I was more cognizant of the tensions between research participants and researcher during my interviews, and worked to combat the exploitative models of Western research that pervade Lebanon.

Sampling methods for this study morphed over time. Eager to utilize my extant network in Lebanon, I designed the study in a way that relied exclusively on snowball sampling for participant recruitment (Goodman, 1961). I proposed in my application for ethical approval through the University of Oxford, “15-30 secondary school teachers working in Beirut, Lebanon,” and, “no more than three teachers from the same school.”

Upon beginning my research, I quickly realized that my sampling method contradicted the strict inclusion and exclusion criteria I had set out for the study. The teachers I knew from my time living and working in Lebanon taught at the primary level. Convinced that my findings would be enriched by including a range of grade levels, I proceeded with the interviews. Snowball sampling, at its core, relies on social networks. The social networks of teachers have been cinched in, particularly through the past year of primarily remote work. Initial participants nominated between one and three of their close colleagues, most of whom taught the same grade level at the same school. By the fifth interview, I had only heard the perspectives of primary-level teachers in two private schools in Beirut, which weakened the study’s representativeness. My snowball was rolling in circles.

In order to preserve the study’s original objective of gathering data from multiple schools and grade levels, I abandoned snowball sampling. I reached out to contacts at TFL and the MEHE, who provided me with the contact information of teachers and headmasters of several public schools around the country.

The virtual mode of interviews posed its own set of ethical considerations. Originally, interviews were designed to last 60 minutes. However, emerging literature on concepts of screen fatigue prompted me to shorten the interviews to 30 minutes, and select only the most relevant

and fruitful questions. Feedback from two pilot interviews with former teachers (not Lebanese) guided the refinement of the interview schedule. Furthermore, the pilot interviews served as much-needed practice for virtual interviews; sufficient lighting, good audio quality, looking into the camera, and providing non-verbal feedback were all essential to portraying professionalism and respect throughout the actual interviews.

Every interview began with an oral consent process, during which I recited the details of the study, emphasizing the psychological risks to the participant and their rights as an interviewee. Multiple participants appeared bored or impatient during this two-minute period. One participant, after giving their oral consent to participate and to be recorded, commented that the informed consent process was quite unnecessary, saying:

In Lebanon, it's a different culture... People share things. It's not as strict as in the [United] States or in other places where, "oh my God, this is confidential," and all... You just disclose these things, and it's only natural for people to share information together.

(Lina)

The formal consent process may feel not only unnecessary, but also alienating or obstructive to participants from non-Western cultures (Hett & Hett, 2013).

The interview schedule (see Appendix H) provided a framework for each interview, beginning by asking the participant to briefly recount the past two years of teaching. Meanwhile, I noted which events garnered extra time or attention, and subsequently directed the interviews toward those topics. After discussing one or two instances of disruption or challenge, I pivoted to slightly more abstract questions about emotional support and cultural specificities surrounding trauma. To facilitate a friendly and conversational tone, I provided brief reflections on the

participants responses, often referencing my own experiences in Lebanon or as a teacher, before transitioning to the next question.

Technical difficulties affected five interviews. Interview 11 was conducted via WhatsApp voice call, during which I took notes in my field journal. Interview 12 was moved to Zoom. Interview 6 had very poor audio quality, so only some sections were able to be directly transcribed. Two interviews were abruptly ended by power cuts in Lebanon.

Interview transcripts were notated to capture important non-verbal events, such as laughter, verbal irony, difficulties in translation, and power outages. Thinking actively, analytically, and critically about the data was only possible with an amount of distance between myself and interviews. One particularly affecting moment was when Hadi, a public-school headmaster, insinuated that The University of Oxford has the capacity to provide humanitarian relief to Lebanon:

We present a call of distress, a call of humanity, to all the donor countries and large countries and all the universities that help those children that are in the schools [...]
I responded to your [interview request] and to UNICEF and UNDP, from all international organizations working with humanitarian issues and relief work, even the Red Cross, to help the students in the next school year because there might not be a school year. And the economic crisis is getting worse, quickly. The issues that I told you about earlier are leading to a situation that is not reassuring to humanitarian workers if the students do not have teachers.

The expectation that my affiliated university had humanitarian capacities on par with that of the U.N. and Red Cross confounded me, and felt debilitating. The ‘distance’ from this experience

came during the period of translation and transcription. During the familiarization phase, my duty as a researcher came into perspective: to clearly and directly convey my participants' calls of distress through this dissertation.

Thematic analysis, like hybrid sampling methods and thirty-minute interviews, was a product of the challenges posed by the digital mode. The study was originally designed to use grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and inductive, or open, coding, with the aim of generating theory that was disassociated from established, predominantly Western theories of trauma. Deductive, or closed, coding, at face value, seems antithetical to the decolonial agenda. However, as I reviewed extant literature about trauma, grounded theory became the less salient methodological choice.

Lebanon has a long history of foreign intervention in many forms. Traders, missionaries, colonial governments, artists, revolutionaries, and humanitarians have come and gone, and with them, ideas about human nature. The fundamental assumptions of TIE are all present in Lebanon; the interviews from this very study convey widespread awareness of psychosocial support strategies, factors of resilience, and the political nature of trauma, for instance. Ignoring the foundational literature of these fields, and instead examining trauma in Lebanon as an organic, localized phenomenon neglected the responsibility of decolonization to reconcile the colonial past with the post-colonial present.

Appendix C: CUREC IDREC Approval Letter**SOCIAL SCIENCES & HUMANITIES INTERDIVISIONAL RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE**

Research Services, University of Oxford, Wellington Square, Oxford OX1 2JD
Tel: +44(0)1865 616576 Fax: +44(0)1865 280467
ethics@socsci.ox.ac.uk



25 February 2021

Avery Gonzales
Department of Education

Dear Avery

Research Ethics Approval (CUREC 2)
Ref No: R74492/RE001

Title: Trauma-informed education in Beirut, Lebanon: A decolonial perspective

The above application has been considered on behalf of the Social Sciences and Humanities Interdivisional Research Ethics Committee (IDREC) in accordance with the procedures laid down by the University for ethical approval of all research involving human participants.

I am pleased to inform you that, on the basis of the information provided to the IDREC, the proposed research has been judged as meeting appropriate ethical standards, and accordingly approval has been granted.

Should there be any subsequent changes to the project that raise ethical issues not covered in the original application you should submit details to the IDREC for consideration:
<https://researchsupport.admin.ox.ac.uk/governance/ethics/apply/sshidrec#collapse394916>.

Please note that your study may be selected for review by the SSH IDREC during an annual audit. You may also be required to submit a brief annual progress report on each anniversary of study approval, until the study is completed.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J Blaikie'.

Jennifer Blaikie
Research Ethics Manager

cc: Liam Gearon
Jackie Bridges

Appendix D: Recruitment Email

Dear [name],

I hope this finds you well. My name is Avery Gonzales and I am a researcher with the University of Oxford's Department of Education. I received your contact information from [name], who nominated you to participate in a study of schoolteachers in Lebanon. Specifically, this study will explore how your personal and professional experiences over the past two years have influenced your understanding and management of trauma in the classroom (in-person and virtual).

I would be honored to conduct an interview with you over Microsoft Teams at a time that works for you. The interview would last around 30 minutes, and we would discuss some potentially sensitive or distressing topics, such as the impacts of COVID-19, political unrest, the economic crisis, and the explosion at the port on yourself and your students. With your permission, I would make an audio recording of the interview to ensure that I accurately represent your thoughts in writing.

If you are happy to participate, please schedule an interview here. If you have any questions regarding the study, please respond to this email and I will send you further information.

Wishing you good health,

Avery Gonzales

MSc Education (Comparative and International)

University of Oxford

avery.gonzales@ssho.ox.ac.uk

مرحباً،

أتمنى أن تكون بخير. أنا اسمي أيفري غزالس وأنا باحث في قسم التعليم في جامعة أكسفورد. حصلت على معلوماتك للتواصل معك من زميل لك بغاية المشاركة في هذا البحث الذي يخص المعلمين في المدارس في لبنان. هذا المشروع سوف يلقي الضوء على الأساليب التي يتابعها المعلمون من أجل التعامل مع أثر الصدمات مع الطلاب. أنا مهتم جداً بتجاربك كمعلم في خلال السنتين ماضيتين.

سوف يشرفني أن أقوم بنقاش معك على مايكروسوفت تيمز في وقت مناسب لك. مدة المقابلة هي 30 دقيقة سوف نتطرق فيها لمناقشة مواضيع قد تكون حساسة أو تسبب قلقاً نفسياً مثل تجاربك خلال جائحة كوفيد بالإضافة الى الوضع السياسي غير مستقر والأزمة الاقتصادية التي يعاني منها لبنان وأيضاً الانفجار المؤسف في مرفأ بيروت. سوف أقوم بتسجيل نقاشنا صوتياً بعد موافقتك من أجل التأكد من أنني أمثل أفكارك بدقة.

إذا أردت المشاركة في هذا البحث فتستطيع أن تحدد موعداً هنا. إذا كان لديك أي أسئلة أو اعتراض، الرجاء الرد على هذه الرسالة وسوف أرسل لك معلومات أكثر عن الموضوع.

شاكرين لكم على حسن تعاونكم،

أيفري غزالس | Avery Gonzales

ماجستير التعليم المقارن والدولي | (MSc Education (Comparative and International)

جامعة أكسفورد | University of Oxford

avery.gonzales@ssho.ox.ac.uk

Appendix E: Participant Information Sheet

University of Oxford Department of Education
 15 Norham Gardens Oxford, OX2 6PY
<http://www.education.ox.ac.uk>
 Avery Gonzales
 E-Mail: avery.gonzales@ssho.ox.ac.uk



Trauma-informed education in Beirut, Lebanon: a decolonial perspective

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Central University Research Ethics Committee (CUREC) Approval Reference: [R74492/RE001]

1. *Why is this research being conducted?*

Major events in the past two years have impacted the lives of every adult and child in Beirut, without exception. Unfortunately, very little attention has been paid to the impacts of COVID-19, the economic crisis, political instability, and the Beirut port explosion on teaching and learning. This research is being conducted to understand how teachers have adapted to challenging conditions and potentially traumatic events.

2. *Why have I been invited to take part?*

You have been invited because you are a school teacher in Beirut. Your name and contact information were shared with me by a friend or colleague of yours, who thought you may be interested in participating.

3. *Do I have to take part?*

No. You can ask questions about the research before deciding whether or not to take part. If you do agree to take part, you may withdraw yourself from the study, without giving a reason by advising me of this decision. The deadline by which you can withdraw any information you have contributed to the research is 1 August 2021. At your request, all information from previous emails and interviews will be permanently deleted.

4. *What will happen to me if I take part in the research?*

You will be invited to complete a 30-minute interview with me on Microsoft Teams at a time that works for you. We can speak either in Arabic or English. I will introduce myself, ask your permission to make an audio recording of the interview, and review your agreement to take part in the interview. If you are still happy to participate, I will ask you to verbally confirm your consent.

The interview should take approximately 30 minutes. If this is too long, please ask for a shorter interview. You can also ask to pause or stop the interview at any time.

After the interview, I will send you an email thanking you for your time and reviewing some of the main themes we discussed. If you have more you would like to say, a follow-up interview can be scheduled. With your consent, I would like to audio record you in order to accurately convey your thoughts.

5. *Are there any potential risks in taking part?*

The following risks are involved in taking part: the topics I will ask about are potentially sensitive and/or distressful. They include COVID-19, political unrest, the economic crisis, and the explosion at the port. These discussions will be audio recorded.

To reduce any potential risks your name will not be associated with any of your data. Furthermore, audio will be securely stored. Only selected pseudonymized quotes and themes from the interview will be visible to the public. You have the right to skip any question or end the interview at any time if you become uncomfortable or distressed.

6. *Are there any benefits in taking part?*

There are no direct benefits to you. The interview is designed to be a reflective and constructive experience for you. The potential benefit is the opportunity to reflect on recent events and how they have impacted your personal and professional life.

7. *What happens to the data provided?*

The information you provide during the study is the **research data**. Any research data from which you can be identified (name, place of work, and audio recording) is known as **personal data**. This includes more sensitive categories of personal data such as your mental health.

Personal / sensitive data will be stored on an encrypted hard drive and backed up to Nexus 365 OneDrive, The University of Oxford's approved encrypted cloud storage location. Personal data will be destroyed after 1 August 2021, with the exception of your recorded oral consent (**other research data**), which will be stored for three years after publication or public release of the work of the research.

Only the researcher (myself) will have access to the research data. Responsible members of the University of Oxford may be given access to data for monitoring and/or audit of the research.

I would like your permission to use direct quotes in my dissertation and possible publications. Identifying information will not be associated with the information, including your name, appearance, voice, or other potentially identifying information.

8. *Will the research be published?*

The research may be published in academic journals and/or media outlets.

The University of Oxford is committed to the dissemination of its research for the benefit of society and the economy and, in support of this commitment, has established an online archive of research materials. This archive includes digital copies of student theses successfully submitted as part of a University of Oxford postgraduate degree programme. Holding the archive online gives easy access for researchers to the full text of freely available theses, thereby increasing the likely impact and use of that research.

The research will be written up as a student's thesis. On successful submission of the thesis, it may be deposited both in print and online in the University archives to facilitate its use in future research. If so, the thesis will be openly accessible.

9. *Who has reviewed this study?*

This study has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the University of Oxford Central University Research Ethics Committee (Reference number: R74492/RE001).

10. Who do I contact if I have a concern about the study or I wish to complain?

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, please contact me (Avery Gonzales, avery.gonzales@ssho.ox.ac.uk) or Liam Gearon (supervisor, liam.gearon@education.ox.ac.uk), and we will do our best to answer your query. I will acknowledge your concern within 10 working days and give you an indication of how it will be dealt with. If you remain unhappy or wish to make a formal complaint, please contact the Chair of the Research Ethics Committee at the University of Oxford who will seek to resolve the matter as soon as possible:

Chair, Social Sciences & Humanities Inter-Divisional Research Ethics Committee; Email: ethics@socsci.ox.ac.uk; Address: Research Services, University of Oxford, Wellington Square, Oxford OX1 2JD

11. Data Protection

The University of Oxford is the data controller with respect to your personal data, and as such will determine how your personal data is used in the study. The University will process your personal data for the purpose of the research outlined above. Research is a task that is performed in the public interest. Further information about your rights with respect to your personal data is available from <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/councilsec/compliance/gdpr/individualrights/>.

12. Further Information and Contact Details

If you would like to discuss the research with someone beforehand (or if you have questions afterwards), please contact:

Avery Gonzales
Department of Education
15 Norham Gardens Oxford, OX2 6PY
University email: avery.gonzales@ssho.ox.ac.uk

Appendix F: Oral Consent Script



CONSENT SCRIPT

Trauma-informed education in Beirut, Lebanon: a decolonial perspective

Note: Full participant information sheet will be shared prior to interview. I will have already introduced myself and obtained permission to make an audio recording.

- **Project details and aims:** In my study, I want to investigate how teachers manage potentially traumatized student populations. I'm interested in your experiences as a teacher over the exceptional past two years. If you choose to be a part of this project, here is what will happen:
- أهداف وتفاصيل البحث: في هذه الدراسة أود أن ألقى ضوء على الأساليب التي يتأقها المعلمون من أجل التعامل مع أثر الصدمات مع الطلاب. أنا مهتم بتجاربك كمعلم في خلال السنتين ماضيتين. إذا و اقلت على الانضمام في هذا المشروع، اليك الخطوات التي سوف يتبعها هذا البحث:
- **Interview description:** We will have roughly a 30-minute conversation where I will ask a range of questions about how recent, possibly traumatizing events have impacted you and your students.
- تفاصيل المقابلة: سوف نقوم بعمل نقاش لمدة 30 دقيقة حيث سأقوم بسؤالك مجموعة من الأسئلة عن أحداث صادمة أخيرة أثرت عليك وعلى تلامذك.
- **Data sharing/access/confidentiality:** The answers you give will form the basis of my MSc Dissertation. Only I will have access to any personal data.
- **نشر المعلومات:** الأجابة للأسئلة سوف تشكل أساس أطروحتي. المعلومات الشخصية ستكون متوفرة لي فقط وسأتم المحافظة على المعلومات الشخصية مثل اسمك والتسجيل الصوتي من نقاشنا وأي معلومات عن هويتك.
- **Data storage:** I will store your information/data safely on an encrypted hard drive and a secure cloud location. I will keep the research data for 3 years after publication.
- مخزن المعلومات: سوف أأزن المعلومات من المقابلة في طريقة آمنة على حيو أس بي> أو في موقع سحابي آمن. سوف أحفظ المعلومات لمدة 3 سنوات بعد النشر.
- **Anonymity/pseudonyms/identifiable data:** In any publications a fake name will be used (i.e. a pseudonym). No audio recordings will be shared, and all information about your identity will be removed.
- **عدم الكشف عن الهوية:** سأقوم باستعمال اسم مستعار لحفاظ على هويتك في أي منشور ولن أنشر أي تسجيلات أو معلومات تتعلق بهويتك.
- **Risks:** The following risks are involved in taking part: You may find aspects of this interview distressing as I'll be asking for your experiences concerning COVID-19, political unrest, the economic crisis, and the explosion at the port. In order to reduce any potential risks, please know that you have the right not to answer any question I ask, take breaks, or end the interview at any time. Furthermore, if you do not want your answers to be used for research purposes, you can ask me to exclude some or all of your responses.
- **تحديات:** يوجد عدد من التحديات إذا شاركت في البحث: بعض من جوانب هذه المقابلة تشترك الي تجاربك خلال جائحة كوفيد-19، الوضع السياسي غير مستقر والأزمة الاقتصادية التي يعاني منها لبنان وأيضاً الانفجار المؤسف في مرفأ بيروت. من أجل تقليل أي مخاطر، لديك الحق بالترام الصمت أو بعدم الإجابة على أي سؤال وبإمكانك أخذ استراحة أو انتهاء المقابلة إذا تطلب الأمر. بالإضافة إلى ذلك يمكنك طلب استثناء بعض المعلومات التي شاركتها في البحث.
- **Rights:** You don't have to agree to take part; you can ask me any questions you want before or throughout; you can also withdraw at any stage without giving a reason. You can withdraw your information/data until 1 August 2021.

- **حقوق:** المشاركة في المقابلة ليست ضرورية. تستطيع أن تسألني أي سؤال قبل أو خلال المقابلة. تستطيع أن تتسحب في أي وقت بلا سبب حتى تاريخ 2021/8/1
- **Audio recording/notes details:** With your permission, I would like to make an audio recording of our discussion to make sure I'm getting an accurate record of your thoughts. Are you comfortable with an audio recording? (if hesitant) Instead of recording you, I can take notes in my notebook. Which would you prefer? I may want to re-contact you to clarify information you gave me in your interview.
- تسجيل صوتي وملاحظات: سوف أقوم بتسجيل نقاشنا صوتياً بعد موافقتك من أجل التأكد من أنني أمثل أفكارك بدقة. هل أنت مرتاح مع التسجيل؟ إذا كنت تفضل عدم التسجيل، بإمكانني أخذ ملاحظات على فكري.
- **Publication plans:** The project will be published in a dissertation, and possibly in an academic journal. A copy of my dissertation may be deposited both in print and online in the University archives.
النشر: هذا البحث سيكون منشور في أطروحتي وربما في مجلة أكاديمية. سوف يتوفر نسخة مطبوعة و إلكترونية من الأطروحة في أرشيف الجامعة.
- **Complaints/concerns procedure:** If you have any complaints or concerns please feel free to contact me in the first instance. My email is averygonzales@sho.ox.ac.uk, the same email I contacted you through before today.
طريقة الشكوى: إذا كان لديك أي شكوى أو اعتراض فالرجاء التوجه الي مباشرًا. عنواني هو ... وهو نفس العنوان الذي توصلت معك على الطريقة.
- **Ethics review details:** This research project has been reviewed and approved by an Oxford University ethics committee. If, after contacting me with any concern, you're still unhappy and wish to make a formal complaint, please contact the ethics committee. Their email address is ethics@socsci.ox.ac.uk. The reference number is located on the Participant Information sheet emailed to you before.

- تم الموافقة على إجراء هذا البحث من قبل اللجنة الأخلاقية في الجامعة أكسفورد. إذا كنت تتواصل معي بخصوص أي شكوى ولكنت لم تكون سعيد بالنتائج، بإمكانك التقدم بشكوى رسمية من خلال اللجنة الأخلاقية. التوصل مع اللجنة الأخلاقية عنوان البريد الإلكتروني هو ... رقم المرجع موجود على طلب المعلومات التي كنت يرسله لك من قبل.
- **Questions/concerns?** Do you have any questions?
هل لديك أي أسئلة؟

2. Oral consent seeking stage, after participant has had sufficient time to think about whether s/he wants to take part

- Do you give your permission for me to interview and audio record you?
هل تقبل بإعطائي الموافقة لإجراء المقابلة وتسجيلك صوتياً؟
- [If applicable:] Do you give permission for me to re-contact you to clarify information?
إذا تطلب الأمر، هل توافق على أن أتواصل بك مجدداً في حال احتجت توضيح بعض المعلومات؟
- Do you give me permission to quote you directly using a pseudonym?
هل تسمح لي بقياس كلامك مع استعمال اسم مستعار؟
- Are you happy for me to collect information about potentially sensitive and distressful topics?
هل تسمح لي بجمع معلومات عن مواضيع قد تكون حساسة أو تسبب قلقاً نفسياً؟
- Are you happy to take part?
هل توافق على المشاركة؟

Ok, thanks, let's start.

Participant

Interview Number	Pseudonym	Role	School Location	School Type	Grade Level	Teacher Subject	Experience (years)	Interview Language
1	Michael	teacher	Beirut	private	2	French general education	6	English
2	Noor	teacher	Beirut	private	preschool-2	General education	25	English
3	Lina	teacher	Beirut	private	2	French general education	33	English
4	Khaled	teacher	Beirut	informal	All ages	Drama	5	English / Arabic
5	Hana	teacher	Beirut	private	2	French general education	25	English
6	Hussein	teacher	South	semi-private	4-7	Mathematics and science	5	English / Arabic
7	Jamila	teacher	Beirut	private	1-5	Special needs	5	English
8	Christy	counsellor	Beirut	private	N/A	N/A	N/A	English
9	Mirna	teacher	Tripoli	public	1-2	General education	5	Arabic
10	Hind	headmaster	Tripoli	public	N/A	N/A	6	Arabic
11	Zahra	headmaster	Chouf	public	N/A	N/A	4	English
12	Riwa	teacher	Chouf	public / private	Unknown	English Language	9	English
13	Rawan	teacher	Beirut	private	2-3	Mathematics	4	English
14	Hadi, Sara, Diana	headmaster, two teachers	Begaa	public	N/A	N/A	N/A	Arabic
15	Alaa	teacher	Beirut	public	7-8	French	Unknown	Arabic
16	Natalia	teacher	Beirut	public	7-8	French	16	Arabic
17	Rabab	teacher / counsellor	Beirut	public	6-8	Health	2	Arabic

Appendix G:
Information

Appendix H: Interview Schedule

Interview questions:

1. Please tell me about yourself. What year do you teach? What school do you work at?
2. How are things right now? Have you returned to in-person classes?
3. Can you tell me more about the past two years, starting with the *thawra* in August 2019?
How was your school affected by the *thawra*, the economic crisis, COVID-19, and the explosion?
4. How did these events affect your students? Did you notice anything different about their behaviors or interests?
5. How have you helped your students adapt to disruption and manage their stress and anxiety?
6. Have you received formal training about supporting your students emotionally?
7. Do students receive adequate emotional support? Where from?
8. Any other thoughts or stories you would like to share?

أسئلة المقابلة:

1. احكيني شوي عن حالك. أي سنة تدرس؟ في أي مدرسة تدرس؟
2. كيف الأحوال الآن؟ هل عدتم الى التدريس الشخصي؟
3. تقدر تتحدث أكثر عن السنتين الماضيتين، بدءا بالثورة في 2019؟ كيف أثرت الثورة والأزمة الاقتصادية وجائحة كوفيد والانفجار على مدرستك؟
4. كيف أثرت هذه الأحداث على طلابك؟ هل لاحظت أشياء مختلفة في تصرفاتهم أو اهتماماتهم؟
5. كيف ساعدت طلابك بالتأقلم أو بالتعود الى الظروف غير مستقرة وأيضا بالتعامل مع الضغط والتوتر النفسي؟

6. هل حصلت على أي تدريبات التي تتناول فيها الدعم العاطفي أو الصدمات النفسية أو مهارات متعلقة بها؟
7. هل يحصل طلابك على الدعم العاطفي الكافي؟ من أين يجي هذا الدعم؟
8. هل لديك المزيد من أفكار أو قصص التي تريد مشاركتها؟

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