Building Relationships: Servicescapes and Parents of

Children in Publicly Funded K-12 Schools

Capstone

Submitted by: Kim Yielding

Email: kimyielding@gmail.com

Phone: 437-433-6248

Submitted to: Dr. Alexandre Sévigny

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Department of Communication Studies and Multimedia

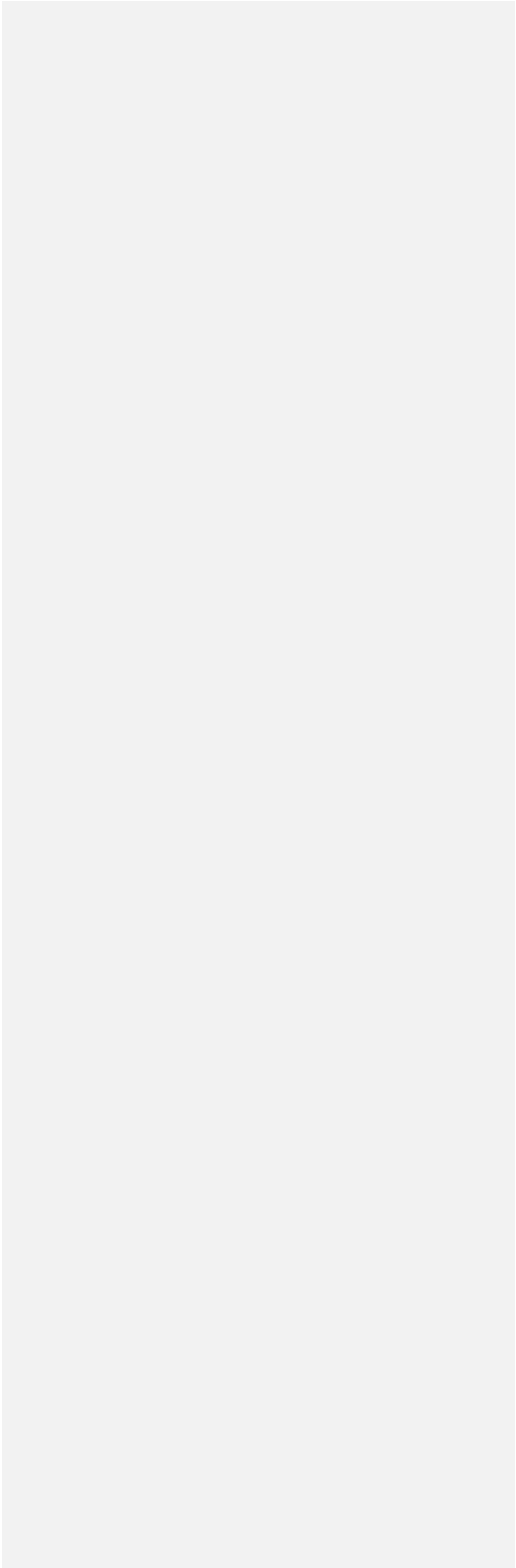Faculty of Humanities, McMaster University

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Acknowledgements

"We shape our buildings; thereafter, they shape us" Winston Churchill

Abstract

Despite the seminal research of academics like Grunig on the benefits of mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics, this research does not investigate how human responses to the built environments of organizations can foster relationships with their publics.

Servicescape (Bitner, 1992) research, while not applied to public relations contexts, has been practically studied in a variety of sectors including hospitals, retail stores, and restaurants. Given the desire of schools to build positive relationships with parents to establish partnerships in student success, it follows that servicescape research could lead to an understanding of how school buildings can positively support building relationships between parents and schools, and through this understanding, create more fulfilling working and learning environments for students and staff.

Using the research of Bitner (1992), Mehrabian and Russell (1974), and Grunig and Hon (1999) as a conceptual framework, this study applied servicescape, environmental psychology, and relationship dimension research to public relations. Focusing on developing mutually beneficial relationships, this capstone examined relationships between schools and parents of students enrolled in Kindergarten to grade 12 publicly funded school districts in Ontario.

This study examined how parents perceive schools according to servicescape typologies and their subsequent emotional, cognitive, behavioural, and physiological affects. With these affects in mind, this study explored how parents felt about relationships with schools, and if school servicescapes impacted parents' assessments of quality relative to the school experience.

The knowledge, skills, and abilities of public relations professionals working in Ontario school districts provided another dimension to this capstone. Public relations professionals' assessments of the value of servicescapes as a strategy to build mutually beneficial relationships with parent communities brought a real-world public relations practitioners perspective to this capstone.

Using a purposive non-probability sampling of two target populations, this study collected data through an online survey, four focus groups, and six in-depth interviews.

Major findings were that parent participants were affected by school servicescapes. These impacts influenced their assessments of parent relationships with schools. However, this influence was not consistent across all parameters; parents were willing to overlook the school servicescape if they felt their child's teacher and/or the school was caring and involved.

Public relations professionals appraised servicescapes as a valuable relationship building strategy. They ascertained it would have the most impact if it were implemented as a system-wide program with multi-departmental responsibility.

Keywords: public relations, servicescapes, organizational relationships, environmental psychology, mutually beneficial relationships

Background

The relationship between parents and their children's school is a key component of student success. Involving parents in school life and engaging them in their children's education is supported through many Ontario Ministry of Education (MOE), programs and initiatives. *Growing Success*, the MOE's policy and procedures document that stipulates assessment, evaluation, and reporting practices in Ontario schools acknowledges the importance of parent involvement: "We know that parents have an important role to play in supporting student learning. Studies show that students perform better in school if their parents or guardians are involved in their education" (Government of Ontario, 2010, p. 8). Regulation 612/00, "School Councils and Parent Involvement Committees" (Government of Ontario, 2010) mandates that every school have an advisory council with a goal of "through the active participation of parents, to improve pupil achievement and to enhance the accountability of the education system to parents" (Government of Ontario, 2010).

Academic research has also recognized the impact that parents can have on their child's education. Zellman and Waterman (1998) "found that a higher level of reported parent school involvement was associated with better test scores in reading and teacher ratings of fewer learning problems" (p. 378). While parent involvement and engagement are linked to children's educational outcomes, creating relationships with parents can be difficult. Busy schedules, language barriers, and even parents' past educational experiences are among the complex obstacles to parent involvement in schools. Watt (2016) notes "removing the physical barrier between parents and school by encouraging parents to be in the school building regularly ... was especially important for parents who were apprehensive about school from past experiences;

having them in school was a way to assure them that it was a positive and safe place to be" (p. 37). Given how important it is to engage parents, it is incumbent upon schools to explore all avenues to foster meaningful and mutually beneficial relationships with them.

Despite the seminal research of academics like Grunig on the benefits of mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics, this body of research does not extend to how human responses to built environments can foster relationships with organizational publics. Servicescape (Bitner, 1992) research, while not commonly applied to public relations contexts, has been practically studied in a variety of sectors including hospitals, retail stores, and restaurants. Given the desire of schools to build positive relationships with parents to establish partnerships in student success, it follows that servicescape research could lead to an understanding of how school buildings can positively support building relationships between parents and schools, and through this understanding also create more fulfilling working and learning environments for students and staff.

This capstone explores school servicescapes and how they affect the perceptions of parents with children enrolled in Kindergarten to grade 12 schools. Parent reactions to school exteriors, entryways, and foyer servicescapes were measured using Mehrabian and Russell's (1974) model of emotion and Bitner's (1992) Servicescape model. Using Grunig and Hon's (1999) Qualitative Measure for Assessing Relationships as a framework, this capstone explored to what extent parents' perceptions of the school exteriors, entryways, and foyer servicescapes correlated with their assessments of parent relationships with the schools shown.

To include the public relations perspective, public relations professionals working in publicly funded school districts in Ontario were interviewed about their experiences with

servicescape research and if they were likely to use this knowledge in schools as a way to build relationships with their parent communities.

By strategically integrating servicescapes into educational spaces as part of public relations practice, this capstone hypothesizes that schools can support the building of mutually beneficial relationships with parents through the creation of welcoming schools that foster positive feelings with parents.

Literature Review

Organization-Public Relationships

Organization-public relationship theory evolved from Grunig's research that identified the importance of two-way symmetrical communication with priority publics when fostering long-term mutually beneficial relationships.

By focusing on the cultivation of relationships between organizations and priority publics, the organization-public relationship theory explores a variety of public relations practices and the associated relationship outcomes (Grunig, L.A., Grunig, J. E., & Ehling, 1992; Bruning, Dials, & Shirka, 2008). In his research on organization-public relationships, Ledingham (1998) concluded that "When public relations is viewed as relationship management, then public relations can be designed around relationship goals, with communication strategies employed to support the achievement of those goals" (p. 62).

Thinking of an organization-public relationship where the school is the organization and the parents are the priority publics, an involved parent community enables schools to have engaged volunteers, active members on school council, and have more meaningful dialogue with parents about student learning, which is advantageous to schools, parents, students, and the community (Government of Ontario, 2016).

With two-way symmetrical communication central to their research, Bruning and Ledingham (2000) advanced the theory by constructing a rubric to measure the dimensions of a relationship between an organization and its priority publics. Focused on priority publics as "active participants" (p. 88), their theoretical framework began with the "organization-public relationship dimensions of trust, openness, involvement, investment and commitment" (p. 88).

Their research expanded beyond the impact of relationships to include the behaviour of key publics as well:

> When input from all affected parties in the relationship – both the organization and the organization's key public members – is solicited, relationship enhancement programs that maximize mutual benefit; improve key public members' perceptions and evaluations of the organization, and ultimately, influence key public members behavior toward the sponsoring organization can be designed (Bruning & Ledingham, 2000, p. 91).

Bruning, Dials, and Shirka (2008) continued investigating the notion of interaction between publics and organizations with an examination of the function of dialogue to build relationships. Eight years later, Sweetser and Kelleher (2016), credit social media with building relationships by "affording organizations with many more opportunities to establish, maintain, and cultivate relationships with publics on a more interpersonal level than did traditional media" (p. 218).

Despite the body of academic research devoted to organization-public relationship, there are critics of this approach to public relations. Huang and Zhang (2013), suggest that it is problematic to engage in research that belongs in the realm of interpersonal communication, because it leads to "inaccurate and disingenuous" (p. 692) explorations of the nature of the relationships between organizations and publics. In their view, organizations can only have parasocial relationships with their publics, a term that emerged from mass media which describes

"situations where viewers develop friendships and a sense of intimacy with personalities they see regularly on television" (Huang & Zhang, 2013, p. 693).

Mutually Beneficial Relationships

For the purposes of this capstone, mutually beneficial relationships are understood as the connection between schools and parents. Both schools and parents receive advantages from participating in this relationship.

Grunig and Hon (1999) created a "Qualitative Measure for Assessing Relationships" to determine relationship types, either communal or exchange, and to understand the quality of relationships between organizations and their publics. These qualities are organized into the subsets of control mutuality, trust, commitment, and satisfaction.

Communal relationships are those in which both the organization and its publics participate in the relationship to support the other party. Exchange relationships are those in which one or all the parties are in the relationship due to a perceived advantage for themselves (Grunig & Hon, 1999; Bruning, DeMiglio, & Embry, 2006). The exchange type of relationship is not inherently negative; however, it cannot be considered mutually beneficial because the motivation for the relationship is self-serving rather than outwardly focused to be other-serving. In contrast, the communal relationship type complements the notion of a mutually beneficial relationship as it focuses on supporting and serving the priority public.

Relationship quality dimensions are important for cultivating longevity of a mutually beneficial relationship. When a priority public feels that an organization seeks out and listens to their ideas and input, it gives them a feeling of control. The relationship in these circumstances is considered to have a power balance and "control mutuality" (Grunig & Hon, 1999, p. 2). School councils are a vehicle through which parents and schools share control mutuality. Parents can

offer their ideas and advice about what best serves student needs, while the school benefits from the experience and expertise of the school council members.

Trust on the other hand is a relationship dimension that Grunig and Hon (1999) describe as complex with the three most important factors being "integrity, belief that the organization is fair and just … dependability, the belief that the organization will do what it says it will do … and competence, the belief that an organization has the ability to do what it says it will do" (p. 2). Parents trust that schools will educate their children and keep them safe. Trust can be violated in a variety of ways: when a parent feels that the school is not fulfilling its mandate, or, that their child is not receiving an education that is equitable.

The other two subsets that determine relationship quality according to Grunig and Hon (1999) are commitment and satisfaction. Both dimensions refer to the perceived value the relationship has for its participants. Grunig and Hon (1999) describe commitment as the degree to which the organization and its public "feel the relationship is worth spending energy on to maintain and promote" (p. 2). Satisfaction is how the expectations of the participants are being met by relationship.

Servicescapes

While the grandfather of public relations Marshall McLuhan (1964) observed, "the medium is the message" (p. 12), referring to a broad range of possibilities including buildings, this notion is typically understood as a mass media concept which does not include the built environment. In the practical realm of public relations, practitioners understand how to leverage visual communications through strategic branding and graphic design, special events, and place branding. But this expertise does not extend to the built environment. The public relations

profession has not explored how to integrate experiential reactions of people with the built environment to build relationships with their priority publics.

Bitner's (1992) "servicescapes" model offers strategic public relations practitioners another medium through which to build relationships with their publics. Servicescapes refers to the effect of "atmospherics, or physical design and décor elements, on consumers or workers" (Bitner, 1992, p. 57). Environmental psychology, architecture, and urban design theory have established that every person experiences an initial affective response to the built environment (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). "Perceptions of space, lighting, temperature, noise, scent and aesthetic variables" (Nasar, 1994, p. 383) all affect how people perceive spaces. While these phenomena have been widely researched and applied in retail, hotel, restaurant, and healthcare sectors, public relations has a dearth of study in this area.

One aspect of relationship development that is missing from the public relations profession is an understanding of how individuals are affected by the buildings that organizations inhabit. Whether an individual inhabits a space for years or drops by a building once for a particular purpose, the built environment causes sensory, cognitive, emotional, and physiological reactions in people. It follows then, that understanding and working with the ways that the built environment affects people, could be a public relations strategy that could help organizations develop relationships with their priority publics.

Parents of children in publicly funded Kindergarten to Grade 12 schools will visit their children's schools hundreds of times over the fourteen years that most children spend in elementary and secondary education combined. The MOE has curriculum standards for learners, but there are no expectations that schools should be designed to bolster student learning outcomes or to accommodate parent and community engagement. While schools are required to

have adequate light, power, heat, safe drinking water, access to washrooms and be free of harmful substances like mould (Government of Ontario, 2016) for the physical well-being of students and staff, the MOE does not expect school building designs to optimize the learning and working environments of schools, nor does it require schools to maximize welcoming features for parents and community members (Government of Ontario, 2016).

The lack of design guidelines to ensure schools incorporate parent engagement is a missed opportunity for the MOE and school communities. Parent engagement is vitally important to student learning and community involvement (Wilson, 2013). The more welcome parents feel in their children's schools, the more likely they will be involved and form social interactions within the larger parent community of the school (Neal, Vincent, & Iqbal, 2016; Government of Ontario, 2016).

Perhaps part of the problem is the limited academic research pertaining to educational spaces as a way to build community (Temple, 2008). While there is plentiful research on classroom design (Casanova, Di Napoli, & Leijon, 2018), lighting, (Gentile, Goven, Laike, & Sjoberg, 2018), acoustics, (Madbouly, Noaman, Ragab, Khedra, & Fayoumi, 2016) and indoor air quality (Kielb, Lin, Muscatiello, Hord, Rogers-Harrington, & Healy, 2015) as they pertain to student achievement, there is a lack of research that focuses on the role of school spaces as a way to engage parents (Berner, 1993; Tanner & Lackney, 2006).

In one of the few studies connecting school condition with parent engagement, Berner (1993) discovered that the degree to which parents were involved with their children's schools "was related to the condition of school buildings" (p. 20). Uline and Tschannen-Moran's (2008) research found that "poor-quality school buildings are likely to be perceived by inhabitants and community members alike as a lack of commitment to the aims of schooling" (p. 61) thus putting

potential parent engagement and pupil enrolment at risk. It may take time before the connection between school buildings and parent engagement is researched more widely.

Commercial retailers did not recognize the impact that store environments could have on consumer purchasing habits until the early 1970s. Kotler (1973) notes that because "men of business are practical and functional in their thinking … [and] atmospheres are a 'silent language' in communication" (p. 48), the effect of store environments on consumers and the consequential impact on retail sales had previously not been considered. Since that time, there has been considerable academic research that has found, "statistically significant relationship[s] between atmospherics and shopping behaviour" (Michon, Chebat, & Turley, 2005, p. 576).

Environmental psychology, "the study of transactions between individuals and their physical settings" (Gifford, 2007, p. 440) was one of the first fields to study how people respond to their surroundings. Ward and Russell (1981) describe the effect that spaces have on people as "involving numerous environmental attributes related to a perceptual, cognitive, affective, and behavioral responses" (p. 121). The term, "affect" used throughout this capstone is defined as, "emotion expressed in language, and affective quality of a place, as the emotion-inducing quality that persons verbally attribute to that place" (Russell & Pratt, 1980, p. 312).

Environmental psychologists Mehrabian and Russell's (1974) work demonstrated that an individual's interactions with the built environment generates both "perceptual cognitive dimension" (Bakker, van der Voordt, Vink & Jan de Boon, 2013, p. 71) and affective dimension which they organized into the categories of "pleasure, arousal, and dominance, abbreviated as P-A-D" (Yoo, Park, & MacInnis, 1998, p. 255). Environmental psychology views people's responses to their environment as a transaction, or a two-way interaction a concept similar to Grunig and Hon's mutually beneficial relationships.

Using the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) paradigm (Donovan & Rossiter, 1982), their model plots individuals' affective reactions to spaces on a sliding scale. One dimension of the model measures eight categories of descriptive emotional response variables that lead to the individual either approaching or avoiding a space (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). Mehrabian and Russell (1977) note that in their research, "happiness was shown to include high degrees of pleasure, arousal, and dominance" (p. 289) thus leading to approaching behaviour.

The second dimension consists of a series of affective polarities that show degrees of PAD. Mehrabian and Russell (1977) argue that "the three dimensions of pleasure-displeasure, arousal-nonarousal, and dominance-submissiveness are both necessary and sufficient to describe a large variety of emotional states" (p. 291). How the individual feels when they react to the space mediates how they will behave within that space (Mehrabian & Russell, 1977). If a parent for example feels that a school servicescape is unwelcoming, the parent may choose to avoid the school rather than becoming more engaged.

The pleasure-displeasure scale measures how satisfied consumers are with their visit to the space. For instance, a parent may have gone to the school to have a meeting with a teacher, but because they found the school building dreary, they came away with a degree of displeasure when thinking about the school. Arousal-non-arousal plots degrees of excitement or stimulation visitors feel when they are in the space. A parent visiting a school may be stimulated when seeing examples of student work on bulletin boards in the halls giving them positive feelings about the school (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974).

The dominance-submissiveness scale measures the degree to which visitors feel they have some control within their environment. For instance, a parent may be plotted on the submissiveness end of the scale when visiting their child's school and not being able to get in

due to locked doors. Having to buzz the staff and wait to be let in could further contribute to the lack of dominance experienced in that situation and lead to avoidance behaviours in reaction to the school.

Bitner (1992), developed Mehrabian and Russell's theory further, adding cognitive and physiological responses of individuals interacting with their environment to her study. Like Mehrabian and Russell's work, Bitner's research also used a S-O-R model (Donovan & Rossiter, 1982). In her research Bitner (1992) describes servicescapes as "the environment in which the service is assembled and in which seller and consumer interact, combined with commodities that facilitate performance or communication of the service" (p. 36). Stated more simply, servicescapes are the sensory, emotional, cognitive, behaviour, and physiological reactions people have to the non-human elements of service spaces. Beyond human reactions to building stimuli, Bitner's model "evokes emotions that help determine value, which ultimately motivates customers to make a certain choice repeatedly" (Lee & Kim, 2013, p. 2). The more the individual's responses to a servicescape evoke favourable responses, the more valuable the space and the interactions within it become (Bitner, 1992; Mehrabian and Russell, 1974). For this capstone, servicescapes refer to school building environments.

Nasar (1994) theorized that the more the look of the building and corresponding visuals appeal to an individual's aesthetic, the more positively they would feel about that building. If parents have a "favourable emotional appraisal" (Ulrich, 1983, p. 87) to a school building, it is possible that their positive feelings could impact their perceptions about the school itself. This notion is supported by Tanner (2000) who noted with respect to school spaces that "an overall positive impression . . . implies the presence of friendly student and teacher learning environments" (p. 327).

Bitner's (1992) framework organizes servicescapes into three distinct elements: sensory, spatial, and symbolic (Bitner, 1992; Katz & Rossiter, 1991). Ambient conditions, for instance refer to sounds, lighting, temperature, and smell. Nasar, (1994) notes that perceptions of space, lighting, temperature, noise, scent and "aesthetic variables" (p. 189) all influence how people perceive spaces. A dimly-lit school, with a disagreeable smell, and loud, echoing sound will cause a different reaction for parents than a school that has ample lighting, a pleasant smell, and consistent ambient sounds.

Spatial layout and functionality address the visual aesthetic and architectural layout of the space. Spatial layout refers to "flow"; how furniture and physical objects are arranged within the space (Bitner, 1992). Functionality describes how those objects are arranged in a way that either help or hinder how users move through the space. For instance, a large bench in a large school entryway could be a helpful place for parents to sit and wait for their children; in a small, cramped entryway, this type of furniture could be perceived as uncomfortable and a physical and philosophical blockage to the front entrance.

Signs, symbols, and artefacts can be intentional or unintentional; they describe how wayfinding and information is shared with people who encounter the space (Bitner, 1992). Signage directing parents to the office is essential in most schools as offices are not necessarily located near the front doors. The content of the sign, the materials it is made out if, use of words and/or symbols, and the tone of the message are an example of how signs, symbols, and artefacts can cause a parent to have a positive or negative response to this aspect of a school servicescape.

All of the servicescape elements work together to cause a stimulus response in building visitors (Bitner, 1992). Citing Bell, Fisher, and Loomis (1978), Bitner (1992) explains that

although "individuals perceive discrete stimuli, it is the total configuration of stimuli that determines their responses to the environment" (p. 65).

Similar to Mehrabian and Russell's emotional response variables, Bitner's servicescapes model includes the response of an individual to a building through approach and avoid responses. Approach behaviours "refer to all positive actions that might be directed toward a particular setting, for example, intentions to stay, explore, and affiliate, while avoidance concerns the opposite" (Eroglu, Machleit, & Davis, 2001, p. 182; Bitner, 1992).

Research Problem

Can individual reactions to the built environment be integrated into public relations as a strategy for fostering mutually beneficial relationships with priority publics? This research problem was explored through three research questions. They were designed to examine parents' affective responses to school buildings, and to study if school servicescapes influence parents' perceptions of relationships with schools. This capstone sought insights from public relations professionals working for school districts, to understand if they viewed servicescapes as a feasible strategy to foster mutually beneficial relationships with parents.

RQ1: *How and to what extent do parents have an affective response to school servicescapes?*

This RQ set out to explore if parents have an affective response to school servicescapes. By using Mehrabian and Russell's emotion model, and Bitner's servicescapes model, parents in the online survey and focus groups explored their reactions to a variety of school building spaces. Understanding if parents have an affective or an emotional response to a school building, is different from a cognitive or physiological response.

RQ2: *How and to what extent do school servicescapes impact parents' assessments of control mutuality, trust, commitment and satisfaction relative to their perceptions of the school experience?*

Grunig and Hon's scale for measuring the quality of relationships helped to draw parents from thinking passively about their experiences with their child's school, to thinking critically and exploring the dimensions of the relationship itself. Focus group and survey participants were asked to assess school buildings and their visits to their child's school. Their responses were organized into categories of control mutuality, trust, commitment and satisfaction to understand the type of relationships parents have with their child's school.

RQ3: *How and to what extent do school public relations professionals view servicescapes as a way to build mutually beneficial relationships with their publics?*

If parents have affective responses to their child's school, and those responses translate into the degree of control mutuality, trust, commitment and satisfaction they have in their relationship with their child's school, it behooves the school board to have a department or departments that take leadership for implementing or monitoring factors that bolster parents' relationships with their child's school in positive ways.

Public relations professionals working for school boards are often responsible for community relations and are connected to school councils as part of this work. The purpose of this research question was to determine if school PR professionals had experience working with servicescapes and if they evaluated the connection of parents to their child's school building as work they evaluated as being part of their responsibilities.

Research Methodologies

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There are 72 publicly-funded school boards with 2,020,301 students attending 3,954 elementary schools and 896 secondary schools in Ontario (Government of Ontario, 2016). Given the time and budget constraints of inviting all of the parents and guardians of these students to participate in the research for this capstone, the researcher used non-scientific and purposive non-probability sampling (Stacks, 2016) of two target populations for this study.

The first sample group was comprised of parents of children enrolled in publicly funded Kindergarten to Grade 12 schools in Ontario. The second population consisted of public relations professionals working for publicly funded school boards in Ontario.

An online survey, four focus groups, and six in-depth interviews comprised the research methodologies for this capstone.

Online Survey

The survey was available solely in an online format using McMaster University's LimeSurvey from February 3, 2019 at 12:05 p.m. to March 3, 2019, at 12:05 p.m. A total of 161 responses to this survey were received by the deadline date of the collection period. The online survey resulted in 139 completed surveys and 22 incomplete surveys. Completed surveys comprised of 86.3% of the total participants.

While coverage errors resulted from only offering the survey online, this method was chosen for its cost effectiveness, ethics compliance, and because it enables "responses to be gathered from large numbers of people in a very short amount of time" (Dillman et al., 2016, p. 303).

The survey used funnel and narrative approaches in its design. A narrative statement before each of five sections of questions set the tone and general category for participants. Four

different types of questions were used: open-ended limited to 50 words, Likert-scale, single answer, and multiple-choice questions.

The filtering section introduced the purpose of the research and guided participants through screening questions (Stacks, 2016, p. 333). These questions identified participants who had children enrolled in publicly funded Kindergarten to Grade 12 schools in Ontario and disqualified those who did not. A second screening question required participants to consent to their participation in the survey and gave permission to the researcher to use their responses in the data set. Participants who did not give consent were exited from the survey.

Section one inquired about participants' visits to their children's schools, and for how long they had been visiting those schools.

Section two explored participants' reactions to photographs of school building exteriors, entryways, and foyers. Participants evaluated the photographs using 42 affective descriptors (Mehrabian and Russell, p. 291, 1974). In this section, participants also evaluated the quality of school culture and academics based solely on photographs shown to them.

Section three focused on participants' experiences with and feelings about their children's school. These questions explored parents' assessments of control mutuality, trust, commitment, and satisfaction.

Section four asked participants questions about what they value in a school and how likely parents are to recommend their children's school to another parent.

Focus Groups

Nineteen people participated in four focus groups that were held on February 6, 8, 27, and 28, 2019. The focus groups lasted for approximately 75 minutes. Focus groups, as described

by Stacks (2016), "provide a glimpse of how that set of respondents thinks, feels, or behaves *at that point in time*" (p. 225). Focus groups provided the opportunity to both observe participants and listen to their reactions, feelings, and inferences as they looked at photographs of schools. Some of the initial reactions to the photographs were non-verbal, and could not have been collected using the survey alone.

The participants all had children enrolled in publicly funded Kindergarten to Grade 12 schools in Ontario. The researcher facilitated the focus groups; all sessions were recorded with a standalone audio device and transcribed by the researcher. An assistant with ethics clearance attended the focus groups to take notes and observe participants' non-verbal reactions to questions and responses to other participants. These reactions included sounds, eye movement, facial expressions, and hand movements. These were studied alongside the question responses to underscore emergent themes. This enabled the researcher to place her full attention on facilitating.

Eight questions engaged participants in examination of a variety of school buildings. Participants were challenged to describe their feelings when looking at some of the pictures, and in some instances assess levels of control mutuality, trust, commitment, and satisfaction.

Because the survey and the focus groups used the same images, discussion amongst the participants allowed the researcher to notice trends, and to compare and contrast responses between the two methodologies. Focus groups also provided more robust data to complement the survey data including ranges of responses to the photographs and questions, offered the chance for the researcher to provide clarity to participants when needed, and had benefit of recording the exchange of observations, comments, and ideas amongst the participants.

In-Depth Interviews

Six in-depth interviews were held during February 2019. Due to geographical distance of the researcher from the participants, all interviews were held over the telephone and recorded using a standalone device. The interviews were held on February 3, 8, 12, 14, 20, and 25, 2019. The interviews ranged from 44 minutes to 81 minutes in length. Interviewees were asked 8 questions that asked about their evaluation of the importance of building relationships with the parent community, their involvement in facility decisions, and their likelihood of implementing programs for the built environment to foster parent involvement.

Data Collection

Primary research data for this capstone was collected by using mixed-mode sampling including an online survey, participant focus groups, and in-depth interviews (Stacks, 2016). Secondary research was not collected beyond academic research for the literature review.

Participants for the online survey and the focus groups were recruited using purposive, volunteer, and snowball collection methods, while the in-depth interview participants were recruited with purposive and volunteer sampling methods.

The units of analysis were the parents of children enrolled in publicly funded Kindergarten to grade 12 schools in Ontario, and communications professionals working for publicly funded school districts in Ontario.

Variables included photos of school entrances, foyers, and hallways, parents' experiences with their childrens' schools, parents' perceptions of photos, and communications professionals' experiences with servicescapes and attitude toward fostering relationships with parents.

Sampling Methods

Purposive Sampling.

The online survey, focus groups, and in-depth interviews used purposive filtering questions to ensure the respondents fit the intended sampling population for the data collection method. The online survey and the focus groups required participants to have a child or children enrolled in a Kindergarten to grade 12 publicly funded school in Ontario. Focus group members were restricted from participating if they worked for the District School Board of Niagara. Online survey respondents who did not meet the criteria were disqualified from the survey. In-depth interview participants were required to be currently employed by a publicly funded school board in Ontario and could not work at the District School Board of Niagara.

Another example of purposive sampling techniques for data collection was the distribution of referral surveys to the sample population outlined earlier in this project. Surveys were referred to potential participants by their contact holders using a pre-scripted email provided by the researcher.

Volunteer Sampling.

All respondents to the survey, focus group, and in-depth interview choose to participate of their own volition. Stacks (2016) explains that, "volunteers often participate … because they have a particular interest in the focus or topic of the research project" (p. 203).

Snowball Sampling.

The researcher posted an explanation of the research with a link to the online survey on her personal Facebook page. The researcher requested her social media contacts participate in the survey and share the survey. This is an example of snowball sampling, where the participants in the research project are actively engaged in recruiting participants from their contacts (Stacks, 2016).

Similarly, focus group and in-depth interview participants were recruited through a referral letter sent by the researcher to her contacts. The contacts then referred individuals who they thought might be interested in participating. If interested, the individuals contacted the researcher directly; the referral contact was not informed if the individual chose to participate.

Data Analysis

Survey data was analysed using LimeSurvey's statistical tool. For some questions where the researcher wanted to do a deeper analysis, she exported data from the online collection site into Microsoft Excel spreadsheets. Open-ended questions and participant responses in "other" answer fields were downloaded into Microsoft Excel spreadsheets and reviewed using latent content analysis. Stacks (2016) notes that this method, "examines particular words, symbols, characters, items, and space and time measures" (p. 128).

Results

The Respondents

The majority of respondents reported that they had been visiting their child's school for 6-10 years (38.5%, n=62); with those visiting their child's school 5 years or fewer almost the same size. (37.8%, n=61). The researcher inferred, based on the number of years that they had been visiting their child's school, that participants in these two groups had children enrolled in elementary school, Kindergarten to grade 8.

Forty-two respondents reported that they had been visiting their child for 11-15 years (26%, n=42), which would make their children secondary school age. The remaining participants (6%, n=11) selected that the question was either "not applicable", "did not know/preferred not to answer", or "other".

> **Commented [AS3]:** It would be good to have a summary table or chart for each RQ, so that the results are "glanceable".

There are many reasons that parents visit their child's school. The majority of respondents (58.3%, n=94) said they drop off and pick up their child at school. Sixty-three participants (39.1%, n=63) attended a school event, while meeting with the principal or educator (29.8%, n=48) was the next largest reason parents visited their child's school. The second and third largest groupings are significant, as these are activities where these participants (68.9%, n=111) would have entered the school building and thus have a level of interaction with the facility. The remaining respondents (16%, n=27) choose "attended a school council meeting", "not applicable", and "other" as their reasons to go to their child's school. Among the "other" answers, parents reported volunteering, picking up homework for an absent child, dropping off a large musical instrument, and working in the same school as their children.

RQ1 Summary: *How and to what extent do parents have an affective response to school servicescapes?*

Table 1

Q8 - Before Photograph of School Entryway

For each sentence below, rate your impressions of this school.

.	SD	D	NAND	A	SA	DK/ PNTA	Skip/NC
This is a happy school	9.3%, (n=15)	21.7%, (n=35)	43.4%, (n=70)	6.2%, (n=10)	1.2% (n=2)	4.3% (n=7)	13% (n=22)
This school is a stimulating place to learn	11.8% (n=19)	22.36% (n=36)	37.8% (n=61)	7.45% (n=12)	1.24% (n=2)	4.35% (n=7)	14% (n=24)
This school is important to the community	6.2% (n=10)	14.2% (n=23)	43.1% (n=55)	18.1% (n=29)	8.7% (n=14)	3.7% (n=6)	14.9% (n=24)
This school inspires hope in its students	11.8% (n=19)	25.4% (n=41)	29.1% (n=47)	9.32% (n=15)	3.7% (n=6)	4.35% (n=7)	16.1% (n=26)

This is a school that inspires students to learn	10.5% (n=17)	22.9% (n=37)	33.5% (n=54)	9.3% (n=15)	3.7% (n=6)	5.5% (n=9)	14.2% (n=23)
This is a school where learning is a priority	8.7% (n=14)	14.9% (n=24)	36.6% (n=59)	10.5% (n=17)	8% (n=13)	7.4% (n=12)	13.6% (n=22)

Note: The abbreviations used in the table headings are as follows: SD = Strongly disagree, D = Disagree, NDNA = Neither disagree nor agree, A = Agree, A = Strongly agree, DK/PNTA = Don't know/prefer not to answer, Skip/NC = Question skipped or not completed

Table 2

Q9 - After Photograph of School Entryway

For each sentence below, rate your impressions of this school.

	SD	D	NAND	A	SA	DK/ PNTA	Skip/NC
This is a happy school	1.2%, (n=2)	1.8%, (n=3)	18.1%, (n=29)	37.2%, (n=60)	25.4% (n=41)	3.1% (n=5)	13% (n=21)
This school is a stimulating place to learn	0.6% (n=1)	2.4% (n=4)	19.8% (n=32)	39.7% (n=64)	22.3% (n=36)	1.8% (n=3)	13% (n=21)
This school is important to the community	2.4% (n=4)	4.9% (n=68)	37.2% (n=60)	18.1% (n=29)	24.2% (n=39)	9.94% (n=16)	16.7% (n=27)
This school inspires hope in its students	1.2% (n=2)	5.5% (n=9)	27.9% (n=45)	32.9% (n=53)	11.8% (n=19)	2.48% (n=4)	18% (n=29)
This is a school that inspires students to learn	1.8% (n=3)	3.7% (n=6)	28.5% (n=46)	27.9% (n=45)	17.3% (n=28)	3.7% (n=6)	16.7% (n=27)
This is a school where learning is a priority	3.73% (n=6)	4.35% (n=7)	34.1% (n=55)	22.3% (n=36)	14.2% (n=23)	4.3% (n=7)	16.7% (n=27)

Note: The abbreviations used in the table headings are as follows: SD = Strongly disagree, D = Disagree, NAND = Neither agree nor disagree, A = Agree, A = Strongly agree, DK/PNTA = Don't know/prefer not to answer, Skip/NC = Question skipped or not completed

Graph 1 - *Comparison of Agree/Strongly Agree & Disagree/Strongly Disagree for this is a happy school - Q8 and Q9*
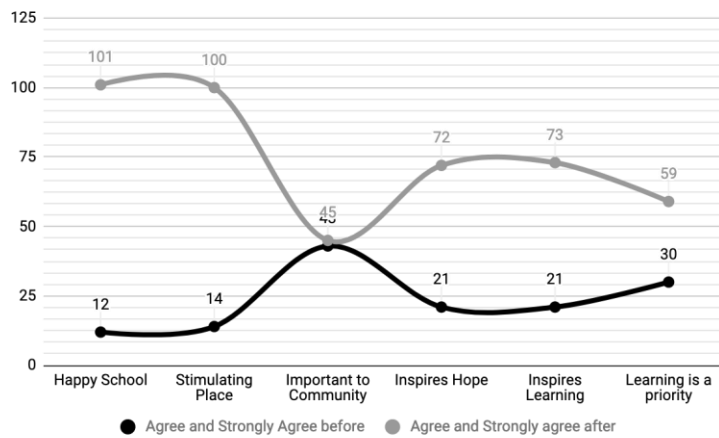

Table 3

Q10 - Before Photograph of School Exterior

For each sentence below, rate your impressions of this school.

	SD	D	NAND	A	SA	DK/ PNTA	Skip/NC
This is a happy school	36.6%, (n=59)	29.1%, (n=47)	15.5%, (n=25)	1.8%, (n=3)	1.8% (n=3)	3.1% (n=5)	11.8% (n=19)
This school is a stimulating place to learn	31.6% (n=51)	24.2% (n=39)	20.5% (n=33)	1.2% (n=2)	2.4% (n=4)	3.1% (n=5)	16.7% (n=27)
This school is important to the community	34.1% (n=55)	24.2% (n=39)	14.2% (n=23)	5.5% (n=9)	2.4% (n=4)	2.4% (n=4)	16.7% (n=27)
This school inspires hope in its students	32.3% (n=52)	27.9% (n=45)	16.1% (n=26)	1.2% (n=2)	1.2% (n=2)	4.3% (n=7)	16.7% (n=27)

This is a school that inspires students to learn	28.5% (n=46)	24.2% (n=39)	21.7% (n=35)	1.8% (n=3)	1.2% (n=2)	4.3% (n=7)	18% (n=29)
This is a school where learning is a priority	26% (n=42)	19.2% (n=31)	28.5% (n=46)	2.4% (n=4)	1.8% (n=3)	4.3% (n=7)	17.3% (n=28)

Note: The abbreviations used in the table headings are as follows: SD = Strongly disagree, D = Disagree, NDNA = Neither disagree nor agree, A = Agree, A = Strongly agree, DK/PNTA = Don't know/prefer not to answer, Skip/NC = Question skipped or not completed

Table 4

Q11 - After Photograph of School Exterior

For each sentence below, rate your impressions of this school.

	SD	D	NAND	A	SA	DK/ PNTA	Skip/NC
This is a happy school	3.3%, (n=6)	8.7%, (n=14)	28.5%, (n=46)	32.3%, (n=52)	7.45% (n=12)	3.1% (n=5)	16.1% (n=26)
This school is a stimulating place to learn	2.4% (n=4)	6.83% (n=11)	36% (n=58)	26.7% (n=43)	6.2% (n=10)	3.1% (n=5)	18.6% (n=30)
This school is important to the community	3.7% (n=6)	4.3% (n=7)	34.6% (n=55)	28.5% (n=46)	8.7% (n=14)	1.8% (n=3)	18.6% (n=30)
This school inspires hope in its students	3.7% (n=6)	8% (n=13)	31% (n=50)	31% (n=50)	6.2% (n=10)	1.8% (n=3)	18% (n=29)
This is a school that inspires students to learn	2.4% (n=4)	8% (n=13)	32.3% (n=52)	29.8% (n=48)	5.5% (n=9)	3.1% (n=5)	18.6% (n=30)
This is a school where learning is a priority	2.4% (n=4)	6.8% (n=11)	35.4% (n=57)	27.3% (n=44)	7.4% (n=12)	2.4% (n=4)	18% (n=29)

Note: The abbreviations used in the table headings are as follows: SD = Strongly disagree, D = Disagree, NAND = Neither agree nor disagree, A = Agree, A = Strongly agree, DK/PNTA = Don't know/prefer not to answer, Skip/NC = Question skipped or not completed

Graph 2 - Questions 10 and 11 (Appendix H and I)
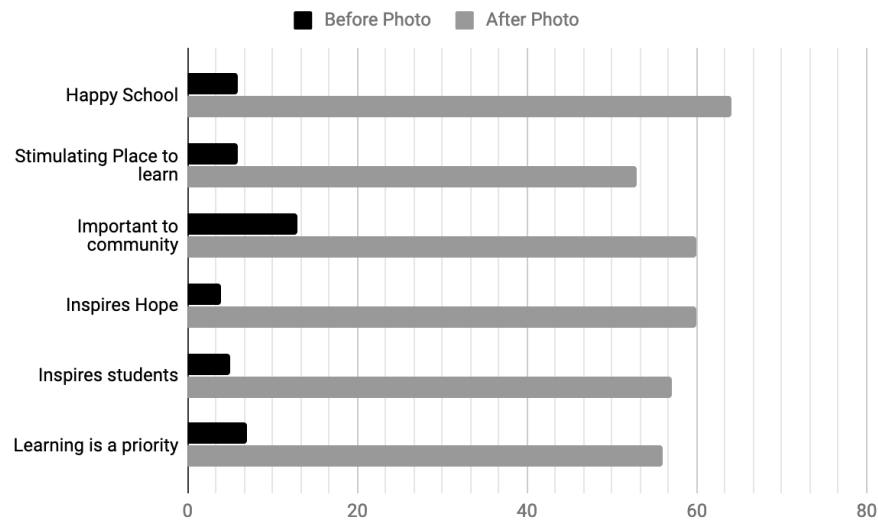
In-depth Results for RQ1:

Respondents were shown photos of schools in two separate questions. In the first, the photo depicted the facade of a historic school (Appendix D) with grey stone, long concrete steps up to the front doors, large wooden doors, ornate grey stone work, and large dark windows. The second photo showed an overhead view of a modern learning commons with large windows that showed sunlight and a courtyard with trees and grass outside, green, orange, and yellow modular furniture, and clusters of children reading or working in groups, or with an adult.

Using Mehrabian and Russell's (1977) 42 descriptors of affective responses, participants were asked to choose as many of the words that they needed to describe the impressions of the school. For the first photo, respondents used 41 of the 42 descriptors and 40 participants added

their own words as well including (8%, n=13) who used the words, "old" or "historic", and (7%, n=12) who used the words "imposing" or "intimidating". The three most common descriptors chosen for this building were "beautiful" (42.2%, n=68), "interesting" (37.2%, n=60), and "intense" (33.5%, n=54).

For the second photo, participants used 39 of the 42 descriptors to describe the space, with (11.1%, n=18) adding their own words such as "inviting" and "comfortable" (3%, n=6), and (4%, n=7) using words such as "colourful" and "sunny" to describe the space. The descriptors used more frequently were "pleasant" (69.5%, n=112), "nice" (52.8%, n=85), and "stimulating" (49%, n=79).

Although both photos were distinct from one another and the respondents chose different words to describe them, the major descriptive words used for both photos plots them on on the same quadrant of the emotional variant axis. Sub-headings for the first photo spanned three categories: "exciting, "pleasant", and "arousing", while the second photo fell into the two sub-headings "pleasant" and "exciting". Both photos fit into Mehrabian and Russell's model as having high pleasure and arousal scores, which would elicit an approach response with the individuals interacting with the building. Visitors may want to stay longer than originally intended, or even choose to interact with building inhabitants if applicable.

In survey questions 8 and 9, participants were shown two photographs depicting a school entrance. Both photos contained elements of Bitner's servicescapes sub-categories: symbols, space, and sensory (which called upon participants to imagine their senses in this space). The first photo (Appendix F) was taken before the entrance was updated, and the second photo (Appendix G) showed the same area after paint had been applied.

Comments from the focus groups included reactions to the sensory, symbol, and space sub-categories: "That would not be my staircase of choice because it's dark. It's not welcoming. Where are you taking me?", "It's one of these confusing entrances, right? Where you're going 'where is the office?' I don't know what's around the corner", "It's very institutional there's nothing that screams school spirit. parents and the kids want to have an emotional connection to the school. School spirit gives you a feeling of belonging".

Throughout question 8, the majority of respondents consistently chose, "Neither Agree Nor Disagree" in response to all of the statements associated with this photo. The lowest occurrence for "This school inspires hope in its students" was (29.1%, n=47) and the highest was (43.4%, n=70) for "This is a happy school". This trend did not continue for Appendix G.

Focus group participants' observations gave some rationale for these rankings: "I think change is hard for some people and some people get really attached to things and that's why you see so many schools that look like they are from 50 years ago", "I kinda feel sorry for this school. I'm sure the teachers at this school are great, it's just, just that this picture doesn't show that". Perhaps survey participants remained neutral in their responses for Appendix F because they felt they did not have enough information from the photograph to choose another answer.

`   The two tables below show the participant responses to the two photographs. Table 1 is the before photograph (Appendix F), and Table 2 is the after photograph (Appendix G).

Table 1

Q8 - Before Photograph

For each sentence below, rate your impressions of this school.

`		SD	D	NAND	A	SA	DK/ PNTA	Skip/NC

	SD	D	NDNA	A	A	DK/PNTA	Skip/NC
This is a happy school	9.3%, (n=15)	21.7%, (n=35)	43.4%, (n=70)	6.2%, (n=10)	1.2% (n=2)	4.3% (n=7)	13% (n=22)
This school is a stimulating place to learn	11.8% (n=19)	22.36% (n=36)	37.8% (n=61)	7.45% (n=12)	1.24% (n=2)	4.35% (n=7)	14% (n=24)
This school is important to the community	6.2% (n=10)	14.2% (n=23)	43.1% (n=55)	18.1% (n=29)	8.7% (n=14)	3.7% (n=6)	14.9% (n=24)
This school inspires hope in its students	11.8% (n=19)	25.4% (n=41)	29.1% (n=47)	9.32% (n=15)	3.7% (n=6)	4.35% (n=7)	16.1% (n=26)
This is a school that inspires students to learn	10.5% (n=17)	22.9% (n=37)	33.5% (n=54)	9.3% (n=15)	3.7% (n=6)	5.5% (n=9)	14.2% (n=23)
This is a school where learning is a priority	8.7% (n=14)	14.9% (n=24)	36.6% (n=59)	10.5% (n=17)	8% (n=13)	7.4% (n=12)	13.6% (n=22)

Note: The abbreviations used in the table headings are as follows: SD = Strongly disagree, D = Disagree, NDNA = Neither disagree nor agree, A = Agree, A = Strongly agree, DK/PNTA = Don't know/prefer not to answer, Skip/NC = Question skipped or not completed

In Appendix F, (31%, n=50) survey participants strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement, "This is a happy school", while only (10.5%, n=12) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. As discussed above, the majority of respondents choose to remain neutral when responding to this statement. Focus group reactions corresponded with the rankings of survey participants. Some participants reacted to the entry decor: "Beige and dreary", "I don't get a sense that this is a place where you greet people. You know when you have people walk into your house you want their first impression to be like, 'oh wow I feel at home here'".

Other focus group participants imagined their child in the school space: "I just think they're not really going to a space worthy of my children. Yeah, I think about my own son like, he's always moving, like, always happy and stuff and he loves to be engaged with bright colors."

Table 2

After Photograph

For each sentence below, rate your impressions of this school.

`	SD	D	NAND	A	SA	DK/ PNTA	Skip/NC
This is a happy school	1.2%, (n=2)	1.8%, (n=3)	18.1%, (n=29)	37.2%, (n=60)	25.4% (n=41)	3.1% (n=5)	13% (n=21)
This school is a stimulating place to learn	0.6% (n=1)	2.4% (n=4)	19.8% (n=32)	39.7% (n=64)	22.3% (n=36)	1.8% (n=3)	13% (n=21)
This school is important to the community	2.4% (n=4)	4.9% (n=68)	37.2% (n=60)	18.1% (n=29)	24.2% (n=39)	9.94% (n=16)	16.7% (n=27)
This school inspires hope in its students	1.2% (n=2)	5.5% (n=9)	27.9% (n=45)	32.9% (n=53)	11.8% (n=19)	2.48% (n=4)	18% (n=29)
This is a school that inspires students to learn	1.8% (n=3)	3.7% (n=6)	28.5% (n=46)	27.9% (n=45)	17.3% (n=28)	3.7% (n=6)	16.7% (n=27)
This is a school where learning is a priority	3.73% (n=6)	4.35% (n=7)	34.1% (n=55)	22.3% (n=36)	14.2% (n=23)	4.3% (n=7)	16.7% (n=27)

Note: The abbreviations used in the table headings are as follows: SD = Strongly disagree, D = Disagree, NAND = Neither agree nor disagree, A = Agree, A = Strongly agree, DK/PNTA = Don't know/prefer not to answer, Skip/NC = Question skipped or not completed

As shown by the tables for questions 8 and 9, survey participants had different reactions to the two photos. The most significant difference occurred with "This is a happy school" and "This is a stimulating place to learn". In the before photo, In the after photo, Appendix G, (62.7%, n=101) respondents agreed or strongly agreed that this school was happy. The difference in responses between the first two photographs was (55.3%, n=89) or 46%.

Focus group participants' reactions aligned with the survey responses for question 9. Some focus group respondents felt the after photograph captured the connection between their child and the learning facilities: "This is an old building but there's obviously been some effort put in here to make it a better place for kids. You know it's a fun spot to be. Spend the day there

and you know it's going to be an exciting day", "I feel like kids would like this more because it actually reflects what they would see and like in other environments. Go to any other place where kids go, right, they're always bright and colorful and kind of reflects that energy. So it's neat that there's some consistency. They see that in their school".

The statement, "This is a stimulating place to learn", only garnered (8%, n=14) responses that either agreed or strongly agreed when referring to Appendix F. Alternatively, (62.1%, n=100) choose "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" for the same statement in reference to Appendix G, a difference of (53.4%, n=86) or 49%.

The "Neither Agree Nor Disagree" responses decreased significantly, and no longer represented the majority of respondents across all categories. The lowest rating was (18.1%, n=29) for "This is a happy school" a decrease of (25.5%, n=41), to the highest for "This school is important to the community" at (37.2%, n=60).

Graph 1 - *Comparison of Agree/Strongly Agree & Disagree/Strongly Disagree for this is a happy school - Q8 and Q9*
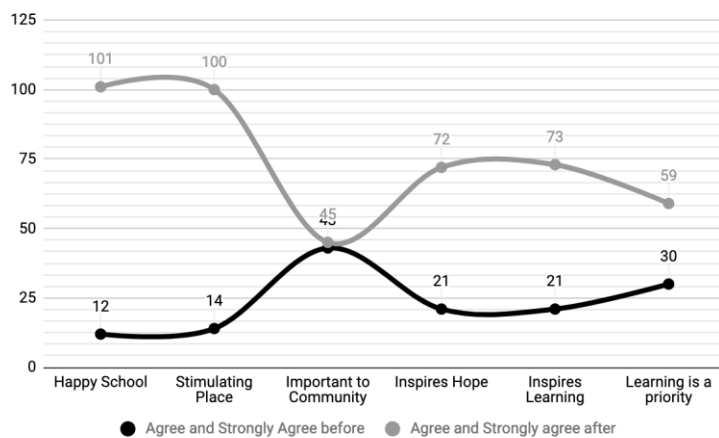
Graph 1 compares the rankings of "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" responses between questions 8 and 9, and Appendix F and G. Where respondents were asked to select a question that features an emotion in connection with children such as "happy" or "stimulating", the majority of respondents scored in agreement or remained neutral with the statement. The response to a statement about the school's importance to the community was almost the same for both question 8 (34.1%, n=55) and 9 (37.2%, n=60). Perhaps participants were comfortable ranking their own impressions but were hesitant to speak for the community at large.

Questions 10 and 11 asked participants to rate their impressions of the exterior of a school building. One of the most noticeable features of the school in the before picture (Appendix H) was metal construction hoarding covering the front entrance. In question 11, participants were shown the same school exterior (Appendix I), but with the addition of a brightly coloured sign covering the metal fencing.

Participants felt strong disagreement with all of the statements in question 10, in fact "Strongly Disagree" and "Disagree" were both chosen most often by participants in five out of the six categories. The "Strongly Disagree" and "Disagree" answers ranged from (45.2%, n=73) for "This is a school where learning is a priority", to (65.7%, n=106) for "This is a happy school".

Table 3

Q10 - Before Photograph of School Exterior

For each sentence below, rate your impressions of this school.

`	SD	D	NAND	A	SA	DK/ PNTA	Skip/NC

	SD	D	NDNA	A	SA	DK/PNTA	Skip/NC
This is a happy school	36.6%, (n=59)	29.1%, (n=47)	15.5%, (n=25)	1.8%, (n=3)	1.8% (n=3)	3.1% (n=5)	11.8% (n=19)
This school is a stimulating place to learn	31.6% (n=51)	24.2% (n=39)	20.5% (n=33)	1.2% (n=2)	2.4% (n=4)	3.1% (n=5)	16.7% (n=27)
This school is important to the community	34.1% (n=55)	24.2% (n=39)	14.2% (n=23)	5.5% (n=9)	2.4% (n=4)	2.4% (n=4)	16.7% (n=27)
This school inspires hope in its students	32.3% (n=52)	27.9% (n=45)	16.1% (n=26)	1.2% (n=2)	1.2% (n=2)	4.3% (n=7)	16.7% (n=27)
This is a school that inspires students to learn	28.5% (n=46)	24.2% (n=39)	21.7% (n=35)	1.8% (n=3)	1.2% (n=2)	4.3% (n=7)	18% (n=29)
This is a school where learning is a priority	26% (n=42)	19.2% (n=31)	28.5% (n=46)	2.4% (n=4)	1.8% (n=3)	4.3% (n=7)	17.3% (n=28)

Note: The abbreviations used in the table headings are as follows: SD = Strongly disagree, D = Disagree, NDNA = Neither disagree nor agree, A = Agree, A = Strongly agree, DK/PNTA = Don't know/prefer not to answer, Skip/NC = Question skipped or not completed

Focus group participants also reacted negatively to the photos shown in Appendix H. Some participants had a strong emotional reaction to the school in the photo. "It's very scary!" said one participant, while another said, "Just the fact that it's containing something with the metal is disturbing enough to be like, what is going on in that school?" Another participant extended their reaction to sensory elements and a lack of trust pertaining to the safety of the building asking, "Is it scary in there? Does it make weird sounds? Does it smell weird? I'm also thinking, like, you know, inside of a school like that there's going to be a lot of different types of things that are going to be happening inside the walls. Is there mold in there? What's going on that you were not seeing?", "[Laughing] It's Breaking Bad and The Walking Dead together. But in a school".

Other participants connected their reaction to the school with the quality of education the school delivered: "If they don't care now, and they would allow this building to deteriorate to this

point, what's happening inside the building? Is there quality education?" Another participant explained, "It still is important to me that my children have an exceptional school experience. It shapes so much of a young person's personality. So, I want them to be self-aware, and be in a school that is bright and engaging, and where I feel like they'll have opportunity. And then when they see a building like that, my automatic thought is they're not going to have the same kind of education -- even though it's just a building, that's what I'm thinking".

In Appendix I, the after photo shown to participants, the "Agree" ranking of the statements increased significantly. Ranking of "This is a happy school" went from (1.8%, n=3) to (32.3% n=52), a response difference of (30.5%, n=49) or 58% and was the largest difference between the two questions.

Graph 2 - Questions 10 and 11 (Appendix H and I)
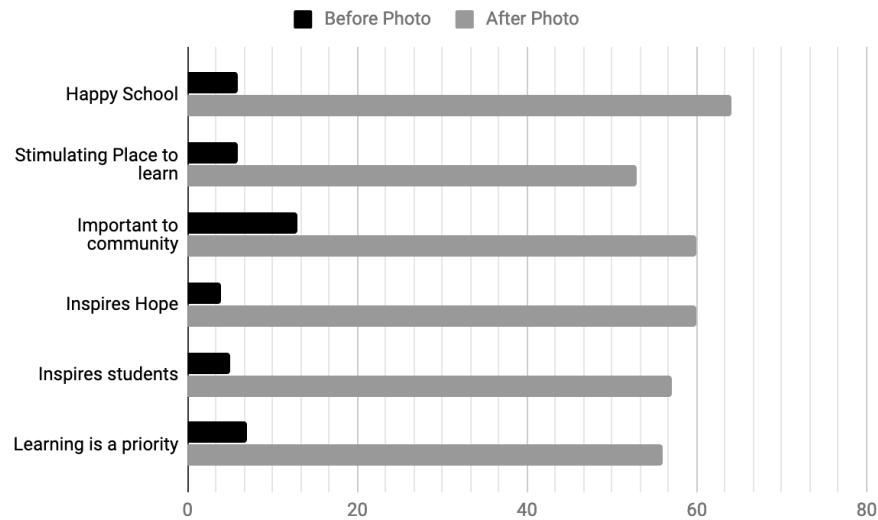
The "Neither Agree Nor Disagree" ranking also increased significantly between the two questions. The biggest increase in that category was in response to "This school is important to the community" with (14.2%, n=23) for question 10 and (34.6%, n=55) for question 11, a 41% difference. It was noted that this particular statement was ranked similarly in question 9.

Table 4

Q11 - After Photograph of School Exterior

For each sentence below, rate your impressions of this school.

`	SD	D	NAND	A	SA	DK/PNTA	Skip/NC
This is a happy school	3.3%, (n=6)	8.7%, (n=14)	28.5%, (n=46)	32.3%, (n=52)	7.45% (n=12)	3.1% (n=5)	16.1% (n=26)
This school is a stimulating place to learn	2.4% (n=4)	6.83% (n=11)	36% (n=58)	26.7% (n=43)	6.2% (n=10)	3.1% (n=5)	18.6% (n=30)
This school is important to the community	3.7% (n=6)	4.3% (n=7)	34.6% (n=55)	28.5% (n=46)	8.7% (n=14)	1.8% (n=3)	18.6% (n=30)
This school inspires hope in its students	3.7% (n=6)	8% (n=13)	31% (n=50)	31% (n=50)	6.2% (n=10)	1.8% (n=3)	18% (n=29)
This is a school that inspires students to learn	2.4% (n=4)	8% (n=13)	32.3% (n=52)	29.8% (n=48)	5.5% (n=9)	3.1% (n=5)	18.6% (n=30)
This is a school where learning is a priority	2.4% (n=4)	6.8% (n=11)	35.4% (n=57)	27.3% (n=44)	7.4% (n=12)	2.4% (n=4)	18% (n=29)

Note: The abbreviations used in the table headings are as follows: SD = Strongly disagree, D = Disagree, NAND = Neither agree nor disagree, A = Agree, A = Strongly agree, DK/PNTA = Don't know/prefer not to answer, Skip/NC = Question skipped or not completed

Upon seeing the after photo of the same school (Appendix I) focus group participants' views on the building improved. "It's added lot of personality and it draws your eyes away from

the uglier parts of the building too, right, because you're drawn to the color and to look at the exciting, you know, vibrant piece and not so much the windows anymore".

"Before the fencing looked like, yeah, it was just closed off. It's also cleaner. It's clean. Even the stairs in the other picture have weeds growing in between. In this picture the gardens are trimmed. The grass is cut". Of note, the building and landscaping was untouched, however the change in the sign made the participant think other changes had been made.

Three of the four focus group participants rated the after photograph, (Appendix I) as more positive than the first. One focus group however, had a negative reaction to the after photo (Appendix I). Overall, the participants felt the sign covering the construction hoarding was "ugly" and "like a giant bandaid". Some participants offered their own solutions for improving the look of the building: "Just plant trees around that whole entrance and voila, a good solution", "A little or playing area for the kids". Other participants had explanations for why the decision to add signage was made: "We came up with 100 great ideas in 30 seconds. I think the people who need to be making these decisions are not the right people", "I think that it's not that people who were in the school didn't care for it, it's that people who make decisions decided they weren't going to care for it". This particular focus groups' reaction could correspond with the increase in "Neither Agree Nor Disagree" responses from the survey.

Summary of RQ2 Results: *How and to what extent do school servicescapes impact parents' assessments of control mutuality, trust, commitment and satisfaction relative to their perceptions of the school experience?*

Table 5

Q12 - Sign on School Door

For each sentence below, rate your impression of this school.

`	SD	D	NAND	A	SA	DK/ PNTA	Skip/NC
The school & parents have a trusting relationship (Trust)	9.3%, (n=15)	19.2%, (n=31)	26.7%, (n=43)	19.8%, (n=32)	4.9% (n=8)	0% (n=0)	19.8% (n=32)
The school values open communication with parents (Satisfaction)	10.5% (n=17)	16.1% (n=26)	19.8% (n=32)	22.9% (n=37)	10.5% (n=17)	0.6% (n=1)	19.2% (n=31)
The school is committed to serving children's learning needs (Satisfaction)	4.3% (n=7)	8% (n=13)	16.7% (n=27)	34.1% (n=55)	18% (n=29)	0.6% (n=1)	18% (n=29)
Parents are satisfied with their relationship with the school (Commitment)	9.3% (n=15)	19.2% (n=31)	31.6% (n=51)	14.2% (n=23)	1.8% (n=3)	3.1% (n=5)	20% (n=33)
This is a school that invites parent feedback (Control Mutuality)	11.1% (n=18)	21.7% (n=35)	33.5% (n=54)	9.3% (n=15)	3.1% (n=5)	1.2% (n=2)	19.8% (n=32)
This is a school that fosters parent engagement (Control Mutuality)	13.6% (n=22)	20.5% (n=33)	31.6% (n=51)	10.5% (n=17)	3.1% (n=5)	1.8% (n=3)	18.6% (n=30)

Note: The abbreviations used in the table headings are as follows: SD = Strongly disagree, D = Disagree, NDNA = Neither disagree nor agree, A = Agree, A = Strongly agree, DK/PNTA = Don't know/prefer not to answer, Skip/NC = Question skipped or not completed

Table 6

Q13 - School Reception Area

For each sentence below, rate your impression of this school.

.	SD	D	NAND	A	SA	DK/PNTA	Skip/NC
The school & parents have a trusting relationship (Trust)	12.4%, (n=20)	26.7%, (n=43)	29.1%, (n=47)	3.7%, (n=6)	4.9% (n=8)	1.2% (n=2)	21.7% (n=35)
The school values open communication with parents (Satisfaction)	12.4% (n=20)	30.4% (n=49)	21.7% (n=35)	6.2% (n=10)	4.9% (n=8)	1.8% (n=3)	22.3% (n=36)
The school is committed to serving children's learning needs (Satisfaction)	8.7% (n=14)	19.8% (n=32)	32.3% (n=52)	6.8% (n=11)	6.2% (n=10)	2.4% (n=4)	23.6% (n=38)
Parents are satisfied with their relationship with the school (Commitment)	9.9% (n=16)	24.8% (n=40)	28.5% (n=46)	3.7% (n=6)	4.3% (n=7)	4.3% (n=7)	24.2% (n=39)
This is a school that invites parent feedback (Control Mutuality)	10.5% (n=17)	27.3% (n=44)	26.7% (n=43)	5.5% (n=9)	4.9% (n=8)	1.8% (n=3)	22.9% (n=37)
This is a school that fosters parent engagement (Control Mutuality)	13.6% (n=22)	27.9% (n=45)	25.4% (n=41)	4.3% (n=7)	4.3% (n=7)	1.2% (n=2)	22.9% (n=37)

Note: The abbreviations used in the table headings are as follows: SD = Strongly disagree, D = Disagree, NDNA = Neither disagree nor agree, A = Agree, A = Strongly agree, DK/PNTA = Don't know/prefer not to answer, Skip/NC = Question skipped or not completed

Table 7

Q16 - 42 Affective Descriptor Headings - Parent's rating of entrance to child's school

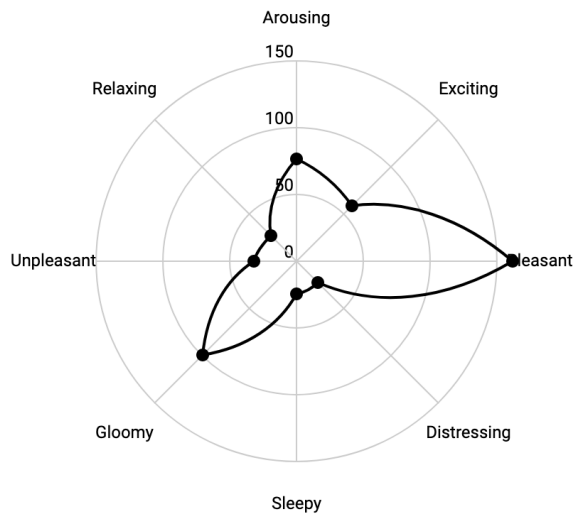| Arousing	Exciting	Pleasant	Distressing	Sleepy	Gloomy	Unpleasant	Relaxing
77	58	162	23	25	100	32	27

Graph 3 - Q 16

Table 8

During your recent visit to your child's school building, what did you notice about the physical aspects of the school? Please rate your response to each of the statements below.

School Facility and Environment	SD	D	NAND	A	SA	DK/ PNTA	Skip/NC

The school looked clean and fresh	1.8% (n=3)	12.4% (n=20)	7.4% (n=12)	36% (n=58)	19.2% (n=31)	0% (n=0)	22.9% (n=37)
School signs were clear and easy to follow	2.4% (n=4)	8% (n=13)	14.2% (n=23)	36% (n=58)	16.1% (n=26)	0.6% (n=1)	22.3% (n=36)
Parking was convenient	11.1% (n=18)	21.7% (n=35)	11.1% (n=18)	18.6% (n=30)	14.2% (n=23)	0.6% (n=1)	22.3% (n=36)
Student work was prominently displayed	2.4% (n=4)	10.5% (n=17)	4.9% (n=8)	40.9% (n=66)	18.6% (n=30)	0% (n=0)	22.3% (n=36)
Lighting was sufficient	1.2% (n=2)	6.2% (n=10)	4.9% (n=8)	45.3% (n=73)	19.8% (n=32)	0% (n=0)	22.3% (n=36)
The school had a pleasant smell	1.2% (n=2)	6.2% (n=10)	26.7% (n=43)	31.6% (n=51)	8.6% (n=14)	1.2% (n=2)	24.2% (n=39)
The school had a nice atmosphere	2.4% (n=4)	7.4% (n=12)	10.5% (n=17)	37.2% (n=60)	20.4% (n=33)	0% (n=0)	21.7% (n=35)
The look of my child's school made me feel good	2.4% (n=4)	11.8% (n=19)	15.5% (n=25)	27.3% (n=44)	19.8% (n=32)	0% (n=0)	22.9% (n=37)

Table 9

Symbols	Spaces	Senses	Human Factors
(13.6%, n=33)	(29.5%, n=55)	(33.2%, n=103)	(2.7%, n=11)

Table 10

Importance of 12 School Choice Factors, Organized into Three Categories

Building Relationships (n=367)	School Business (n=234)	Community Connections (n=156)

Customer Service 3.9% (n=47)	Academics 8.3% (n=100)	Child Care 2.5% (n=30)
Reputation of School 6.6% (n=80)	Athletics 4.5% (n=55)	Location 6.8% (n=82)
Facilities 4.9% (n=59)	Extra-Curricular	Siblings Attend 3.6% (n=44)
School Culture 6.3% (n=76)	Activities 4.75% (n=57)	
Positive Interactions with school in the Past 4.8% (n=58)	School Programs 1.8% (n=22)	

Average: 30.5%	Average: 19.5%	Average: 13%

In question 12, survey and focus group participants were shown a sign posted on the door of a school (Appendix J). Based on the photograph of the sign, participants were asked to rank their level of agreement of statements pertaining to Grunig and Hon's (1999) relationship dimensions: control mutuality, trust, satisfaction, and commitment.

Qualities of trust, commitment, and control mutuality were most frequently ranked within the ranges of "Strongly Disagree" to "Disagree". The statements for control mutuality, "This is a school that invites parent feedback", and "This is a school that fosters parent engagement" were ranked very similarly with (32.8%, n=53), and (34.1%, n=55) respectively.

Control mutuality was the most discussed relationship dimension among participants in the focus groups as well. Some participants felt the sign was insulting: "Please don't talk to us like we are two-year olds; we are adults with children, and they are making us out to be bad apples. We're not". "I'm not trying to distract you from your agenda. Thank you very much. It just feels a little bit (pauses, thinks for a moment) the word is off-putting. Yeah, a bit overdone, a little heavy-handed".

Others characterized it as a barrier to the school and a feeling of not being allowed in the building: "There's a line drawn in this message that basically says, 'you're not welcome here'". "It seems counterintuitive. If you really wanted to spread the message and make parents feel

welcome, then have the teacher chat with the parents as they pick up their child. What a missed opportunity to get to know the classroom teacher as well", "Right now I don't feel like I'm welcome. Yeah".

Some participants felt the message and how it was presented indicates the type of relationship the school had with the parents. "What is that choice of choosing that message in those words and presenting it that way?", "Here's how we communicate with parents at our school. What it says to me is it's very top down from the principal".

The two outliers for the statements pertaining to satisfaction were "This school values open communication with parents" (10.5%, n=17), and "This school is committed to serving children's learning needs" (18%, n=29). Both of these statements represented the two largest scores for the "Strongly Agree" rank. Other rankings for "Strongly Agree" were relatively low with the following: (4.9, n=8), (1.8%, n=3), (3.1%, n=5), and (3.1%, n=5).

It is possible that the difference here is that the sign presented an example of the school communicating with the parents. Although focus group participants were critical of the sign, they also acknowledged that they understood that the school was trying to get a message across: "Yeah. It's an important message and it makes sense what they're saying. And clearly they're prioritizing student safety. They just should have done it differently", "I feel like 'oh, you know at least the school is looking out for my kid'", "I see a principal having to deal with their staff and being like, 'OK how can I get the functionality and practicality of this?'".

Table 5

Q12 - Sign on School Door

For each sentence below, rate your impression of this school.

.	SD	D	NAND	A	SA	DK/PNTA	Skip/NC
The school & parents have a trusting relationship (Trust)	9.3%, (n=15)	19.2%, (n=31)	26.7%, (n=43)	19.8%, (n=32)	4.9% (n=8)	0% (n=0)	19.8% (n=32)
The school values open communication with parents (Satisfaction)	10.5% (n=17)	16.1% (n=26)	19.8% (n=32)	22.9% (n=37)	10.5% (n=17)	0.6% (n=1)	19.2% (n=31)
The school is committed to serving children's learning needs (Satisfaction)	4.3% (n=7)	8% (n=13)	16.7% (n=27)	34.1% (n=55)	18% (n=29)	0.6% (n=1)	18% (n=29)
Parents are satisfied with their relationship with the school (Commitment)	9.3% (n=15)	19.2% (n=31)	31.6% (n=51)	14.2% (n=23)	1.8% (n=3)	3.1% (n=5)	20% (n=33)
This is a school that invites parent feedback (Control Mutuality)	11.1% (n=18)	21.7% (n=35)	33.5% (n=54)	9.3% (n=15)	3.1% (n=5)	1.2% (n=2)	19.8% (n=32)
This is a school that fosters parent engagement (Control Mutuality)	13.6% (n=22)	20.5% (n=33)	31.6% (n=51)	10.5% (n=17)	3.1% (n=5)	1.8% (n=3)	18.6% (n=30)

Note: The abbreviations used in the table headings are as follows: SD = Strongly disagree, D = Disagree, NDNA = Neither disagree nor agree, A = Agree, A = Strongly agree, DK/PNTA = Don't know/prefer not to answer, Skip/NC = Question skipped or not completed

Question 13 showed participants a photograph (Appendix J) of a school reception area, where parents would typically sign in and speak to the secretary. Across all statements, the majority of participants selected "Strongly Disagree" or "Disagree" in reaction to the

photograph. "The school values open communication with parents" a statement pertaining to satisfaction with the relationship, was ranked negatively by (68.3%, n=69) of the participants. A statement about control mutuality "This is a school that fosters parent engagement", was ranked negatively by (66.3%, n=67) participants.

Table 6

Q13 - School Reception Area

For each sentence below, rate your impression of this school.

	SD	D	NAND	A	SA	DK/ PNTA	Skip/NC
The school & parents have a trusting relationship (Trust)	12.4%, (n=20)	26.7%, (n=43)	29.1%, (n=47)	3.7%, (n=6)	4.9% (n=8)	1.2% (n=2)	21.7% (n=35)
The school values open communication with parents (Satisfaction)	12.4% (n=20)	30.4% (n=49)	21.7% (n=35)	6.2% (n=10)	4.9% (n=8)	1.8% (n=3)	22.3% (n=36)
The school is committed to serving children's learning needs (Satisfaction)	8.7% (n=14)	19.8% (n=32)	32.3% (n=52)	6.8% (n=11)	6.2% (n=10)	2.4% (n=4)	23.6% (n=38)
Parents are satisfied with their relationship with the school (Commitment)	9.9% (n=16)	24.8% (n=40)	28.5% (n=46)	3.7% (n=6)	4.3% (n=7)	4.3% (n=7)	24.2% (n=39)
This is a school that invites parent feedback (Control Mutuality)	10.5% (n=17)	27.3% (n=44)	26.7% (n=43)	5.5% (n=9)	4.9% (n=8)	1.8% (n=3)	22.9% (n=37)

	SD	D	NDNA	A	A	DK/PNTA	Skip/NC
This is a school that fosters parent engagement (Control Mutuality)	13.6% (n=22)	27.9% (n=45)	25.4% (n=41)	4.3% (n=7)	4.3% (n=7)	1.2% (n=2)	22.9% (n=37)

Note: The abbreviations used in the table headings are as follows: SD = Strongly disagree, D = Disagree, NDNA = Neither disagree nor agree, A = Agree, A = Strongly agree, DK/PNTA = Don't know/prefer not to answer, Skip/NC = Question skipped or not completed

Reactions from focus groups were equally negative: "That's where you drop off your stuff as they check you into the prison", "It's such a small window and half of it is covered up with paper", "I would be mortified to leave my child here".

Feelings of an inability to communicate with the school and lack of trust were two reactions that participants had to the photo: "I think there's that separation again. Distance. Looks like it's going to be a challenge to communicate", "That barrier and the small window connotes a lack of trust".

Other participants wondered why more effort had not been made to make the space more welcoming: "You can dress that up to represent your school in some way. You can put stuff around it. You could you could make it comfortable and welcoming in so many ways. There's lots of possibilities there".

These reactions of the participants are indicative of the ability of a servicescape to "assume a facilitator role by either aiding or hindering the ability of customers and employees to carry out their respective activities" (Bitner, 1992, p. 67). In this example, the servicescape hindered the ability of parents to access the school, and potentially the barrier of the blocked window also prevented the secretary from fulfilling administrative tasks such as signing parents in to the school.

For question 16, survey participants rated the entrance of their child's school based on Mehrabian and Russell's 42 affective descriptors. The 504 descriptors chosen were organized into their headings according to the emotional variant axis (Table 7).

Table 7

Q16 - 42 Affective Descriptor Headings - Parent's rating of entrance to child's school

Arousing	Exciting	Pleasant	Distressing	Sleepy	Gloomy	Unpleasant	Relaxing
77	58	162	23	25	100	32	27

As shown when plotted on the emotional variant axis (Graph 3), parents rated the entrance of their child's school most frequently in the "arousing-exciting-pleasant" quadrant with 324 ratings or 64.2% of total rankings overall. This quadrant encourages advancement behaviour; these parents are more likely to enter their child's school with positive feelings and stay longer in the building as well.

Parents used 180 descriptors (35.7% of descriptors used) to plot their child's school on the unpleasant-gloomy-sleepy quadrant of the emotional variant axis describing their child's school entrances as "distressing", "gloomy", "sleepy" and "unpleasant". These descriptors encourage avoidance behaviour; parents are less likely to enter the school, and when they do go inside, they will spend as little time in the space as possible.

Graph 3 - Q 16

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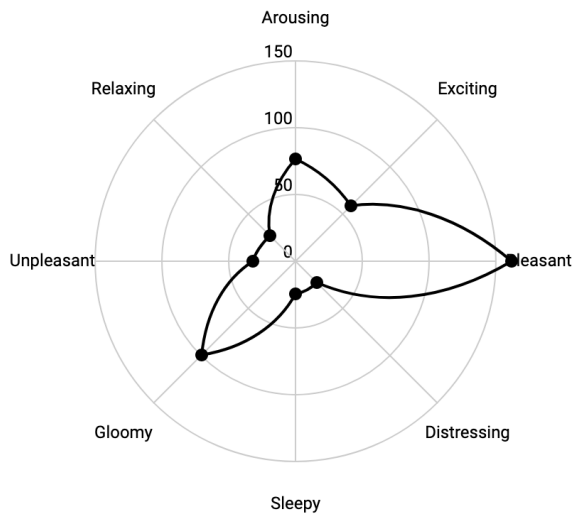
In question 17, participants were asked to rate their agreement with six statements pertaining to their child's school. Of those six statements, only one, "The look of my child's school made me feel good" pertained to an emotional response. Respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with that statement comprised (47.2%, n=76) which interestingly does not align with the participants who plotted their child's school entrance using positive descriptors from question 16 with 64.2%.

This trend was consistent with the disagree or strongly disagree ranking of statements for "The look of my child's school made me feel good". The ranking for question 17 was (14.2%, n=23) while 35.7% of negative descriptors were used to describe the entrances of participants' children's schools. It is possible that not all of the descriptors were chosen as a negative response, although according to the Mehrabian and Russell emotions axis they would have been

plotted that way. For instance, the "sleepy" sub-heading for example may not infer a negative attribute to some of the participants.

Another explanation could be that participants could chose a variety of responses, however none of the responses were neutral. The two options for those who felt neutral about the statement was to skip it or write their own answer in the "other" category. Thirteen respondents choose to provide their own words. These words were not plotted on the emotions axis as they did not match the words, however (61%, n=8) of the words were negative while (38%, n=5) were positive. Thirteen percent (n=21) of the participants skipped this question.

The majority of respondents for question 17 either agreed or strongly agreed with positive statements about their child's school. In six categories, respondents' rankings in "agree" or "strongly agree" ranged from (40.3%, n=65 - smell) to (65.2%, n=105 - lighting). In contrast, respondents who either disagreed or strongly disagreed with positive statements pertaining to their child's school facility were in the minority. The lowest ranking of respondents who chose "strongly disagree" or "disagree" was (0.7%, n=12) in two of the six categories, with the remaining categories ranging from (10.5%, n=17 - Signage) to (32.9%, n=53 - Parking). Table 8 below illustrates the categories and rankings that pertained to this survey question.

Two outliers from the distribution pattern of a majority of responses being "agree" or "agree strongly" and the fewest being "disagree" or "disagree strongly" were responses to parking and the odor of the school.

In response to the question, "Parking was convenient" showed (32.9%, n=53) respondents either "strongly disagreed" or "disagreed" which comprised the greatest accumulation of negative responses in that category. Parking in schools is funded for the number of teachers based on enrolment when the school was built, rather than the size of the parent

community. Often school parking lots cannot accommodate both staff and visitor parking, or the

busy flow of traffic in and out of the parking lot during morning and afternoon pick up.

The second outlier in this category was in response to "The school had a pleasant smell".

Twenty-six percent (n=43) of respondents gave a neutral ranking to this question, the highest

neutral ranking in the category.

Table 8

During your recent visit to your child's school building, what did you notice about the physical

aspects of the school? Please rate your response to each of the statements below.

School Facility and Environment	SD	D	NAND	A	SA	DK/ PNTA	Skip/NC
The school looked clean and fresh	1.8% (n=3)	12.4% (n=20)	7.4% (n=12)	36% (n=58)	19.2% (n=31)	0% (n=0)	22.9% (n=37)
School signs were clear and easy to follow	2.4% (n=4)	8% (n=13)	14.2% (n=23)	36% (n=58)	16.1% (n=26)	0.6% (n=1)	22.3% (n=36)
Parking was convenient	11.1% (n=18)	21.7% (n=35)	11.1% (n=18)	18.6% (n=30)	14.2% (n=23)	0.6% (n=1)	22.3% (n=36)
Student work was prominently displayed	2.4% (n=4)	10.5% (n=17)	4.9% (n=8)	40.9% (n=66)	18.6% (n=30)	0% (n=0)	22.3% (n=36)
Lighting was sufficient	1.2% (n=2)	6.2% (n=10)	4.9% (n=8)	45.3% (n=73)	19.8% (n=32)	0% (n=0)	22.3% (n=36)
The school had a pleasant smell	1.2% (n=2)	6.2% (n=10)	26.7% (n=43)	31.6% (n=51)	8.6% (n=14)	1.2% (n=2)	24.2% (n=39)
The school had a nice atmosphere	2.4% (n=4)	7.4% (n=12)	10.5% (n=17)	37.2% (n=60)	20.4% (n=33)	0% (n=0)	21.7% (n=35)
The look of my child's school made me feel good	2.4% (n=4)	11.8% (n=19)	15.5% (n=25)	27.3% (n=44)	19.8% (n=32)	0% (n=0)	22.9% (n=37)

The majority of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with positive statements

about their child's school. In six categories, respondents' rankings in "agree" or "strongly agree"

ranged from (32.9%, n=53) to (65.2%, n=105). In contrast, respondents who either disagreed or strongly disagreed with positive statements pertaining to their child's school facility were in the minority. The lowest ranking of respondents who chose "strongly disagree" or "disagree" was (0.7%, n=12) in 2 of the six categories, with the remaining categories ranging from (0.3%, n=6) to (32.9%, n=53). Table 1 below illustrates the categories and rankings that pertained to this survey question.

Two outliers from the distribution pattern of a majority of responses being "agree" or "agree strongly" and the fewest being "disagree" or "disagree strongly" were responses to parking and the odor of the school.

In response to the question, "Parking was convenient" showed (32.9%, n=53) respondents either "strongly disagreed" or "disagreed" which comprised the greatest accumulation of negative responses in that category; the next highest negative response at 14.2% (n=23), under half. Parking in schools is funded for the number of teachers based on enrolment when the school was built, rather than the size of the parent community.

The second outlier in this category was in response to "The school had a pleasant smell". Twenty-six percent (n=43) of respondents gave a neutral ranking to this question, the highest neutral ranking in the category.

Questions 18 and 19 asked participants "If you could change something about the way your child's school looks, what would it be?", and "If you could change something about the way your child's school feels, what would it be?". From reading the responses, it was clear that participants interchanged "looks" and "feels". So, the responses to these two questions were combined.

Question 18 had (63.9%, n=103) responses, and question 19 had (62.1%, n=100) responses which were averaged to 63% of the responses when combined. The 203 responses were organized into the servicescape categories of "Symbols, Space, Senses" An additional category, "Human Factors" was added to capture comments that pertained to people who interact with the school. Table 9 below illustrates the frequency of responses in each category.

Table 9

Symbols	Spaces	Senses	Human Factors
(13.6%, n=33)	(29.5%, n=55)	(33.2%, n=103)	(2.7%, n=11)

Spaces:

A content analysis of spaces showed that despite the 55 comments, they were all about a few items. For instance, 23 participants wanted to see more greenery, landscaping, or outdoor classrooms at their child's school. Suggestions included, "More greenspace and less pavement", "Improve the playground area and change the chain link fence around the on-site daycare", and "Outdoor play area or naturalized play space with trees".

Fifty-eight participants suggested building repairs and updates, and making the school more inviting. Their ideas ranged from "Overall, the schools looks similar to the elementary school I went to 35 years ago. Teaching has changed a lot but the aesthetics of the classrooms and school have not changed in the last three decades", "Do not like the high counter in the office - fewer barriers between office personnel and parents", and "The school is very dark and imposing on the exterior - it looks institutional and foreboding. It'd be nice if the front entranceway was more welcoming/open/bright/ instead of something that looks like a service entrance on a 1970s building".

The remaining comments ranged from getting rid of portables, changing the parking, adding central air conditioning, removing clutter and cramped spaces, adding bigger windows and other items to improve the quality of life for students during the school day. One parent suggested, "There would be a larger space for children who require support with their IEPs. A learning lab that would serve all students but more important inspire students with IEPs". Often support of children with IEPs is done in foyers, empty closets, and a spare table at the back of a classroom.

Senses:

One hundred and three participants offered suggestions that pertained to the senses of a servicescape. Thirty-three participants suggested colour as a way to improve their child's school: "Fresh paint and bright colours - it's pretty brown", "Vibrant colour, more inviting", "Brighter colour pops!".

Twenty-eight participants made suggestions connected to lighting or wanting to see more "brightness" in the school: "Less institutional and a lot more natural light", "Not very bright, kind of dated", "The lighting in the school is rather dull, especially at the front by the office. Brighter lights may promote a brighter feel".

The remaining comments pertained to changing the institutional look of the school, creating a more open and engaging environment, and integrating the ideas of students into the look of the building: "Student led initiatives that show the children are in charge and proud of how their school looks", "Give each school a way to express more of its students' personalities".

Symbols:

Participants (n=17) suggested that student artwork, murals, and items showing school pride would improve the look and feel of the school. "More student work, less office type stuff. I

want to know how my child is taught and learns". Five participants felt signage at their child's

school could be improved suggesting, "Bigger, clearer and better signs for people who are new

and don't know where things are. Other ideas included inspirational quotes, and less clutter on

the walls.

Human Factors:

Although this section was small, participants' suggestions pertained to wanting staff to be

more welcoming (six comments) and wanting to feel more included in school culture (four

comments). Comments ranged from "Secretary acts like it's an imposition to her if you drop in.

Why hire someone who obviously doesn't like children?", to "Warmer, happier looking people",

to "Want to feel included in the school - like they are happy to see me".

Table 10

Importance of 12 School Choice Factors, Organized into Three Categories

Building Relationships (n=367)	School Business (n=234)	Community Connections (n=156)
Customer Service 3.9% (n=47)	Academics 8.3% (n=100)	Child Care 2.5% (n=30)
Reputation of School 6.6% (n=80)	Athletics 4.5% (n=55)	Location 6.8% (n=82)
Facilities 4.9% (n=59)	Extra-Curricular	Siblings Attend 3.6% (n=44)
School Culture 6.3% (n=76)	Activities 4.75% (n=57)	
Positive Interactions with school in	School Programs 1.8% (n=22)	
the Past 4.8% (n=58)		
Average: 30.5%	Average: 19.5%	Average: 13%

Participants selected the variables that were most important to them when they chose

their child's school. Table 10 shows the 12 school choice factors organized into three categories:

building relationships, school business, and community connections.

Building Relationships refers to those elements of a school that when done well, can facilitate a relationship with the parent. School Business refers to the core functions of a school, curriculum, and extra-curricular programs. Community Connections describes elements that anchor the school in the community: location, child care, and a sibling previously enrolled.

The number of selections per factor was divided by the 12 factor to arrive at an average. School facilities 4.9% (n=59) ranked higher than seven of the 12 categories including Athletics 4.5% (n=55), Extra Curricular Activities 4.75% (n=57), and Positive Interactions with School in the Past 4.8% (n=58) among others.

Part Three: RQ3: *How and to what extent do school public relations professionals view servicescapes as a way to build mutually beneficial relationships with their publics?*

Public relations professionals working in publicly funded school boards in Ontario have a vast range of responsibilities. When in senior positions, they are members of the leadership team; in that role they offer strategic advice based on research, environmental scanning, and data analysis. They are called on in a crisis to be lead spokesperson with media, provide briefing notes to senior staff and trustees, and give support to schools. Strategic branding, marketing, and social media strategy is yet another important part of their work. Through six in-depth interviews, school public relations professionals discussed that one of their most important roles is community relations and specifically, the work they carry out to foster mutually-beneficial relationships with parents.

Commenting on the importance of developing relationships, one interviewee explained, "It's about building trust. I need to build trust with these individuals [parents] so they they can help me in tougher times". Another participant suggested that parents' expectations have

changed; communicating in a way that parents want helps to build relationships: "We know that parents that are coming into our school system now grew up with technology as their their main source for communication. So their expectation is that is how they're going to be communicated to. There's also an expectation of "right now" information. An expectation of knowing exactly what is happening with their child right now." Another public relations professional credited social media with helping to build relationships by giving PR staff a direct link to communicating with parents: "Through our Board Facebook account we address concerns, we address misunderstandings, misconceptions, and falsehoods, and that may help them feel better about our whole system".

The interviewees identified a range of strategies they use to connect with and develop relationships with the parent community. These included working directly with school councils through a leadership initiative, assisting schools with communication plans and parent survey data to identify parent needs, advocating with staff on the importance of including parent audiences when seeking input and feedback, supporting the work of the Parent Involvement Committee, ensuring notifications systems like snow day messages are in place, and having interactive social media platforms.

Creating visually appealing collateral was considered by the public relations professionals as an important part of successful messaging by creating brand recognition. All of the interviewees agreed that visual identity standards, branding standards, "and visual consistency is important because it builds credibility and trust". There was agreement that consistent branding was a way to build trust between schools, school boards, and parents, "I want them [parents] first and foremost to trust schools with the communication that they send out. But I also want to be just as engaged in that trust. If we sent something out to parents, we want them

to really pay attention to it, and they want to know that's coming from a good source".

Despite their expertise in fostering mutually-beneficial relationships with parents and in creating consistency in their branding for parents, none of the public relations professionals had considered the work they have done in creating welcoming environments for parents as a way to build relationships. Instead, they thought of this work was connected to curb appeal and customer service initiatives, marketing efforts to boost flagging enrolment in some schools, and helping to create communication equity amongst school cultures.

All of the interviewees knew anecdotally about the impact of building environments on visitors and had some experience working with servicescapes, through their own research, research obtained from third party organizations, and via a committee created to address the loss of students to a competitor school board.

One public relations professional found that choice of schools often came down to how schools looked on the outside. *"That exterior curb appeal is so important; if you've barred up all the windows, if it is unkempt, if it doesn't look tidy, if there isn't a garden, you know all of those exterior pieces we found in our research contribute to the perception that the school is not a caring place, not a safe space".*

One school district created a campaign to make their schools and administrative buildings feel welcoming. "Part of the work we did was to examine all the touchpoints that someone experiences when they are coming into a building. Are they walking along a path that's cleared? Is there easy signage to know what door to use, how to use the door, or the entrance system when they come in? Are there arrows to direct them to the office so they know where to go?"

Another participant's ongoing role with the school-built environment is to promote positive, and inclusive cultures. "Our lens is always advocating for welcoming environments that

are well maintained … does the school reflect the community that it's serving so it is a place that everyone can be proud of?".

Given the opportunity to obtain professional development pertaining to servicescapes, all of the participants agreed that they would want to learn more. Some of the participants have seen positive changes to school culture after implementing adjustments to the built environment giving them the impetus to learn more: "These schools have seen their enrollment grow and there are certainly people who would say that their students and the community are respectful, and that wasn't their impression initially".

The appeal of learning more about servicescapes for some participants was about connecting with other staff and departments within their school board to collaborate on shared projects: "So that would be something that I might want to convince my counterparts in planning and designing construction to come to with me", "There would be so many tentacles to different portfolios across the Board that would come up. And the interesting thing is that they would all be fascinated with the physical building and to think about it from each of our different perspectives, business services, physical plant, janitorial services...".

Having the professional development in servicescapes would not be enough according to some of the interviewees. To make an impact, it would have to be part of a school board approved initiative with clear roles and expectations. One PR professional explained that otherwise, "It's the kind of thing that everybody would think is someone else's job and then you are working at cross purposes. One department says, 'Well that's up to Communications to do that', and then Physical Plant says, "Well no, that should be us'".

Half the PR professionals interviewed agreed that working on the built environment would be a way that they could facilitate building relationships with parents. One interviewee

suggested: "As we modernize education, we realize parents are a really important contributor to the culture of the school the community, and the value they bring to the child's education. So, the more we can make them feel welcome, the more we engage them in that process, the more it makes them feel positively about the school, their child's education, and the school board too". Another participant pointed out, "You can't build a relationship unless you have trust. And with so many of our schools that were built in the 60s where they created these brown boxes -- they don't reflect the innovation in education we have today. When there is a contradiction between the school environment and the people within it what are parents going to trust? It's up to Communications to advocate for our schools to remove that contradiction in their spaces".

The other half of the PR professionals felt that working on the physical space of the school would not be enough, it would have to be accompanied by a program for frontline staff and/or the school staff on customer service to be successful. "I've been in beautiful schools that have no spirit, and ugly schools with amazing culture. I suggest it's important that the people inside the building are still that the driver of enthusiasm for the building experience", "I think the relationships make or break a space."

` Bitner would agree with the sentiment that servicescape projects cannot happen in a vacuum; they must take into consideration how the space will be used by staff and customers and their unique needs for the space (Bitner, 1992). As stated earlier in this capstone, servicescapes can act as facilitators between customers and employees (Bitner, 1992). The design of the "servicescape can also encourage and nurture particular forms of social interaction among and between employees and customers" (Bitner, 1992, p. 67), so the design of a servicescape can actually enhance positive interaction between school staff and parents.

Discussion

Using Bitner's servicescapes model (1992), and Mehrabian and Russell's 42 affective descriptors (1974), this capstone explored if parents have an affective response to school servicescapes, and further, explored to what extent.

Both survey and focus group participants assigned emotions to photographs of school entrances, foyers, and hallways they had not seen before. Without any information about the school, including the location, the age of the pupils, and the size of the school, parents rated schools for their level of happiness, their ability to inspire students, their commitment to student learning among others.

Parents rating these qualities in a school in itself is not surprising as human beings tend to have ideas and judgements about all kinds of things they have never experienced before. What was significant, is how participants rated before and after pictures of schools that had been modified with paint or signage. These results showed that parents' ratings of the schools shown in the "after" pictures, were more positive than the "before" photos.

Participants showed that Bitner's three servicescape categories, senses, space, and symbols, did impact their selections both emotionally and cognitively. A school hallway painted bright blue and orange was attributed as being "an exciting place to learn" receiving a 49% increase in "Agree" and "Strongly Agree" rankings for "This school is a stimulating place to learn".

Participants' comments also indicated that they are tired of schools that are institutional, use the colour beige, and are not friendly and vibrant. Parents expect to be warmly welcomed when they come to their child's school, and they want to see their child enjoy the school day in a facility that is safe, happy, and clean. While it is clear that parents are impacted by school

servicescapes, it was important to investigate how that impact related to Grunig and Hon's (1999) relationship dimensions.

A sign at a school, and sign-in area for a school office were evaluated by survey and focus group participants. Rather than asking participants to evaluate the quality of the school, they were asked to rate the quality of the relationship of the school's relationship with the parent community based on qualities of control mutuality, trust, commitment, and satisfaction.

The data showed that school servicescapes did impact parents' assessments of the relationship with the school. Control mutuality was the biggest concern for participants, who wanted more access to the school and with its staff. A small, cluttered window through which to speak with the secretary was indicative of a school that does not have control mutuality with parents, and as such parents had a low degree of satisfaction with the relationship.

Of interest was participant ratings of the school's commitment to the relationship with the parent. Even if the school servicescape was negative, participants were able to overlook that if the school demonstrated that they were fully committed to the safety and education of their child.

A sign hung on a locked school doorway was insulting to many participants, but because the message referenced student learning and safety, parents were willing to make an exception for the school.

This theme showed again through participant assessments of what their child's school currently is, and what it could be. Participants rated their child's school entryway, rated the school facilities based on six factors, and made suggestions for improving the look and feel of their child's school. Although the participants criticized perceived flaws with their child's school and offered dozens of ideas for making the school servicescape more positive, the majority of

respondents rated their child's school facility highly. This data seems counterintuitive to the strong ways that participants talked about what they felt were the failings of their child's school.

However, when asked if they would recommend their child's school, (65.8%, n=106) participants agreed or strongly agreed that they would. When asked for rationale for their choice, of the (70.1%, n=113) participants who provided a positive comment, (34.1%, n=55) said the most influential factor was the relationship that the child had with their teacher, and the openness of communication with parents.

So, while parents are affected by the school servicescape, and it does impact how they rate the quality of their relationship with the school, they are willing to accept a servicescape that needs work, and a less than optimal relationship with their child's school provided they perceive that their child has a good relationship with their teacher and that the teacher and staff cares about their child.

The insights of public relations professionals working for school districts in Ontario were important to this study as they are typically the staff who have community relations and parent engagement in their portfolios.

The in-depth interviews showed that these "school pr" staff are already working in the realm of servicescapes by working to create welcoming school spaces to parents and students. Interviewees were interested to learn more about servicescapes and all felt that they would make a great addition to the strategies they are already using to build relationships. However, practitioners working with buildings beyond customer service training would need to involve multiple stakeholders requiring multi-department buy-in. Additionally, communication staff were hesitant to develop a servicescapes project without also doing a complementary customer service training program for front-line staff such as secretaries and caretakers.

Servicescape Relationship Development Model

To the researcher's knowledge, it is the first time that academic research from public relations, marketing, and environmental psychology has been combined to examine if it is possible for organizations to develop relationships with their priority publics through the design of the built environment. The Servicescape Relationship Development Model was created to
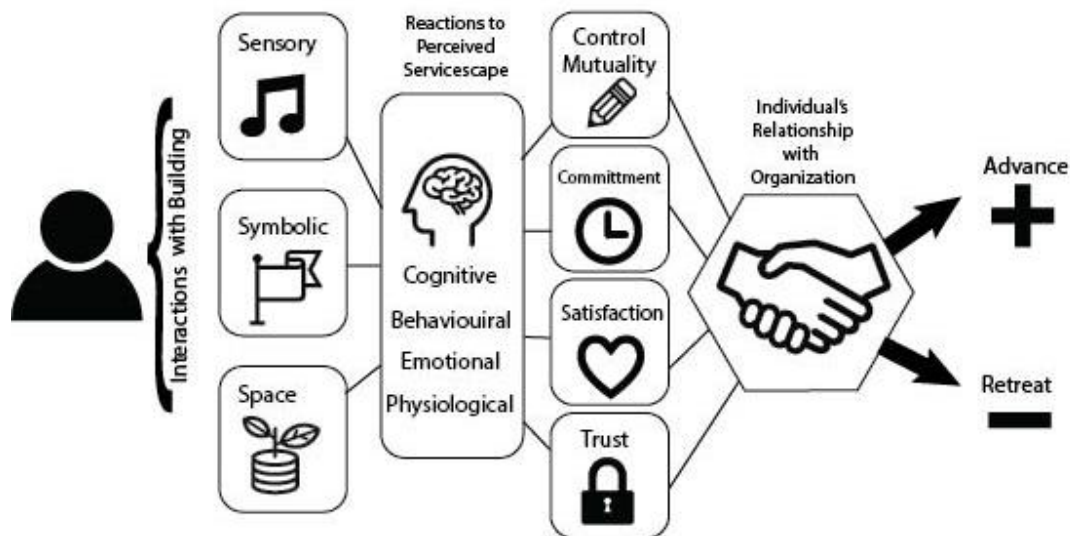
combine the essence of the research and to illustrate how the process of relationship development or deterioration could occur when an individual encounters a building or servicescape.

The flow of the model runs left to right, after an individual has entered the servicescape. The individual experiences the area through Bitner's three servicescape factors: sensory characteristics such as smell, temperature, and sound, symbolic features such as artwork and signage, and space, how the space is designed and furnished.

The individual experiences cognitive, behavioural, emotional, and physiological reactions to the servicescape. These reactions reinforce or denigrate the individual's perception of their

relationship with the organization based on Grunig and Hon's relationship dimensions of control mutuality, commitment, satisfaction, and trust. Some experiences of the servicescape may reinforce perceived positive attributes of the individual's relationship with the organization, thus creating a advancement response where they perceive the relationship as mutually beneficial. Other experiences may have a negative impact, causing the individual to want to retreat from the relationship.

Recommendations for Communications Professionals

Public relations is evolving at a rapid speed, creating increasing opportunities for PR professionals to apply their strategic mindsets and aptitude for resourcefulness. Integrating servicescapes into organizational public relations strategy is an untapped resource. The intrinsic value of public relations professionals to their organizations is unfortunately not growing at the same rate as the field. Thus, the more public relation practitioners can add another layer of value to their practice the more it will advance the value of the profession.

Integrate Servicescapes into Existing Projects

While this particular study cannot be considered rigorous enough to have external viability, there is an abundance of academic research in related fields such as marketing that proves that servicescapes do impact individuals. One way to test if servicescape practices could have value to your public relations practice is to try an aspect of the research on a project you are already working on. A client with an image problem, an organization trying to boost their walk-in traffic, even the front lobby of your own firm could be potential places to test if servicescapes practices helps you achieve your public relations goals.

Add Building Audits to Your PR Practice

People who enjoy eating at restaurants will often say that the state of the washroom is a reflection of the condition of the kitchen. Spaces reflect the organization; when there is cognitive dissonance between who an organization claims to be and what their building looks like creates a feeling of mistrust in clients. Doing a simple audit can help align the organization with its space.

Begin with housekeeping. The space should be clean and free of clutter and items in need of repair. The entrance to the building should be easy to access, with clear signage. The furniture should provide a place to make visitors feel welcome.

Not every space has the ideal design. Enhance spaces by looking for elements that create positives in the space such as large windows, and beautiful woodwork. Minimize items that detract from the space such as electrical panels and conduit.

Recommendations for Further Research

There are many opportunities to do further research in this area. Referring to work that has been done in marketing contexts, it would be interesting to break up the servicescape areas and focus in on one of the variables, or even one element contained within the variables. For instance, colour is part of the sense variable; research could focus on that one element.

Research could be extended to include privately funded schools to see if there are comparative results. Thinking that parents chose to pay to send their child to school rather than have their child publicly educated, are they as impacted by servicescapes as the participants in this study? Research could also be extended to other areas in the public sector and to private corporations.

Limitations

The vast geographical and population sizes of Ontario discussed earlier in this capstone, created the limitation of having equal sampling from a variety of demographics and locations. Because participants were recruited from contact holder connections of the researcher, an inference can be made that the majority of survey participants likely live close to Niagara, Ontario. For the study to be truly robust, it would require survey participants from across Ontario.

A lack of survey funding meant the researcher had to rely on the willingness of participants to volunteer for the three methodologies in the study, rather than being enticed by an incentive. This in part, could have impacted the low sample sizes for all three methodologies. Because of these low sample sizes, the capstone does not have external validity.

The survey was only offered in English, which excluded non-English speakers. With over 200 languages spoken in Ontario, and with 80.5 percent of "Ontarians speaking English at home" (Government of Ontario, 2016), this means that within the 19.5 percent of the population who may have qualified for the survey would not have been able to participate.

Considering that 92% of Ontarians have access to the internet (Government of Canada, 2017) meant that the majority of participants who qualified for the survey would be able to access it. However, the survey did not use responsive design; most Ontarians would have accessed it using a smartphone (Government of Canada, 2017), and thus would not have had an optimal experience; perhaps skipped questions or exited from the survey because of it.

There was a glitch in question 20 which resulted in the researcher not being able to include the data from that question in this study.

Some of the weaknesses of this capstone came from the researcher herself. The researcher is unable to do statistics calculations which she feels would have greatly contributed to the inferences made in this study. Additionally, an average of (13%, n=21) participants did not complete their surveys. With more experience and expertise in survey design, the researcher feels the completion rate could have been higher.

Researcher bias was another limitation of this capstone. The researcher has been interested in this topic since 2011, when she initiated a servicescape project to counteract negative media attention for a program that was about to be launched at her school board (Hammer, 2011). While at that time she did not know about servicescapes and was not familiar with the academic research on that topic, her interest led her to choosing this topic for this study. Ways that personal bias was addressed for this study included working with McMaster University Research Ethics Office to ensure the study met with all ethical protocols and did not unduly influence research participants in any way.

Working with the researcher's Capstone Advisor to review and approve research questions and methodologies was an important way to ensure questions and wording were not manipulating participants into providing responses.

The researcher combatted confirmation bias by using quantitative survey data alongside qualitative responses from survey and focus group participants. The researcher included comments that did not support the research questions to demonstrate that the hypothesis could not always be supported.

Not being able to go to real school environments with focus groups was a limitation of this study. Being immersed in the servicescape would give participants much more concrete data on which to base their commentary.

Conclusion

Although public relations activities can be traced alongside the development of human civilization, most modern public relations history is focused on American public relations practices that occurred during the 20th Century (Bentele, 2013, p. 246). The notion of public relations professionals as unethical spin doctors and propagandists stems from one-way press-agentry models which emerged in response to "muckraking journalism" (Bentele, 2013, p. 255) and by practitioners like Edward Bernays who in the 1920s believed that the role of public relations was to "exercise power though the mass media to control the minds of the masses, i.e. openly as propaganda" (D. Verčič & A.T. Verčič, 2013, p. 262). Public relations practices have evolved since then to recognize that organizations should not seek to control their publics, but instead engage with them in mutually-beneficial relationships. The benefits to organizations, publics, and society at large are innumerable, so much so that Duhé and Wright, (2013), citing Hon (2006) note that, "Organizations have moral duties to engage in dialogue with their strategic publics" (p. 99).

The modern toolkits of PR practitioners include providing strategic advice to the C-Suite, possessing exemplary writing and interpersonal skills, deft branding and reputation management prowess, and understanding and executing data analytics for organizational initiatives. This PR expertise is typically developed with the overarching goal of "developing mutually beneficial relationships with strategic publics" (All About PR, 2019).

While servicescape research has been widely used in marketing to influence consumer buying decisions, and encourage consumer behaviour to increase the bottom-line, the research is easily transferable to the field public relations. Understanding how priority publics react to

organizational spaces can help to facilitate a positive relationship with them the moment they

enter the building.
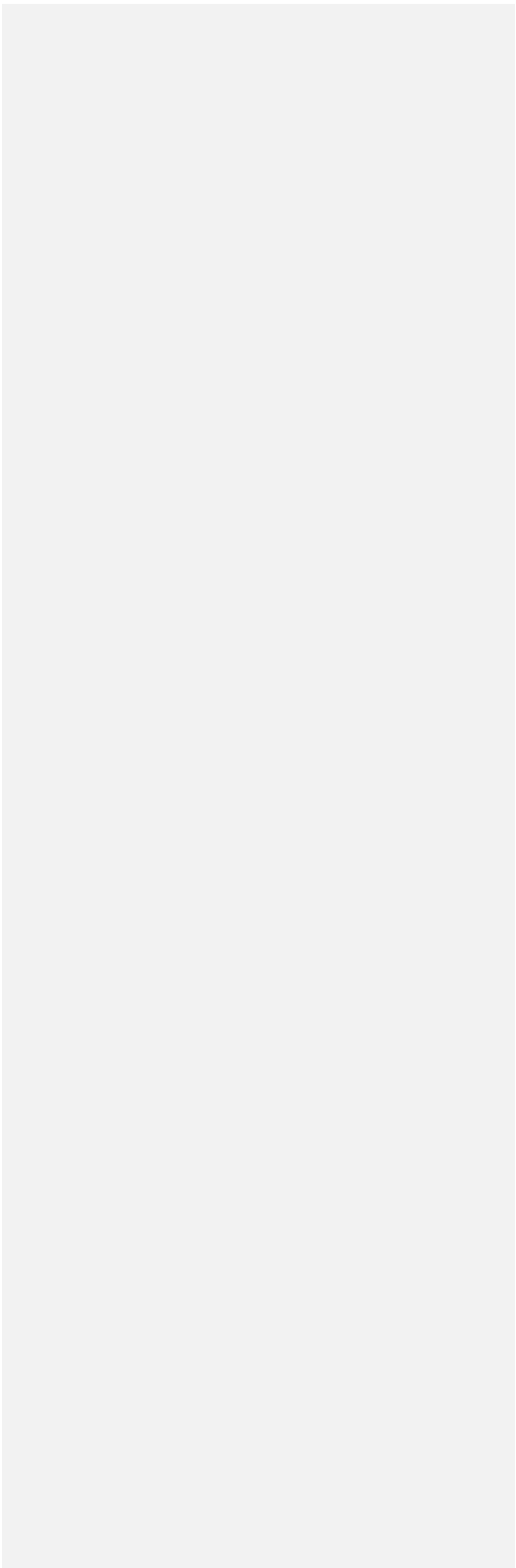
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Appendix A

Online Survey Questions

Filtering Questions:

1. I have a child enrolled in public K-12 education in Ontario

● Yes – If yes is selected participant advances to question #2

● No – If no is chosen, participant is thanked for their interest and told they do not meet the requirements for participation in the survey. They are then exited from the survey.

2. I agree that my participation in this study is completely voluntary. I know I can skip any questions using the "skip question" button, and I can end my participation in this survey at any time using the "exit survey" button.

● Yes – If yes is chosen participant advances to question #3.

● No - If no is chosen, participant is thanked for their interest and told they do not meet the requirements for participation in the survey. They are then exited from the survey.

3. I would like to receive an executive summary of the study once it is available

● Yes – Participant is directed to a second survey site where they enter their email address. When they hit "submit", they are re-directed back to the study survey website

● No thank you I do not wish to receive a copy of the report. Participant is directed to the first question of the survey.

Survey Part One:

4. For how long have you been visiting your child/children's school(s)?

● 1 month or less

● 1 -2 years

● 3-5 years

● 6-10 years

● Other: _____

● Not applicable

● I don't know/Prefer not to answer

5. Thinking of your most recent visit to your child's school please indicate the purpose(s) of your

visit by selecting as many of the options that are applicable below:

● Dropped off/picked up my child

● Met with teacher/principal/educator

● Attended a school event

● Attended a school council meeting

● Other: (please describe)

● Not applicable

● I don't know/prefer not to answer

Survey Part Two:

6. Examine the school in photo shown on your screen. (Appendix D) Using the descriptors

below, please choose as many words as you need to describe your impressions of this school.

intense

inactive

exhilarating

dreary

pleasant

dissatisfying

frenzied

tranquil

drowsy

sensational

dull

nice

displeasing

tense

serene

active

idle

stimulating

unstimulating

pleasing

repulsive

hectic

peaceful

alive

lazy

exciting

monotonous

pretty

unpleasant

panicky

restful

forceful

slow

interesting

boring

beautiful

uncomfortable

rushed

calm

7. Examine the area of the school in photo shown on your screen. (Appendix E) Using the

descriptors below, please choose as many words as you need to describe your impressions of this

school.

intense

inactive

exhilarating

dreary

pleasant

dissatisfying

frenzied

tranquil

drowsy

sensational

dull

nice

displeasing

tense

serene

active

idle

stimulating

unstimulating

pleasing

repulsive

hectic

peaceful

alive

lazy

exciting

monotonous

pretty

unpleasant

panicky

restful

forceful

slow

interesting

boring

beautiful

uncomfortable

rushed

calm

9. Here is another school. (Appendix F) For each sentence below, use the 5-point scale where 5 means strongly agree and 1 means strongly disagree, to rate your impressions of this school.

- This is a happy school
- This school is a stimulating place to learn
- This school is important to the community
- This school inspires hope in its students
- This is a school that inspires students to learn
- This is a school where learning is a priority

10. Take a moment to examine the photo of this school. (Appendix G) For each sentence below, use the 5-point scale where 5 means strongly agree and 1 means strongly disagree to rate your impressions of this school.

- This is a happy school
- This school is a stimulating place to learn
- This school is important to the community
- This school inspires hope in its students
- This is a school that inspires students to learn
- This is a school where learning is a priority

11. This is a picture of a school's front exterior. (Appendix H). For each sentence below, use the 5-point scale where 5 means strongly agree and 1 means strongly disagree to rate your impressions of this school. (Photo #6 - Appendix J).

- This is a happy school
- This school is a stimulating place to learn
- This school is important to the community
- This school inspires hope in its students
- This is a school that inspires students to learn
- This is a school where learning is a priority

12. This is a picture of a school's front exterior. (Appendix I). For each sentence below, use the 5-point scale where 5 means strongly agree and 1 means strongly disagree to rate your impressions of this school. (Photo #6 - Appendix J).

- This is a happy school

- This school is a stimulating place to learn

- This school is important to the community

- This school inspires hope in its students

- This is a school that inspires students to learn

- This is a school where learning is a priority

12. Examine the sign posted at a school entrance. (Appendix J) For each sentence below, use the 5-point scale where 5 means strongly agree and 1 means strongly disagree to rate your impression of this school.

- The school and the parents have a trusting relationship

- This values open communication with parents

- This school is committed to serving my child's needs as a learner

- Parents at this school are satisfied with their relationship with the school

- This is a school that invites parent feedback

- This is a school that fosters parent engagement

13. This is a school entryway where parents check in with the secretary before entering the school. (Appendix K). For each sentence below, use the 5-point scale where 5 means strongly agree and 1 means strongly disagree to rate your impression of this school.

- The school and the parents have a trusting relationship

- This values open communication with parents

- This school is committed to serving my child's needs as a learner

- Parents at this school are satisfied with their relationship with the school

- This is a school that invites parent feedback

- This is a school that fosters parent engagement

Part Three:

16. Thinking of a recent visit to your child's school, please choose all of the descriptors that apply to the sentence below:

The entrance of my child/children's school(s) was:

intense

inactive

exhilarating

dreary

pleasant

dissatisfying

frenzied

tranquil

drowsy

sensational

dull

nice

displeasing

tense

serene

active

idle

stimulating

unstimulating

pleasing

repulsive

hectic

peaceful

alive

lazy

exciting

monotonous

pretty

unpleasant

panicky

restful

forceful

slow

interesting

boring

beautiful

uncomfortable

rushed

calm

Other _____

17. During your recent visit to your child's school, what did you notice about the school

building? For each sentence below, use the 5-point scale where 5 means strongly agree and 1

means strongly disagree to rate your impression of this school.

- The school looked clean and fresh

- School signs were clear and easy to follow

- Parking was convenient

- Student work was prominently displayed

- Lighting was sufficient

- The school had a pleasant smell

- The school had a nice atmosphere

- The look of my child's school made me feel good

18. If you could you change something about the way your child's school *looks*, what would it

be?

19. If you could change something about the way your child's school building *feels,* what would

it be?

20 Do you feel your school administration welcomes parent ideas about how the school looks

and feels?

20 a) You answered yes – in a sentence or two, please explain why you feel that way.

20 b) You answered no – in a sentence or two, please explain why you feel that way.

Part Four:

21. Parents have many reasons for choosing schools for their children. From the list below, please indicate how important the following factors are to you when choosing a school for your child. Please check all that apply:

22. Use the 5-point scale where 5 means strongly agree and 1 means strongly disagree to rate your level of agreement with the statement below:

I would recommend my child's school to another parent.

23. In the previous question, you indicated how likely you would be to recommend your child's school to another parent. In a sentence or two, please explain why you feel that way.

Appendix B

Focus Group Questions

Question 1:

I would like to begin by having you look at the photograph on the screen. Please tell me what

you notice in the picture. It can be anything – there are no wrong answers. (Appendix D)

Question 2:

Here is a different photograph. Take a moment to look at it. Please tell me how it makes you feel.

(Appendix E)

Question 3:

How does this picture of a school foyer make you feel? (Appendix F)

Here is a picture of the same school foyer after some paint and signage was applied. (Appendix

G)

How does this foyer make you feel now?

What are some of the reasons why you feel that way?

How would you describe the commitment of the school to the parent community?

Question 5:

I'll give you a moment to read this sign (Appendix J)

How would you describe the message contained in this sign?

Does this message foster trust with you as a parent?

How would you describe the relationship with parents to the school?

Question 6:

This is a school reception area. (Appendix K)

This is where parents check in with the office and visitors sign in.

What are your first impressions of this area of this school?

Question 7:

Judging only by this photograph, what is your first impression of this school? (Appendix H)

Judging only by this photo – what is your first impression of this school?

Question 8:

Now I would like to you take a look at this photo. (Appendix I)

What are some differences you notice between the first and second photographs?

What is the most important way in which your impression of this school changed?

Appendix C

In-depth Interview questions

1. As a communications professional, how important is developing relationships with parents to you?

2. What are some of the ways that you use your communications expertise to develop relationships with parents either in your support of individual schools or in system wide messaging campaigns?

3. For this question, please consider your overall efforts.

How essential is it that your communications projects are visually appealing to audiences? By this I mean visual branding, system initiatives etc.

Why do you think that?

Can you give me some examples?

4. Academic research has found that people are affected and react emotionally to buildings. How a space is organized, choice of colours, and even the way a building smells can all cause a variety of emotional responses on people who live, work, and visit there.

Are you aware of any research that has been done on the affect of buildings on the emotions of building inhabitants or visitors?

5. What is your first impression of this school entryway from looking at this picture? (Appendix F).

Now I want to show you a picture of the same area after some changes were made. (Appendix G)

Do you notice anything different between the two?

What do you notice between these two entryways?

How do you think parents would react to the changes made?

How do you think school administrators and staff would react to these changes?

6. As a communications professional, to what extent are you involved in decision-making that impacts school buildings?
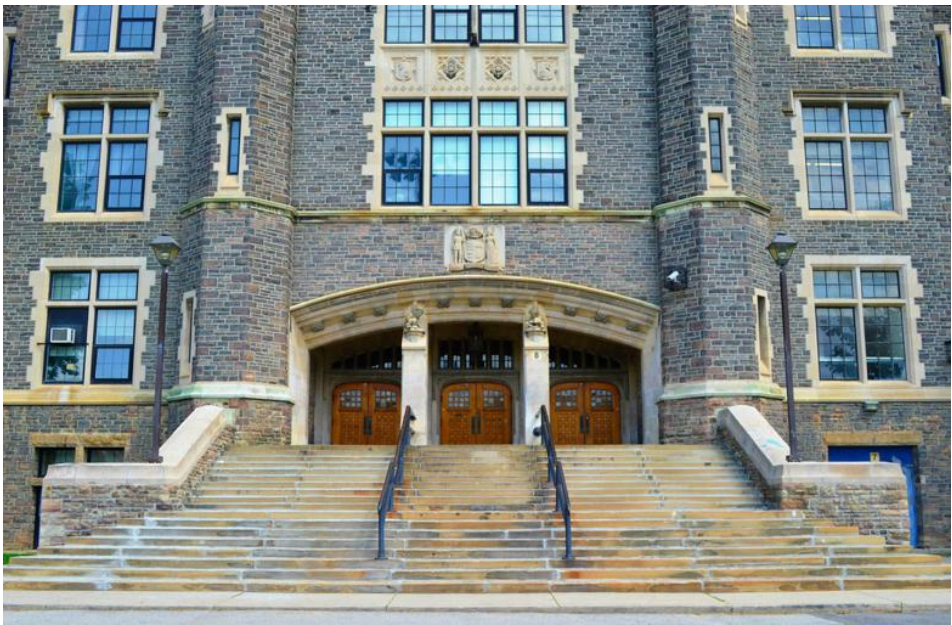
Why do you think this is?

7. Imagine you had the opportunity to acquire professional development about how built environment can improve relationships with parent communities. Would you be likely to take this professional development this opportunity for professional development? Why or why not?

8. Given what we have discussed today, how important do you think the built environment is to building relationships with parents in your school board?

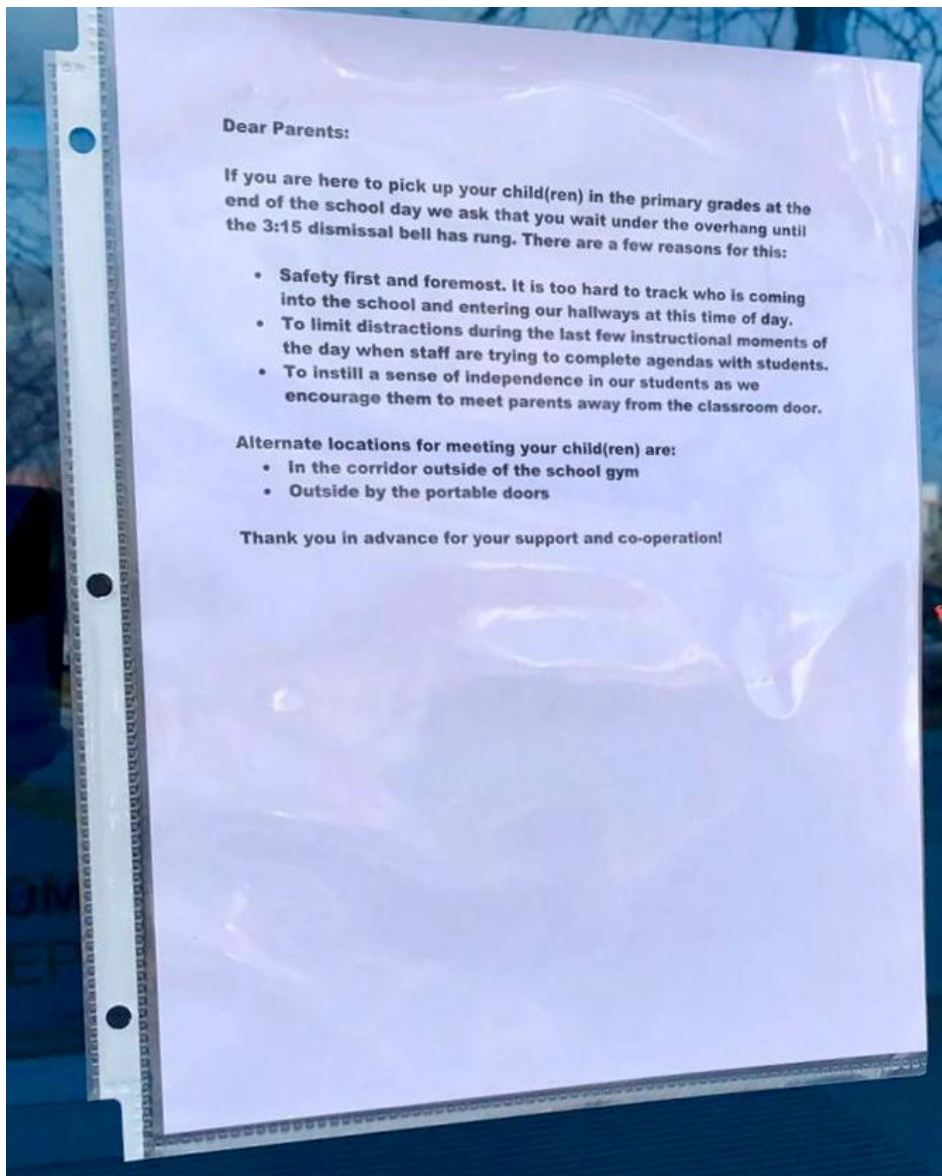Appendix D

Appendix E

Appendix F

Appendix G

Appendix H

Appendix I

Appendix J

Dear Parents:

If you are here to pick up your child(ren) in the primary grades at the end of the school day we ask that you wait under the overhang until the 3:15 dismissal bell has rung. There are a few reasons for this:

- Safety first and foremost. It is too hard to track who is coming into the school and entering our hallways at this time of day.
- To limit distractions during the last few instructional moments of the day when staff are trying to complete agendas with students.
- To instill a sense of independence in our students as we encourage them to meet parents away from the classroom door.

Alternate locations for meeting your child(ren) are:
- In the corridor outside of the school gym
- Outside by the portable doors

Thank you in advance for your support and co-operation!

Appendix K