Developing an Understanding of Cultural Diversity:

How Experiences Living in a Multicultural Nation and an Experience Teaching Abroad

Contribute to Southern Ontario Teachers' Identities

Cristina Pinheiro, Honors B.A., B.Ed.

Department of Graduate and Undergraduate

Studies in Education

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Faculty of Education, Brock University

St. Catharines, Ontario

**Abstract**

This is a narrative design study focusing on the understandings that a group of 6 Southern Ontario teachers have of cultural diversity and how these understandings integrated into their development of teacher identity. Given the high culturally diverse population of Canada and its national multicultural values, conducting this study on Canadian pre-service and in-service teachers offers an interesting contribution to the field. In efforts to explore the participants' understandings, the research examined a teaching abroad experience. The aim was to investigate how these participants gained insight from their experiences with cultural diversity and whether these insights stimulated a greater culturally conscious teacher identity. Narratives provided a description of the lived experiences of these 6 teachers and identified meanings made from these experiences. Participants included 2 pre-service teachers who were in a teacher education program at the time of the interview, and 4 certified teachers who graduated from a teacher education program within the past 5 years. One on one interviews focused on lived experiences within a participant's home, school community, and teaching abroad. The researcher used grounded theory during the data analysis to assist in identifying themes, and then compared these themes among participants. Overall, this study suggests that even though these participants live in a multicultural nation, experiences varied greatly based on contributing factors such as heritage and exposure to cultural diversity through their home and school life. Despite their varying level of cultural competence, all participants gained insight from their teaching abroad experience, contributing to a teacher identity that considered inclusive practices. This study suggests that there are some important factors to consider when preparing teachers to teach in a multicultural society.

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      I am blessed to have so many supportive and caring people in my life that have guided me to where I am today. I am excited to complete this chapter in my life and step forward into the world of teaching. The lessons and skills I learned throughout this process have made me a better person and teacher, but I could not have gotten here without my support group.

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**CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

Canada is a multicultural nation that continues to diversify with the contribution of globalization. Globalization is a process that has existed throughout the years as cultures have influenced one another (Arnett, 2002). However, modern technologies have assisted in the spread of globalization throughout the world. For the purpose of this thesis, globalization refers to the movement of people through immigration and the associated cultural influences on society. Various waves of immigration characterize Canada's history, resulting in a culturally diverse population (Statistics Canada, 2013a). Banks discusses "racial, ethnic, cultural, and language diversity" as an increasing phenomena due to worldwide immigration (2004b). In this thesis, when I discuss cultural diversity I am associating it with the combination of racial, ethnic, cultural and language diversity in the way Banks identifies diversity to be. Cultural diversity has led to the adoption of a multicultural policy and a multicultural national identity (Joshee, 2004; Kymlicka, 2003). With a national policy in place, the integration of multicultural considerations should filter into Canadian institutions.

Canadian educational institutions should implement a program that supports and reflects the values of its multicultural society. The development of a teacher identity that is inclusive of cultural diversity supports these values. Instead, issues such as the hidden curriculum (Egbo, 2009; Vang, 2006) and ethnocentric attitudes (Cushner, 2008; Grossman & Yuen, 2006; Mahon, 2006), have interfered with an educator's ability to provide an education that addresses both the culturally diverse student population and the values of a multicultural society. International travel can contribute to a teacher's understanding and sensitivity towards cultural differences (Mahon, 2006). In

consideration of a teacher's role in the classroom, this study examines the life experiences of teachers, including a teaching abroad experience, to examine the construction of their teacher identity. Themes that emerged from the six participants' interviews are discussed, followed by considerations for the modification of teacher education programs to increase intercultural competence of teachers.

I am interested in exploring the views of both practicing teachers and new teachers; thus, research participants included: a) pre-service teachers currently enrolled in a teacher education program in Ontario, and b) teachers who have graduated from one of these programs within the past 5 years. This study explores the experiences these teachers have had with cultural diversity within their family life, their community life, their school career, and their teaching abroad experiences. The purpose was to identify the impact these experiences had on their understandings of cultural diversity, and how these experiences contributed to their teacher identity with reference to both the culturally diverse student body and the issues surrounding a multicultural society. The Canadian classroom is representative of the culturally diverse population. Classroom teachers can support a positive, respectful environment of cultural diversity based on their understandings of cultural differences. Exploring the development of teacher identity through lived experiences, including a teaching experience abroad, demonstrates how a teacher's understanding of cultural diversity contributes to his or her teaching pedagogy. Therefore, the significance of this study provides teacher education programs with suggestions to contribute to Ontario teachers' preparation to become teachers who contribute positively to the continued development of a multicultural society.

As suggested so far, teacher identity is an important theme throughout this study.

Gee (2000) suggests that identity is defined as "When any human being acts and interacts in a given context, others recognize that person as acting and interacting as a certain 'kind of person'" (p. 99). The transition from student to pre-service teacher within a teacher education program, to a certified in-service teacher, incorporates the progression of a professional self through the development of a teacher identity. Teacher identity "is not something that is fixed nor is it imposed; rather it is negotiated through experience and the sense that is made of the experience" (Sachs, 2005, p. 15). The understanding of an experience contributes to this identity. Additionally, Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) suggest that the contexts of the lived experiences influence the development of the teacher identity. Therefore, this study first focused on exploring participants' understandings of cultural diversity in relation to their experiences living in mostly White dominant Euro Canadian environments, and then I investigated how these experiences influenced their teacher identity.

## Research Questions

Three broad research questions guided this study:

1. What does cultural diversity mean to Canadian teachers enrolled within a teacher education program or who have completed one within the last 5 years? What experiences have influenced these teachers' understandings of cultural diversity?

2. How does an experience abroad contribute to Canadian teachers' understandings of cultural diversity?

3. How does an experience abroad affect Canadian teachers' identity?

This chapter continues with the description of cultural diversity's role in the development of Canada's multicultural society and the implications it has had on the education institution. The role of the classroom teacher in student learning is discussed from a multicultural perspective.

### Personal Background of Problem

I have heard many stories about the hardships that my parents had when immigrating to Canada during the early to mid-1960s. They faced many challenges because they were unfamiliar with the language and customs, and only knew a handful of people who supported their travels. They immigrated during the early years of the ethnic revitalization periods in Canada, and had to overcome their struggles within their small town communities without government support.

Today, I am able to express my Portuguese roots with pride. I continue to perform the Portuguese traditions that my parents taught me and I am fortunate to share my heritage with many other citizens who share the same Portuguese heritage in my community. The freedom to express my cultural heritage has led to my appreciation for cultural diversity. Multiculturalism has become part of Canada's identity. I am proud that as a Canadian I am able to celebrate my cultural heritage, while living united under Canada's multicultural values.

My school experience is a reflection of my understanding of diversity. My high school experience was one that I had assumed was normal for all students who attend publically supported schools. The school had a diverse student body. Within the school community, students expressed their cultural diversity with pride, as I often heard different languages spoken within the hallways, traditional music played during lunch

break, and even the cafeteria prepared traditional foods on certain days of the week. Despite the differences, the student body still came together as one under a united student body.

In a fourth year religious studies university course, I realized that not everyone experienced or understood cultural diversity the way I did. Interestingly, the students in that class were mostly fellow concurrent education students hoping to teach within Canadian classrooms. My fascination with the perception of diversity based on experiences or where one lives stems from the conversations from that class.

## Background of the Problem

The government of Canada adopted the Canadian Multiculturalism Act to recognize and protect the multicultural heritage of Canadians. The Multiculturalism Act is included under section 27 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms to guarantee the equal status of all citizens regardless of ethnic origin or cultural heritage (Banting & Kymlicka, 2010). In accordance with the constitution, the provincial education system of Ontario has adopted policies of relevance to this multicultural policy (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009). This thesis focuses on the province of Ontario because of the continuance of high immigrant population of the province (Statistics Canada, 2013b).

Each province and territory in Canada is responsible for education. The Ontario Ministry of Education developed an equitable and inclusive strategy "to close student achievement gaps by identifying and eliminating any biases, barriers, and power dynamics that may limit students' prospects for learning, growing, and contributing fully to society" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009, pp. 10-11). This strategy encourages

teachers to implement practices to enhance the learning of their students. The problem arises when the teacher lacks the appropriate knowledge or has bias opinions that interfere with providing an equitable and inclusive education considering the multiple cultural differences that may be present within the classroom.

Even though the Ontario Ministry of Education (2009) has provided an equitable and inclusive strategy, the question is whether teachers recognize factors that challenge an equitable outcome. A cultural gap exists between teachers and their students, which could result in inequalities within the classroom. Canadian teachers, having similar trends to their neighbours in the United States, fall into the majority group of White, middle class, and female (Cushner, 2008; Marx & Moss, 2011; Ryan, Pollock, & Antonelli, 2009). This disconnection between teachers and students could result in differences of worldviews and understandings of reality, making it difficult for teachers to connect with some students. If teachers are unaware of the cultural gap, they risk supporting the "culture of power," resulting in an unequal advantage for students of the dominant culture (Egbo, 2009). Hidden throughout the institution and curriculum are influences of the dominant culture (Egbo, 2009; Vang, 2006). While the teacher may unintentionally support the inequalities, he or she also holds the power to initiate change within the classroom by recognizing these inequalities.

## Statement of the Problem

Studies that used the Intercultural Developmental Inventory (Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003), and the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (Bennett, 1986; Bennett & Bennett, 2004) examined teachers' intercultural competence. The studies suggest that the majority of their participants demonstrated ethnocentric attitudes

(Cushner, 2008; Grossman & Yuen, 2006; Mahon, 2006), an unsettling outcome

considering our increasingly globalized world. Ethnocentric understandings of culture

can result in conflicting ideologies for a multicultural society. In the educational context,

teachers who teach based on an ethnocentric worldview can have negative impacts on

minority students' academic achievement (Cushner, 2008; Marx & Moss, 2011), and

these teachers could unintentionally integrate stereotypical and biased opinions into their

teaching (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Moule, 2012). Exploring the narratives of

Southern Ontario teachers can help identify their process of understanding cultural

diversity. Once understood, teacher education programs can use this information to assist

teachers to develop their teacher identity in accordance to the multicultural values of

Canada.

## Purpose of the Study

Teachers can have an influence on classroom learning. Teachers have the power

in the classroom to truly express an issue's importance such as social inequality and

inspire their students to strive towards change (Wiest, 1998). It is from this notion that, I

believe, teachers should be aware of what they teach and why they teach it. Even though

Canada is multicultural, the experiences a teacher has with cultural diversity can vary

based on the communities they live in or where they teach. I am interested in learning

about the communities participants lived in and the lessons they learned about cultural

diversity from society. I am also interested in whether teachers learned about

multiculturalism when they were going through the educational system, including their

teacher education training. Investigating the influential role educational experiences had

on teacher identity was one of the aims for this study. I also explored each participant's

teaching experience abroad and insight gained about cultural diversity. Due to Canada's multicultural identity, my interest lay in the comparison of participants' experiences with cultural diversity while living among a culturally diverse population, to their experiences abroad surrounded by an unfamiliar culture. I anticipated that travelling abroad would provide Canadian teachers with a novel experience different from those had in Canada. I anticipated that participants would experience a new cultural feeling where they were part of a minority group.

This study then addresses the teaching identity of Canadian teachers who are new to the field, or have graduated within the past 5 years. More specifically, I consider the following questions: Have teachers recognized the issues surrounding cultural diversity? Do Canadian teachers feel diversity is an important aspect of education? What role does cultural diversity have in education for these teachers? I was not trying to discover whether my participants held ethnocentric or ethnorelativist views of cultural diversity, but rather my intent was to discover the recognition of cultural diversity on both a personal and a teaching level, and what has contributed to this view.

**Importance of the Study**

Conducting a study on Canadian teachers provides an interesting contribution to the area of study. Studying Canadian perspectives can provide information on the influence that living in a culturally diverse nation could have on teaching. Exploring the lived experiences of Canadian teachers can provide useful information to improve teacher education programs, ensuring that all teachers are well prepared to teach in a culturally diverse society.

Research suggests that an abroad experience contributes to a teacher's understanding of cultural differences (see Cushner & Brennan, 2007; Cushner & Mahon, 2002; Mahon & Cushner, 2002; Stachowski & Mahan, 1998). I explored the experiences teachers have teaching abroad, and the implications experiencing an abroad community had on their teacher identity. While I was a pre-service teacher, I had the opportunity to complete a teacher placement in Italy. I valued the learning experience of this trip as it made me realize that I had not recognized the full value of teaching and living abroad in an unfamiliar culture. Working on this thesis has led to a more in-depth critical reflection of my experience. I constructed a deeper appreciation for what I learned from the experience and its impact on my professional development as a teacher.

**Operational Terms**

Cultural diversity is the combination of racial, ethnic, cultural and language diversity (Banks, 2004b).

Culturally relevant teaching requires the teacher to learn about the cultural backgrounds of their students and integrate teaching methods that are of reference to their culture (Gay, 2010).

Ethnocentrism refers to "seeing one's culture as central to a personal understanding of reality" (Hammer et al., 2003, p. 423).

Ethnorelativism refers to "one's own culture is experienced in the context of other cultures" (Hammer et al., 2003, p. 425).

Identity is dynamic and evolves over time with the continuation of new experiences. Identities develop as individuals interpret their learning from each

experience; similarly, teacher identities would change and adapt based on professional development (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009).

Intercultural competence refers to the self-awareness of one's own culture, while valuing the differences of other cultures. Developing intercultural competence means effectively communicating and interacting with people of different cultures by demonstrating appropriate attitudes and behaviours that are sensitive to the cultural differences (Bennett & Bennett, 2004).

Lived experiences do not necessarily represent facts, but instead are reflections of the past. The researcher should consider the participant's word choice, perceptions, and identity (Merryfield, 2000).

Multiculturalism represents cultural diversity or cultural differences. It represents a variety of "beliefs and practices in terms of which a group of people understand themselves and the world and organize their individual and collective lives" (Parekh, 2006, pp. 2-3).

Multicultural education strives to connect the culture of students with the curriculum (Ladson-Billings, 1995). The goal of multicultural education is to provide students with an education free from inequalities to promote the success of all students (Banks, 1993).

Pre-service teachers are students enrolled in teacher education programs receiving their training to become certified teachers (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1994).

Professional development refers to the training or the development of educational practices. Workshops, courses, and conferences are some methods used to continue learning (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1994).

Ontario offers teacher education programs through two different streams. Consecutive programs are 8 months in duration after obtaining an undergraduate degree. Concurrent programs expand the traditional 8-month teacher education program over 3 or 4 years. The completion of this teacher education program is in conjunction with another undergraduate degree in a different discipline (Ontario Ministry of Education. 2012).

Worldview refers to how one perceives reality based on their understanding of the world (Deardorff, 2006).

The organization of the remainder of this thesis is as follows:

Chapter Two provides a literature review explaining the influence that cultural diversity has had on Canada. After looking at multiculturalism at a national level, I will look at multiculturalism and education. The chapter presents literature on different ways of understanding culture and the implications this can have on the culturally diverse classroom. Finally, the chapter will conclude by presenting data on the development of the teacher identity, followed by information about teaching experiences abroad.

Chapter Three outlines this study's research design, and describes the collection and analysis of data. This chapter will further explain methodology, participant recruitment, and limitations of the study.

Chapter Four presents the findings from this study. Each participant's narrative presents my interpretations of the data. Identified are the major themes that emerged from the comparison of participants' interviews.

Chapter Five concludes the thesis with the presentation of a discussion, my recommendations, and future research. The findings of this study discuss and connect to the literature. I made recommendations to consider ways to improve teacher professional

development. Finally, I describe future research that would add to the outcome of this

study.

**CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

Peaceful unity among nations was a dream of Lester B. Pearson. As the 1957 Nobel Peace Prize winner, Pearson believed that the United Nations could help bring together all nations to form a world community. As a promoter of peace, Pearson (1957) envisioned a united world and explained in the 1950s that

> Different civilizations will have to learn to live side by side in peaceful interchange, learning from each other, studying each other's history and ideals, art and culture, mutually enriching each other's lives. The only alternative in this overcrowded little world is misunderstanding, tension, clash, and catastrophe.

These words not only had significant meaning half a century ago, but they continue to hold value in this globalized, interconnected world.

This chapter contains three key areas of focus. Firstly, I summarize the progression of Canada as a nation dealing with an increased culturally diverse population and review assimilationist and multicultural ideologies. Secondly, the inequalities within educational institutions, along with educational reforms suggested in the literature, are considered. Lastly, I examine the research literature about the attitudes of teachers towards cultural diversity and cultural differences to provide an overview of educators' understandings of cultural diversity and the development of a teacher identity.

**Cultural Diversity in Canada**

Immigration continues to contribute to Canada's population growth. The 2011 Canadian National Household Survey concluded that 20.6% of the Canadian population were immigrants, which accounted for one in every five Canadian citizens (Statistics Canada, 2013b). The Canadian National Household Survey represents one third of all

households in Canada and provides recent immigration statistics. Immigrants have contributed to the rich diversity found within Canada, which has become the foundation of the Canadian identity; however, given Canada's vast terrain cultural diversity can vary drastically between communities. Ontario and British Columbia are the two provinces that have a higher foreign-born population than Canadian born population. Nine out of 10 recent immigrants that arrived in Canada between the 2006 and 2011 Canadian census chose to settle in Ontario, British Columbia, Quebec, or Alberta. The province with the highest percentage of recent immigrants is Ontario with 43.1%. This is considerably different compared to Quebec, which has the second largest recent immigrant population with just 19.2% (Statistics Canada, 2013b).The three top census metropolitan areas that experienced immigration growth were Toronto, Ontario, Montreal, Quebec, and Vancouver, British Columbia. The combined 68.9% of immigrants settled in these three cities (Statistics Canada, 2013b). In Ontario, Toronto received 32.8% of recent immigrants to Canada, the Ottawa-Gatineau census designated area that lies within Ontario, received 3.5% of new immigrants, and all other locations within Ontario experienced less than 2% of recent immigrant growth (Statistics Canada, 2013c). The comparison of immigration growth among these cities demonstrates the differences of diversity among locations. Canadians can, therefore, have a varying level of experience with cultural diversity both within the home and school community. Location was an important aspect to consider when conducting research for this study because the participants grew up in different communities across Southern Ontario. The specific details of participants are discussed further in Chapter Three of the present thesis. Cultural diversity is not a new concept for Canada as it stems back to its very roots as a

nation. Reflecting on Canada's history with immigration and diversity is a reminder of the challenges a culturally diverse nation faces and the importance of accepting cultural differences for the continuity of a peaceful nation.

The First Nations and settlers from France and Britain lived on the land that today we call Canada. Through colonization and conquest, the amalgamation into the British culture was involuntary (Kymlicka, 2003). Immigrants began to arrive as early as the 1840s starting with Irish immigrants (Kymlicka, 2003), and has since continued with newcomers from all parts of the world. Prior to the 1960s, Canada followed an assimilationist ideology in reference to immigration (Banting & Kymlicka, 2010; Parekh, 2006). In accordance with the assimilationist ideology, the success and survival of new immigrants in Canada relied on adopting the Anglo- dominant culture (Ghosh & Abdi, 2004). The assimilationist believed that groups should give up their ethnic differences as it hindered the progress of a united, democratic, and modernized society (Banks, 2006c, p. 118). The desire of immigrants to become accepted members of society led many of them to abandon their cultural identities and assume the values, ideologies, and norms of the dominant culture surrounding them (Banks, 2006c; 2004b; Kymlicka, 2003).

Canadian educational institutions followed the assimilationist ideology through the socialization of students into the dominant culture. The values of the dominant culture influenced the curriculum, the teaching practices, and the acceptable behaviours of the educational institutions. The success of the student depended on adapting to the expectations of these institutions (Ghosh & Abdi, 2004). The ethnic revitalization movements of the 1960s and 1970s contributed to change, bringing to attention the cultural inequalities of society, and addressing the national identity (Joshee, 2004).

Canada began to promote the accommodation of ethnic identities through a multicultural approach of integration (Banting & Kymlicka, 2010).

## Multiculturalism

The ethnic revitalization movements initiated the federal government of Canada to introduce a multicultural policy in 1971, and later a Multicultural Act in 1988 that adopted a

> Multicultural conception of integration, one that expects that many immigrants will visibly and proudly express their ethnic identity, and which accepts an obligation on the part of public institutions (like the police, schools, media, museums, etc.) to make reasonable accommodations for these ethnic identities (Kymlicka, 2003, pp. 370-371).

Today, nations, such as Canada, United States, and the United Kingdom, are recognized not only for their large multicultural populations, but also in their efforts to maintain their multicultural status. However, Kymlicka (2003) calls attention to the fact that "Canada is distinctive in the extent to which it has not only legislated, but also *constitutionalized*, practices of accommodation" (p. 375, italicised in original). The acknowledgment of practices of accommodation in the Canadian Constitution brought a sense of security and comfort to the various cultural groups throughout Canada (Kymlicka, 2003). The inclusion of accommodation within the constitution demonstrates Canada's efforts to protect cultural diversity.

A variety of issues can arise in a multicultural society including the balancing of multiple diverse cultural identities with a unified national identity (Banks, 2004a; Kymlicka, 2010). The unity of citizens by adopting the dominant culture is a reminder of

Canada's past assimilation ideology. The failure to balance identity results in "unity without diversity [which] results in hegemony and oppression" (Banks, 2006b, p. 208). Society suppresses the cultural identity of immigrants and minorities, while the dominant culture remains powerful. This lack of balance could result in feelings of intolerance and xenophobia for citizens belonging to the dominant culture (Kymlicka, 2010). On the other hand, Banks (2006b) argues that "diversity without unity leads to balkanization and the fracturing of the nation-state" (p. 208). This side of the spectrum likewise hinders the success of the nation. Acceptance, tolerance, and respect of both the individuals' identities and the ideals of the nation contribute to the success of a multicultural nation by subduing confrontations among citizens while improving the psychological well-being of immigrants and minorities. Therefore, Canada should continue to strive for balance between diversity and unity to ensure that multicultural ideals remain central to its identity.

Infusing ideals of acceptance and respect towards cultural diversity into educational institutions contributes to the continued success of a multicultural society. Banks (2006b) describes that educational institutions have

> An opportunity to educate students in an environment that reflects the reality of the nation and the world and to teach a student from diverse groups how to get along and how to make decisions and take actions that promote social justice. A diverse school environment enables students from many different groups to engage in discussions to solve complex problems related to living in a multicultural nation and world. (p. 201)

Educational institutions along with educators who teach within them have the opportunity to create inclusive classrooms to teach students to work with one another for the greater societal good. Unfortunately, the culturally diverse classroom can also lead to inflicting ideology that is counterintuitive to social justice. If educational institutions are to prepare the future leaders of a multicultural nation and globalized world, they should first recognize the inequalities of educational institutions and teaching practices.

### Cultural Diversity within Educational Institutions

In Canada, education is traditionally the responsibility of the provincial government and can vary according to province or territory that governs it. For many years, Canada has led the way by implementing multicultural policies and protecting the diverse cultural identities of citizens. However, educational institutions continue to favour the values and teaching methods of the dominant culture, influenced by British cultural norms of the past. The school curriculum downplays Canada's past ethnocentric views in order to accentuate its present multicultural identity (Lund, 2006). The selection of curriculum content misrepresents knowledge to enhance Canada's image while ignoring the injustices of the past. The selection of knowledge is part of a hidden, informal curriculum that unintentionally teaches immigrant and minority students the dominant cultural norms. Not only does content selection determine what knowledge students learn, but also the attitudes and behaviours that comprise the school culture (Egbo, 2009; Vang, 2006). In a multicultural nation, this hidden curriculum affects what and how a student learns, thus, interfering with his or her academic achievement. In consideration of Canada's multicultural policies supporting cultural diversity, the

influence of the dominant culture in classrooms can provide some students with an unfair advantage while disadvantaging others.

Scholars in the education field have made many suggestions to reform the educational system to provide a more inclusive education. Multicultural education recognizes inequality and challenge bias. Nieto and Bode (2010) define multicultural education as a school reform that challenges the inequalities imparted through discrimination, and strives for acceptance of differences among students and teachers. Multicultural education in infused within the:

> School's curriculum and instructional strategies as well as the interactions among teachers, students, and families and the very way that schools conceptualize the nature of teaching and learning. Because it uses critical pedagogy as its underlying philosophy and focuses on knowledge, reflection, and action (praxis) as the basis for social change, multicultural education promotes democratic principles of social justice. (p. 68)

Including multicultural education in the classroom can provide an education that is relevant to the issues of Canadian society. Multicultural education requires full integration into the school community and classroom curriculum, and scholars have developed multiple methods to integrate these multicultural ideals (Banks, 1993; Banks, 2006a; Nieto & Bode, 2010; Sleeter & Grant, 2007). Furthermore, multicultural education is not a specific subject area, but rather integrates multicultural references throughout the curriculum (Lund, 2006). Embracing the heritage of students and incorporating references of their culture into their learning demonstrates the validation and recognition of their cultural identities (Lund, 2006; Mogadime, 2011). Teaching a

culturally inclusive curriculum would enhance students' cultural knowledge and expose them to worldviews different from their own, providing a new outlook on cultural diversity. Therefore, it is essential that teachers themselves understand cultural diversity and recognize their personal stereotypes or biases that they may hold to avoid unconsciously integrating discrimination into their teaching.

In North America, the field of education has yet to experience the transition to a greater culturally diverse teaching force. The lack of diversity in the teaching force itself is considerably disproportionate compared to the diversity of students found within those same classrooms. An education system that has majority Caucasian and ethnocentric educators can affect the educational experience of the students. The worldview of the teacher that is only familiar with the dominant culture may be considerably different from the worldviews of culturally diverse students. The teacher may have very little exposure to cultural diversity, resulting in miscommunication of cultural differences, or a reliance on stereotypical views to develop his or her own distorted understanding of meaning behind these differences (Barrett, Solomon, Singer, Portelli, & Mujuwamariya, 2009). If teachers are absorbed in their own worldview, they may fail to recognize the inequalities of the hidden curriculum, or they may be unfamiliar and uncomfortable with the issues of diversity and choose to ignore them all together (Egbo, 2011). The colour-blind argument is an example that demonstrates the failure to recognize racial differences and inequalities, which devalues the student's identity, while the acknowledgment can assist in overcoming discrimination and oppression (Egbo, 2009, 2011). The colour-blind argument refers to a teacher who claims that they do not notice student's skin colour and that they are colour-blind. Egbo (2009) argues that denying students of their racial and

ethnic differences denies the existence of these students' identities. Colour-blindness may also result in a negative educational experience for students, leading them to fall behind academically (Cushner, 2008; Marx & Moss, 2011). The classroom teacher is an important factor to consider in any effort to provide an inclusive education for all students. Examining the attitudes and understandings that teachers have of culture can provide insight into a small sample of the current teaching force.

### Understanding of Culture

Bennett and Bennett (2004) provide insight into the interaction between people of different cultures, based on an individual's understanding of culture. This understanding develops from an individual's awareness of his or her own culture and awareness of respectful behaviour towards different cultures. The term intercultural competence is based on the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours that are exhibited through the interaction among different cultures (Bennett & Bennett, 2004), and the appropriateness of these thoughts and actions (Hammer et al., 2003). Research into intercultural competence began with an exploration of the different attitudes and reactions people had when put into different intercultural situations. An elaborated grounded theory guided the organization of findings, identifying levels of sensitivity to cultural differences, described as the "Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity." The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) is a research approach to determine an individual's intercultural sensitivity and awareness towards cultural differences (Bennett, 1986; Bennett & Bennett, 2004; Hammer et al., 2003). Milton Bennett developed this model based on the belief that "as one's *experience of cultural difference* becomes more complex and sophisticated, one's potential competence in intercultural relations

increases" (Hammer et al., 2003, p. 423, italicized in original). The six stages of this

model do not correspond to changed attitudes and behaviours, but instead signify the

understanding of attitudes and behaviours that are appropriate to a culture, the

development of an individual's worldview (Bennett & Bennett, 2004; Hammer et al.,

2003). The first three stages of the DMIS are Denial, Defence, and Minimization, and

categorized based on an ethnocentric worldview. An ethnocentric perspective refers to

"seeing one's culture as central to a personal understanding of reality" (Hammer et al.,

2003, p. 423). The last three stages are Acceptance, Adaptation, and Integration. These

stages categorize an ethnorelative worldview with the understanding "that one's own

culture is experienced in the context of other cultures" (Hammer et al., 2003, p. 425). The

ethnorelativist stages portray attitudes that demonstrate intercultural competence. The

following is a description of each stage:

**Denial of Cultural Difference**

Denial of cultural difference is the inability to recognize difference or make

unclear distinctions. People placed within this stage usually live in a monocultural

society. Living in isolation of diversity is preferred (Bennett, 1986; Hammer et al., 2003).

**Defence Stage of Cultural Difference**

This stage is different from the denial stage because cultural difference is

recognized. This stage is identified as ethnocentric because people are threatened by

cultural difference, resulting in negative stereotyping and the division of "us and them."

People who belong to the dominant culture may experience this feeling and view

themselves as being superior, while viewing people from different cultures as inferior.

The defence stage includes the reversal effect, where an individual perceives the practices of different cultures as superior to one's own (Bennett, 1986; Hammer et al., 2003).

**Minimization of Cultural Differences**

This stage neutralizes cultural differences to focus on the similarities of subcultures. Bennett (1986) describes that differences are "buried" (p. 183). A problem with focusing on the similarities among people is that differences are not truly accepted but instead regarded as nonexistent or ignored. Focusing on similarities and ignoring differences can also lead to the perception that one's cultural behaviour is superior and socially acceptable (Bennett, 1986; Hammer et al., 2003). Teachers are placed within this stage when they explain that they do not see differences among their students or that they are colour-blind, as Mahon (2006) explains that it is "ignoring someone's identity" (p. 401), and not truly accepting of difference. Teachers who claim they are colour-blind are essentially ignoring the identity of their students (Egbo, 2009).

**Acceptance of Cultural Difference**

In the first stage of ethnorelativisim, individuals acknowledge and value cultural differences. Teachers situated within this stage understand that behaviours and values differ among cultures (Bennett, 1986; Hammer et al., 2003).

**Adaptation of Cultural Difference**

Once an individual understands that behaviour should change accordingly when interacting with a person from a culture that is different from one's own, he, or she enters the adaptation stage. This stage represents empathy. When an individual reaches this stage, he or she may be referred to as bicultural or multicultural (Bennett, 1986; Hammer et al., 2003).

**Integration of Cultural Difference**

The highest form of sensitivity towards cultural difference is one where an individual is able to shift between cultural worldviews (Hammer et al., 2003).

Hammer et al. (2003) created the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) to measure intercultural sensitivity and to place an individual into a DMIS stage. Cushner (2008) recognized that the IDI and the DMIS are important tools to determine a teacher's level of intercultural sensitivity. He analysed a number of studies using the IDI along with similar measurements and found that teachers in the United States lacked intercultural experience and knowledge to teach appropriately about cultural diversity issues. Mahon (2006) used the IDI to question 155 teachers from the Midwest United States, finding that only 2.5% of teachers sampled fell within the ethnorelative stages of the DMIS, with the majority (60.7%) of participants within the minimization stage (p. 398). Grossman and Yuen (2006) conducted a study on 107 teachers in Hong Kong resulting in only 2% placed under the acceptance or adaptive stage of development, which considered them ethnorelativists (p. 77). These studies demonstrate that the majority of the teachers studied held an ethnocentric perspective of cultures. How then can these teachers successfully teach within a culturally diverse classroom to encourage their students to grow respectfully within a multicultural society when some teachers themselves have an ethnocentric attitude?

## Ethnocentrism within the Classroom

Many pre-service teachers discussed in the literature I reviewed held ethnocentric beliefs (Cushner, 2008; Mahon, 2006; Marx & Moss, 2011; Walters, Garii, & Walters, 2009; Yuen & Grossman, 2009). In North America, educators do not reflect the

ethnicities of their students. In fact, in the United States, educators are predominately White, middle class females (Cushner, 2008; Marx & Moss, 2011). Similarly, in Canada only 6.9% of teachers nationwide are visible minorities (Ryan et al., 2009). The worldview of a teacher who is part of the dominant culture may be considerably different from the culturally diverse student body. Teachers may have little exposure to cultural diversity, resulting in miscommunication of cultural differences, or rely on stereotypical views to develop their own distorted understanding of meaning behind these differences (Barrett et. al., 2009). If teachers are absorbed in their worldview, they may fail to recognize the inequalities of the hidden curriculum, or they may be unfamiliar and uncomfortable with the issues of diversity choosing to ignore them all together (Egbo, 2011). The colour-blind argument is an example that demonstrates the aversion to recognize racial differences and inequalities while the acknowledgement of racial identity could overcome racial discrimination and prejudice (Egbo, 2009, 2011). Insensitive teachers with limited experience or knowledge about cultural diversity can result in negative educational experiences for students, such as the decrease of self-confidence (Ladson-Billings, 1995), and/or leading them to fall behind academically (Cushner, 2008; Marx & Moss, 2011). The classroom teacher is an important factor to consider in efforts to provide an inclusive education for all students. Examining the attitudes and understandings that teachers have of culture can provide an overview of the current teaching force.

Preparation for the teaching field should include strategies to deal with potential cultural issues within the classroom as well as the skills to provide an education that is relevant to the globalized world. Cushner (2008) referenced Piaget's stage theory of

development when determining the critical period when children should be developmentally ready to grasp the concept of international socialization. Educators working with students between the ages of 8-12 years old play an important role in contributing to a child's development of intercultural perspectives (Cushner, 2008, p. 166). Children within this age group begin to understand that different viewpoints and perspectives exist, which may differ from their own, acquiring the ability to communicate effectively with others. These children begin to develop attitudes, values, and beliefs of both a cultural and global identity (Cushner, 2008). Cushner argues that exposure to various cultural perspectives during this period of life helps to develop their culturally sensitive attitudes, values, and beliefs. Unfortunately, many teachers do not have intercultural experience themselves and have not had the opportunity to explore their own cultural identities (Marx & Moss, 2011). The DMIS and the IDI tool have helped to recognize that teachers lack a full understanding of cultural differences. Providing opportunities for pre and in-service teachers to explore their cultural identity is an idea that could better educate present day teachers.

**Experience Abroad**

Mahon (2006) argues that an intercultural experience assists in increased intercultural sensitivity among teachers. Since the ethnic revitalization movements, there have been developments in the area of cultural diversity training for teachers. In Canada, various faculties of education have recognized the importance of including courses into their programs to address diversity. Teacher unions in Canada have also incorporated multicultural policies and often include programs in support of diversity (Joshee, 2004). Many Canadian universities offer programs, courses, or even semesters overseas;

however, the support for these international experiences varies across Canada due to the

organization of the Canadian education system (Trilokekar & Shubert, 2009).

Canadian universities often take a different approach compared to their United

States counterparts, encouraging interaction with the local people by integrating students

into local classes, rather than setting up "island" campuses separating students from the

local cultural community (Trilokekar & Shubert, 2009). When pre-service teachers

complete a teaching experience abroad, community learning contributes to their personal

and professional development. Stachowski and Mahan (1998) found that pre-service

students who interacted with people from a community that was culturally different than

their own and integrated themselves into the community gained just as much if not a

greater understanding of cultural difference than those that did not. Sleeter (2001)

reviewed 80 studies on pre-service teacher preparation for multicultural schools and the

effects of various pre-service teacher education strategies, including cross-cultural

immersion experiences. The studies showed that pre-service teachers who had taught in a

community culturally different from their own learned how to adapt their teaching skills

to the culturally diverse students. Although the studies were small in scale, overall

findings suggested that educators described their teaching experience within the

unfamiliar community as extremely important, so much so, that some held it in higher

regards than their formal teaching program (Sleeter, 2001). Solomon, Khattar

Manoukian, and Clarke's (2005) work on pre-service teachers' participation in

community involvement propose that involvement within the community, especially if

culturally unfamiliar, contributes to teachers' awareness of their own cultural

assumptions and the development of their sensitivity toward differences. Reflecting on

personal views of cultural diversity can also result in questioning personal cultural biases (Walters et al., 2009). Exposure to cultural diversity has the potential to offer many benefits for the professional development of teachers.

There are many factors to consider when planning a teacher education program, including teaching abroad experiences. However, abroad experiences do not always challenge bias opinions, stereotypes, or ethnocentric views about diversity (Davies & Pike, 2009). Travellers may interpret their experience abroad differently based on the challenges faced and the support provided by their programs. In a study that explored the intercultural teaching experiences of American pre-service teachers, the experience offered value to their professional development because it affected their self-awareness and knowledge about others, and increased their sense of global mindedness (Cushner & Mahon, 2002). Willard-Holt's (2001) study on elementary pre-service teachers' abroad teaching experiences looked at participants' development over the course of their experience. This study showed that while the pre-service teachers had ethnocentric preconceived notions before their travels, the experience abroad developed their understanding and acceptance of cultural difference. Many had ambitions to create inclusive classrooms of their own. The experience also helped pre-service teachers (a) relate to the hardships minorities face, (b) understand that teaching strategies should change to accommodate cultural differences, and (c) realize the importance of integrating a global perspective into the curriculum (Willard- Holt, 2001).

Guidance and support can be extremely beneficial when travelling to an unfamiliar culture to help make sense of cultural differences, and avoid focusing on the difficulties faced as these could easily overcome the benefits of travel. Only four of the

participating 22 pre-service teachers in Willard- Holt's (2001) study were unable to understand the full benefits of the experience. One participant was unable to make the connection of his experience to his teaching, believing that he could adapt his new gained knowledge only to situations involving students of minority cultures. Another participant felt the difficulties of teaching diverse students, while two others felt the opposite and believed they were experts on multicultural teaching (Willard-Holt, 2001, pp. 514-515). Receiving guidance on their thoughts and feelings may have improved the interpretations these participants made of their experiences. Willard- Holt suggested that the inclusion of an in-depth debriefing session following the trip might have been helpful for these participants.

Visiting an unfamiliar place and having little knowledge of the language and culture can cause many teachers to feel like an outsider resulting in loneliness, isolation, and insecurity. These are similar feelings that immigrants may feel. Since teachers who have gone abroad may have felt the same emotions as new immigrants, they are able to better relate with these students (Trilokekar & Kukar, 2011; Walters et al., 2009). Some teachers even experienced acts of racism or experienced situations where the locals emphasized the participants' cultural differences while abroad (Trilokekar & Kukar, 2011). Even though some teachers did face challenges, overall, they felt that participating in the experience abroad was of benefit to their personal and professional growth as teachers (Trilokekar & Kukar, 201l; Walters et al., 2009).

## Teacher Development

The construction of an identity is a combination of biological and social influences. Biologically, our identity includes factors that we are born with such as sex

and race. Social influences can change and modify the identity based on the interactions with the environment. There are many factors to consider in the construction of an identity including the consideration of one's career (Egbo, 2009).

Teacher identities develop from the integration of knowledge and professional growth (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Connelly and Clandinin (1999) describe that reflection and social contexts of the experience are important factors to consider when identifying new knowledge learned. This new knowledge may have an impact on professional growth, therefore, modifying teacher identity. Teachers' skills develop through teacher education courses and through teaching practices (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995). Experiences involving exposure to an unfamiliar culture, such as in culturally different communities, demonstrate the role that experience plays in personal and professional development. Reflection provides the opportunity to learn about the self by recognizing perceptions and opinions. All participants within Trilokekar and Kukar's (2011) study were required to complete a reflection component for their teaching abroad experience that encouraged critical thought and that questioned pre-existing assumptions about culture. Trilokekar and Kukar's study demonstrated the contribution that reflection could have on the development of an individual's cultural understanding.

Goodwin (2010) expressed the importance of pre-service teachers considering personal knowledge and experiences in their transformation of becoming a teacher: "the failure to see how one's accumulated life experiences bridge to one's continuing growth is to miss the opportunity to make them relevant to the future" (p. 23). Teachers should take the initiative to understand their cultural views that have an influence on their attitudes and behaviours. Gay and Kirkland (2003) argue that teachers should be

accountable for their teaching practices that stem from their cultural views. Self-reflection is an important skill to learn as a teacher, especially when teaching in a multicultural society. Reflection should assist in understanding personal perspectives as well as knowledge gained from lived experiences. Interpreting and reflecting upon experiences can further improve one's knowledge. Conducting a critical reflection can support cognitive development through restructuring previous knowledge with gained knowledge that may modify one's understanding of reality (Causey, Thomas, & Armento, 2000). Gay and Kirkland suggest that obstacles prevent teachers to self-reflect. They suggest that teachers do not know how to reflect critically because teacher education programs do not sufficiently expose pre-service teachers to this skill. Consequently, teachers confuse reflection with description, and fail to realize their dominant cultural privilege or recognize their stereotypes and biases.

This chapter presented the role of cultural diversity in Canada, identifying the important considerations when teaching a culturally diverse student body, or even just teaching students to live respectfully among their fellow neighbours. Conducting a study on Canadian teachers is important in order to explore how teaching professionals understand cultural diversity. A focus on a participant's understanding can reveal hidden inequalities within the educational institutions, or that the individual himself or herself holds subconsciously. Teachers have the opportunity to instil the multicultural ideals that are parallel to the Canadian multicultural values, but cannot do so if they themselves hold bias or stereotypical perspectives. The opportunity to teach abroad exposes teachers to experience life as a cultural minority and, with the proper guidance, they can benefit greatly from their gained insights. Considering the perspectives of teachers on cultural

diversity can reveal gaps in understanding and track the development of their teacher

identity, suggesting areas of improvement for teacher education programs.

**CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY**

The aims of this qualitative study were, first, examine six pre-service and/or in-service Southern Ontario teachers' understanding of cultural diversity, and second, explore how their lived experiences, including experience teaching abroad, contributed to their current teacher identity. The collection of participants' stories surrounding the context of cultural diversity helps to connect their understandings of cultural diversity to their development as a teacher. The focus on the development of a teacher identity serves the purpose to explore how new teachers entering the field of education within Ontario have developed their understanding of cultural diversity, and deal with culturally diverse issues within their teaching practices. As a recently graduated teacher myself, understanding how fellow teachers view this concept is an interest of mine. This chapter outlines the research design, the participants, the data collection, and the data analysis. The chapter concludes with a discussion of ethical considerations and limitations to this study.

**Research Design**

Narrative inquiry framed the research approach of this study, while a grounded theory approach contributed to analyzing the data. Narrative inquiry provides an understanding of the lives of participants through the organization of plot (Floersch, Longhofer, Kranke, & Townsend, 2010). Organizing lived experiences through plot considers the various factors that can provide insight into an individual's process of development (Chase, 2008). In this study, narrative inquiry explored the influence of experiences on the development of teacher identity. Grounded theory is the construction of a theoretical analysis (Charmaz, 2011). The use of a grounded theory analysis

identified themes and discovered relationships among these themes to develop a theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Floersch, et al., 2010).

Philosophically, I take a constructivist approach in my research and consider past social interactions and cultural experiences as an influence on reality (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). I believe that a person's life experiences contribute to his or her growth and shape his or her identity and perspectives on an ongoing basis. The effects of lived experiences on a person's life are of interest to this study, as the views expressed by members of Canada's multicultural society provide a unique contribution to the literature.

The methods used to collect data included individual interviews with each participant, along with a personal journal to write down the researcher's personal thoughts and opinions. Interviews were the main source for data collected. I selected participants based on relevance to the research questions rather than using random selection. I created criteria that potential participants had to fulfill in order to take part in this study. The criteria were as follows:

1. Participants must have been enrolled in an Ontario university, teacher education program or recently graduated within the past 5 years (or since 2008). These participants could have been part of the consecutive or concurrent program. The Ontario College of Teachers (2011) defines a consecutive education program to be one where students enter following a completed postsecondary degree, while students within the concurrent education program work both on an education degree and additional degree at the same time.

2. Participants must have travelled abroad for teaching through a university program.

3. Participants had to live in Canada during some part of their primary or

secondary education. Their teacher education must have been within Ontario.

I wanted to study both future or recently graduated teachers because of the daily interaction that teachers have with students of diversity in present day classrooms. The high rate of immigration in Canada signifies that diversity will continue to grow (Statistics Canada, 2013a), contributing to cultural diversity within Canadian classrooms. This demonstrates the importance for teachers to understand this concept in regards to their teaching attitudes and behaviours.

As this study also aimed to explore whether exposure to an unfamiliar culture provided cultural and social experiences that modified their understanding of cultural diversity and their teacher identity, the second criterion was necessary. Participants needed to have had a teaching experience abroad so that I could understand how this experience contributed to the development of their teacher identity.

My interest lay in the perceptions of teachers who lived in Canada's multicultural nation, and their preparation to teach in Ontario classrooms. Therefore, I collected stories about participants' experiences growing up in Canada, which provided background knowledge of the experiences that influenced their identity. Narrative inquiry along with a grounded theory analysis guided the collection and analysis of data.

### Participants

I used purposive sampling along with snowball sampling to identify participants for this study. Purposive sampling was the most appropriate technique for this study, as Denscombe (2010) describes that a researcher "can get the best information through focusing on a relatively small number of instances deliberately selected on the basis of

their known attributes" (pp. 34-35). Therefore, I selected participants who best fit the specific criteria required for participation. In search of participants, I contacted the leader of a university program located in Southern Ontario that provides students the opportunity to volunteer overseas in various areas of interest, including education. This program encourages students to develop a deeper sense of global awareness and social justice while abroad. The program leader received an email request introducing this study, along with a letter of invitation and consent form. The program leader forwarded my request to students who participated in the program, asking them to reply to me, the researcher, if interested.

Snowball sampling is the "process of reference from one person to the next" (Denscombe, 2010, p. 37). The use of snowball sampling allowed me to utilize my connections with friends and colleagues in search of potential participants for this study. Identifying potential participants using these connections ensured that the participants complied with the criteria of this study. My connection received an email describing the study along with the letter of invitation and consent form requesting that they forward the message to anyone they knew who would fit the sampling criteria of the study.

Six individuals expressed interest in participating in this study. I contacted these interested individuals to check whether they fulfilled the criteria, along with their availability for an interview. If these participants agreed to participate, they returned the signed consent form. Those who sent a consent form received a copy of the proposed interview questions (Appendix A) 1 week before their interview to encourage reflection upon experiences prior to the interview, in order to provide as much detail as possible. Purposive and snowball sampling helped to find participants who had the knowledge and

experience required to collect relevant data according to the research questions for this study.

## Site

Interviews took place in locations where the participants felt comfortable to share their stories. I offered some suggestions that may have been appropriate, including their school workplace, a library conference room, or a local coffee shop to provide convenience for the participant. As per their request, all interviews took place in coffee shops in their community, which provided a relaxed and comfortable atmosphere. I had initially informed participants when contacting them about the study that I was interested in learning about their life experiences and asked for at least an hour of their time to conduct the interview. I reminded participants at the interview that I wanted to hear their stories and that the interview questions (Appendix A) were merely a guideline to keep the conversation on track. Some participants were initially nervous about being recorded; therefore, I ensured them that it was for checking the accuracy of data. I also reminded them that they would have the opportunity to view my interpretations of their data and could discontinue participation at any time, which would retract their data from the study. Most interviews lasted longer than an hour, lasting typically an hour and a half.

To keep the confidentiality of all participants, pseudonyms replaced any information that could reveal their identity. Participants had the option to choose their own pseudonyms, which some did, while I chose the others. Participants' discussed influential people within their lives, and revealed the names of their communities. Pseudonyms also replaced these names and locations in efforts to protect participants' confidentiality. All participants were female; therefore, I will refer to participants

throughout this study in accordance. Based on the collected data, I created a participant profile located in Table 1. The following is an introduction to each participant.

Laura was born in a small, rural town in Ontario. The Dutch culture had an influential role in the town, stemming back to the large Dutch community that settled in this area. She described herself through her Dutch heritage culture and her Christian religious beliefs. She attended a Christian private school, where peers with the same cultural heritage surrounded her. At the time of the interview, she was completing her second last year of a concurrent teacher education program at a public, midsized university in Ontario. As part of her university experience, she travelled to both Peru and Brazil to teach English.

Twiga was born in Romania, but immigrated to Canada when she was 8 years old. While she followed some Romania, German, and Hungarian cultural traditions, these cultures had little influence in her daily life. In Canada, she grew up in a midsized community where the local postsecondary institutions attracted many international students. She attended a large university that had a very culturally diverse student population, but took her consecutive teacher education program at a small university that had little diversity. She travelled to Kenya for a practice teaching placement. At the time of the interview, she was finishing her teacher education program.

Clara identified herself through her Portuguese heritage. She grew up in a large, culturally diverse community, and interacted with culturally diverse peers on a daily occurrence. She attended a small university that had little cultural diversity for her concurrent education program. She travelled to Italy with her university for a teaching placement abroad. She was on the supply list for a school board in Ontario at the time of

Table 1

*Participants' Profiles*

|  | Laura | Twiga | Clara |
|---|---|---|---|
| Teacher Education Program | Concurrent Education | Consecutive Education | Concurrent Education |
| Graduation year from Teacher Education Program | 2013 | 2012 | 2010 |
| Position at time of Interview | Pre-service Teacher | Pre-service Teacher | Supply Teacher |
| Cultural Heritage | Dutch | Hungarian, Romanian, German | Portuguese |
| Home community | Small, rural, predominantly Dutch Canadian population | Midsized with some diversity | Large, metropolitan with a very culturally diverse population |
| School community | Private, elementary and secondary schools: strongly influenced by Dutch culture; Publicly funded university which introduced her to diversity | Undergrad: large, urban university with cultural diversity; Teacher education program: small university with predominantly Euro Canadian population | Elementary and secondary school: culturally diverse population; University: prominently Euro Canadian population |
| Teaching abroad Experience; Location and Length | Peru, Brazil; 2 weeks each | Kenya, Africa; 3 weeks | Italy; 2 weeks |
| Reflection component while teaching abroad? | Yes - community circles | Yes - personal journals, community circles | No – however reflected in personal journal |

Table Continued

| | Veronica | Melanie | Bethany |
|---|---|---|---|
| Teacher Education Program | Concurrent Education | Concurrent Education | Concurrent Education |
| Graduation year from Teacher Education Program | 2010 | 2010 | 2010 |
| Position at time of Interview | Supply Teacher | Supply Teacher with Long Term Contract | Supply Teacher with Long Term Contract |
| Cultural Heritage | Canadian; Jamaican | Canadian; Portuguese | Portuguese |
| Home community | Large with culturally diverse population | Midsized with culturally diverse population | Large with culturally diverse population; moved to small with little cultural diversity |
| School community | Elementary: predominantly Euro Canadian population; Secondary: high European culture identity | Elementary: predominantly Euro Canadian population; Secondary: more cultural diversity; University: greater culturally diverse population | Large school, culturally diverse population; when she moved, the school was smaller with predominantly Euro Canadian population |
| Teaching abroad Experience; Location and Length | Kenya, Africa; 3 weeks | Italy; 2 weeks | China; 3 weeks |
| Reflection component while teaching abroad? | No | No | No |

her interview.

Veronica had a White, Jamaican cultural heritage, but did not practice any Jamaican cultural traditions or customs. She grew up in a large, culturally diverse community in Ontario. She attended a small university to complete her concurrent education program, travelling to Kenya for her teaching abroad experience. Veronica was also on the teaching supply list for a school board in Ontario at the time of the interview.

Melanie lived in a midsized community that had some culturally diverse citizens. She had a Portuguese cultural background, but it did not have an influential role in her life. Even though she attended a small university for her concurrent education program, she met a variety of people with different cultural heritages. She completed a teaching experience abroad in Italy. She lived in a small, rural community at the time of her interview while she completed a 1-year occasional teaching position in a school, which half of its student body were of a First Nations culture.

Bethany compared her family to the United Nations as she had many aunts and uncles who had various ethnicities. Personally, she associated with her Portuguese heritage, but enjoyed learning about the cultures of her aunts and uncles. She grew up in a large, culturally diverse community, but moved to a small, rural community, with a predominantly Euro Canadian population, where she overcame struggles with peers because of her cultural heritage. She completed the concurrent education program at a small university, and travelled with peers to China for a teaching placement. She was completing a 1-year occasional teaching position at the time of our interview.

**Data Collection**

Interviews provided the majority of data for this study, supplemented with the researcher's observational notes of the participant during the interview. Interviews were semi structured and carried out on a one-to-one basis (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). I considered my role as researcher during the data collection stage as I was aware that my behaviour, words, and actions could interfere with the results. I recognized that my personal narrative could also interfere with the study and I took actions to minimize this.

**Interviews**

A narrative design focused on the collection of detailed stories of participants' experiences, revealing how participants made meaning of their experiences, and considering cultural and social structures (Fraser, 2004). Therefore, using narrative interviews, I collected the descriptive data needed to examine experiences through a Canadian context.

Narrative interviews develop a conversation between the researcher and participant rather than a question-and-answer period, permitting participants to voice themselves and tell their stories of their experiences, including details that are important or influential to them (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Riessman, 2004). Providing the participants with some control over the direction of the interview allowed them to take the conversation in a certain direction, which may lead to revealing information that the researcher did not anticipate (Riessman, 2008). Considering the role of the researcher in an interview, prepared questions can assist the participant in recalling details, turning points, emotions, and actions (Riessman, 2008). Three important behaviours while listening to participants include attentiveness, sensitivity, and nonjudgmental

(Denscombe, 2010). Interview questions (Appendix A) offered starting points for the participant to share experiences or lead the interview back to the focus of the study. Open communication between the researcher and participant assisted in detailed stories and correct interpretation of meanings (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Mishler (1986) described the importance of collaboration between a researcher and the participant during an interview:

> A question may more usefully be thought of as part of a circular process through which its meaning and that of its answer are created in the discourse between interviewer and respondent as they try to make continuing sense of what they are saying to each other. (pp. 53-54)

Narrative interviews offer information about the interpretations participants make of their experiences, indicating that researchers should understand these interpretations to strive for accuracy of data (Riessman, 2008). A completed story required details of the event and the interpreted meanings. The collected stories for participants in this study, considering their interpretations and meanings made of events, exposed their personal values, attitudes, and beliefs. Interviews that collect stories can generate an understanding to the way the participants make sense of the world; therefore, further questioning can assist in understanding the true meaning of data (Mishler, 1986).

For this study, the intention of interview questions (Appendix A) was to extract in-depth details about the lives of participants. In regards to the narrative design, predetermined questions filled in additional information that participants may have left out or forgotten to include when describing their experiences. The list of questions were developed according to four main areas of focus: firstly, experiences of cultural diversity

growing up; secondly, experiences of cultural diversity in education; thirdly, experiences of teaching abroad; and fourthly, how these experiences influenced a participant's teacher identity in relation to cultural diversity. The interview began with an exploration into family life, school life, and community life, collecting details about the cultural and social influences on participants' attitudes and beliefs. Then, I focused on collecting stories about educational experiences that provided information about education students received during primary and secondary school and education while attending their teacher education program. Next, I examined the meanings that participants made about cultural diversity on their teaching abroad experience. Lastly, I focused on how participants developed their teacher identity.

Audio devices recorded the audio during each interview for accuracy purposes. The use of a recording device provided the opportunity for the researcher to focus also on the nonverbal communication throughout the interview. Observations included the reactions that participants had towards interview discussions or while telling their stories, to provide further data on hidden thoughts of the experience (Fraser, 2004). I made notes of the observations that the audio-recording device may have missed due to various reasons such as voice intonation and/or participant distraction.

**Personal Journal**

Throughout this research experience, I documented within a journal my personal thoughts and reactions. The journal provided an area where I could document reactions to the research process such as interacting with participants, data collection, and data analysis. Documenting my thoughts and feelings helped to keep me constantly aware of my opinions, which helped to separate mine from those collected from participants. I did

not want to impose my own thoughts on participants, which could have caused the potential for researcher bias.

## Data Analysis

This study used narrative inquiry to identify participants' understanding of cultural diversity through the exploration of their personal narratives. Humans are natural storytellers who use stories to represent their experiences and interpretations of reality (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, 2006). Accordingly, narrative researchers study these stories as experiences and make interpretations of them. Exploring each participant's narrative provided a holistic overview of experiences taking into consideration the societal and cultural influences that had an impact on the participant's life (Hendry, 2007).

Through a one-on-one interview with each participant, I collected stories and then examined the meanings made from the lived experiences to demonstrate the participant's cognitive learning process. I incorporated Bruner's (2004) insights into the uses of narrative and self-telling as he described in the following statement: "eventually the culturally shaped cognitive and linguistic processes that guide the self-telling of life narratives achieve the power to structure perceptual experience, to organize memory, to segment and purpose-build the very 'events' of a life" (p. 693). In answering this study's main research questions, narratives provided the opportunity to identify any influence a participant's cultural cognitive understandings had on their interpretation of an experience.

Once interviews were completed, I transcribed the audio recordings. I followed Riessman's (1993) suggested process of transferring oral data from an interview to a

transcript: create a first draft transcript as exactly heard from the audio recordings, then transcribe it again omitting the unnecessary filler words and false starts, but noting the pauses or silences. Before beginning data analysis, I reviewed each participant's transcript multiple times to grasp an understanding of the data.

Conducting a narrative analysis initiated a deeper interpretation of the data by examining the meanings of experiences rather than just the events themselves (Riessman, 2008). A narrative analysis helped identify links between participants' lived experiences with their values (Riessman, 2008). Guba and Lincoln (2005) argue that participants' thought processes become more sophisticated as subsequent experiences build upon previous knowledge and understanding. Accordingly, if previous experiences laid the foundation of knowledge, then experiences modify and develop this knowledge producing different perspectives from one day to the next. Conducting a narrative analysis assisted in understanding these participants' reflections of their lived experiences given their present situation.

Participants shared their experiences with cultural diversity both in Canada and abroad. I analysed the meanings from these experiences, then made a comparison among all narratives. When analyzing the stories about the abroad experience, I focused on each participant's teaching and cultural experiences while there. I aimed to explore the influence that participants' experiences had on their perspectives of cultural diversity in order to assist in identifying how these understandings developed into their teacher identity. Essentially, I thought a connection existed between the participants' development of their cultural understandings to their teacher identity.

I began analyzing each individual transcript by identifying and organizing stories. Stories consisted of segments that illustrated a point or opinion, provided a statement and example, or included elements of a story (Bell, 2003; Riessman, 2008). Once identified, stories were numbered and named for easy reference (Fraser, 2004), and I began to organize them into a personal narrative. Chronologically organizing the stories assisted in identifying how each story contributed to the advancement of the plot (Polkinghorne, 1995). I was then able to explore how each experience contributed to a participant's learning process of cultural diversity. Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) work with dimension of continuity framed the narrative analysis of this study, which explores the process of people and their learning between the past, present, and future. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) also suggested examining inquiry space through the dimensions of interaction and situation or place. Interaction identifies the personal factors such as the way a participant thinks about and reacts to a situation, and social factors that consider the surrounding factors of an event (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). Organizing stories chronologically can also contribute to the understanding of how the setting can contribute to the overall analysis of a narrative. Where a story takes place may have an effect on how a participant perceives an event and the researcher should be aware of how a place could have an impact on the experiences (Clandinin, Pushnor, & Orr, 2007). Organizing stories chronologically through plot provided an in-depth analysis and considered various influencing factors of a story.

Once I felt that I understood stories according to the participants' intentions and retold each participant's narrative according to my interpretation, I then compared the narratives among one another. Comparing narratives identified the events that these

participants had with cultural diversity in Canada and the influence cultural and social factors had on interpretations and meanings. Fraser (2004) explained the importance of comparing and contrasting content, style, and tone as patterns may surface amongst participants (p. 194). Comparing the content of stories may also result in themes that contribute to the exposure of hidden meanings behind participants' experiences (Krump, 2004). Grounded theory further assisted in the identification of themes throughout the narratives.

The grounded theory approach provided a deep interaction with the data. The use of codes and memos organized and categorized the data. Coding the data provided an analysis of chunks of data, examining each section thoroughly (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). I developed codes for each section of data. Developing codes is useful as data are sorted, summarized, and synthesized (Charmaz, 2011, p. 165). I used memos to document my thoughts as I reflected on these codes, supporting a constant comparison among codes (Charmaz, 2011; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Memos helped to explain the codes and develop my ideas about the data. Organizing data into codes initiated the identification of themes for each participant's narrative. The process of creating codes and memos based on data, then themes based on these codes and memos (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), led to the comparison of participants' narratives based on these themes. Grounded theory led to a more theoretical and conceptual understanding of the data where central themes of the study were identified.

**Ethics**

Ethical considerations are important in any research as it protects the participants. Therefore, it is expected that researchers abide by ethical research protocol by first

obtaining ethical clearance to conduct research on human beings before any data collection occurs (Creswell, 2009; Denscombe, 2010). This study followed the ethical considerations in place by Brock University's Handbook Regarding Research Ethics. Clearance was granted from the REB (File #: 11-201-MOGADIME) before this study was conducted. I provided participants with a letter of invitation and a consent form, which provided information about my study, their role as a participant, and their right to resign from participation at any time. The information handed out during the participant recruitment stage informed participants about the confidentiality of identifying information. All participants within this study provided free consent to participate.

The benefits of creating a relationship of trust between the researcher and participant were essential for the collection of in-depth data. A relationship of trust can aid in the participants feeling safe to share their stories, and comfortable to reveal hidden meanings (Clandinin, Murphy, Huber, & Orr, 2010). The researcher should refrain from judging the participants on the stories they share (Josselson, 2007). To build a trusting relationship, I was aware of my behaviour, actions, and words at all times, and respected the participants and the stories they told.

It is also important for narrative researchers to consider ethical criteria as sensitive discussions may arise about participants' personal experiences. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) explain, "It is important not to squeeze the language of narrative criteria into a language created for other forms of research" (p. 7). The data collected were the participants' experiences as they told based on their values, interests, and point of view, and not concerned with the stories as information (Josselson, 2007; Riessman, 1993). As such, narrative research uses an ethical criterion that does not focus on validity, as there

is "no absolute way of verifying... [someone's]... thoughts and feelings" (Clandinin et al., 2010, p.188). Polkinghorne (2007), described validity as "believability of a statement or knowledge claim" (p. 4), and, therefore, narrative research is validated through trustworthiness and plausibility. The validity of research depends on whether interpretations are persuasive (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Riessman, 1993). The participant can contribute to the validation of trustworthiness by having the opportunity to review transcripts of interpreted data (Riessman, 2008). Participants in this study had the opportunity to review the transcripts of their interviews. Participants also had the opportunity to review interpreted data for accuracy. Following ethical standards, participants could request to change or modify data. The data are personal to each participant based on his or her lived experiences and interpretations. Therefore, transferability is unfeasible because the data cannot be generalized (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In efforts to increase dependability of the data, asking leading questions within the interview, transcribing as accurately to the spoken word as possible, and reviewing narratives to the accuracy of the initial transcripts were all necessary measures (Collier-Reed, Ingerman, & Berglund, 2009).

### Limitations

A limitation concerning my interview process was that I provided participants with interview questions (Appendix A) well in advance of the interview, which could have led to rehearsed answers. However, my interests were to make each participant feel comfortable to discuss her experiences. Providing questions in advance allowed participants to reflect on their experiences. Semi-structured interviews encouraged flexibility for the participant to integrate her thoughts and views about the concept.

A limitation of my study would be the context in which I recruited my participants. I recruited participants from universities that are located in predominantly White communities. It would have been interesting to examine narratives of teachers with various cultural backgrounds, to learn how their lived experiences developed their understandings of cultural diversity.

My inexperience as a researcher is also a limitation to this study. I have completed interviews with participants in the past; however, this is my first experience conducting and analyzing narrative interviews. I considered the guidelines set out through various narrative researchers, as mentioned throughout this thesis. The works of Fraser (2004) and Riessman (1993, 2004, 2008) initiated my interest in narrative research. Analyzing data through a grounded theory analysis was also a first experience for me. I was careful to follow the research process set out by scholars within the field, including Corbin and Strauss (2008) and Charmaz (2011).

**CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS**

This chapter discusses each participant's narrative. I conducted semi-structured narrative interviews with six participants regarding their experiences of cultural diversity throughout their lives. Supplementing the narrative data, I also took notes throughout the interviews to document body language, expressions, and intonations. These nonverbal cues could have suggested hidden meanings behind the participants' verbal interpretations of their experiences. Additionally, I used a personal journal to record my own thoughts and experiences to assist in separating the participants' ideas from my own experiences and biases. I analyzed the data using a narrative analysis in conjunction with a qualitative grounded theory analysis. I then included the narrative of each participant and provided common categories that were present in all narratives.

Each participant had a unique and interesting narrative to tell. As I listened to the participants share their stories during the interview process, I further understood what cultural diversity meant for each of them. I explored the participants' interpretations of their experiences, exploring how these influenced their professional identities. Participants discussed many ideas to incorporate cultural diversity references into their classroom. The use of the term cultural diversity education throughout this chapter describes any memories that included learning about cultural diversity, or any teaching strategies that they used or planned to use in the future that would teach students about cultural diversity. Combining the narrative analysis results alongside a grounded theory analysis provided a more complete understanding of how experiences contributed to the development of a teacher's identity in relation to cultural diversity.

**Participants' Narratives**

The following are the narratives of each participant. I end this chapter by providing the most dominant categories derived from the participants' data.

**Laura's Story**

Laura was the youngest participant entering her final year of the concurrent education program at the time of her interview. She grew up in a small rural community but moved to a larger city for university, experiencing significant cultural change. Her experience from university and teaching abroad in both Peru and Brazil provided her with an understanding of cultural diversity through a global perspective. Even though she began to develop an understanding based on her experiences within cultural diverse societies, her narrative revealed that her sheltered upbringing continued to have an impact on her cultural perception.

Laura had a sheltered upbringing, experiencing limited cultural diversity within her community and school. She grew up in a small town, with a predominantly Euro Canadian population, where many citizens within her community were of Dutch heritage. Her grandparents had immigrated from The Netherlands, and her family practiced Dutch traditions and customs. The Dutch culture heavily influenced Laura's school community, as many of her fellow classmates and teachers of her private Christian school were of the Dutch heritage. She described this cultural influence in her early life as living in a "Dutch bubble". She explained: "I lived in a Dutch world, in a way that's all I really knew." When asked at the beginning of our interview what cultural diversity meant to her, she admitted: "I had no experience with it before, like I mean I guess I always used the

dictionary definition, but I never really experienced it, so I could never define it for myself."

University presented Laura with an opportunity to explore cultural diversity, as she chose to attend a public university resulting in a move to a larger, more diverse city than her rural hometown. Laura's choice between continuing her education in a private Christian university to strengthen her faith or leave her sheltered upbringing to attend a public university proved a difficult decision for her. Laura reflected on how she felt when starting at the public university in reference to her religious beliefs:

I think if anything it probably strengthened my faith even though there were people there that not necessarily looked down, but were like "ya ok whatever that's what you believe in.". In a Christian school, obviously, there are people with the same values that would essentially build each other up, but I felt that in university it was stronger.... I think because I had a chance to explore myself. So like being in a Christian school, you didn't really challenge any thoughts, you just took it as it is because everyone thinks the same way. When you go into an environment where there are different cultures and beliefs then it's like "oh wait, they are questioning me about this, maybe I should figure out why I believe this or why I do things this way". So it made me answer questions for myself and answer their questions.

Laura's description revealed the role that religion played in her life as she interpreted the experience through a religious perspective. She demonstrated respect for fellow classmates' beliefs and opinions even when different from her own. Her decision

to attend a public university was beneficial because meeting people of diversity encouraged Laura to reflect on her personal beliefs and resulted in a strengthened faith.

Her move to a larger city and public university presented Laura with an introduction to Canadian multiculturalism; her courses and student teaching practices helped her realize that cultural diversity is part of daily life for many Canadians. Laura's concurrent education program included a mandatory diversity course to fulfill the requirements of her degree, which taught Laura about diversity and encouraged her to think critically of the concept. The course provided a foundation of understanding for Laura, which she could continuously build upon with future experiences.

Laura's student teaching practices for her concurrent education program took place in Ontario classrooms. The level of diversity that she encountered within her classrooms surprised her, revealing her limited exposure with diversity as the location of her teaching placements were in communities that she described as having limited diversity. The following discussion about diversity in the classroom reveals her naïveté:

> I'm not sure if diversity was like a trendy word back then, like a couple years ago, but I remember walking into a couple of classrooms and the back bulletin board was all about diversity and acceptance and that kind of stuff. I think that was one of the things that they talked about in character education as something to really build on, so I don't know if that was just for that school itself. Maybe diversity was increasing, I do not know if the board was trying to promote it. I don't really know what was behind it, but it was actually really cool because I never experienced that. I would have never thought to have diversity like talk or education in the class.

At first, Laura struggled to understand the reasoning for including diversity education within the classroom. Her efforts to justify and understand its inclusion reveal that Laura had no experience with diversity education within her past schooling.

Professionally, Laura expressed concern of her limited exposure to diversity, worried that she would be unable to relate to her students. Her concern extended into her desire to teach overseas once graduated from the education program. "I really want to teach abroad, but I feel that if I go into an abroad setting I won't know the culture well enough. So how do I draw practical examples?"

The fear of being an unqualified teacher proved beneficial for Laura, taking it upon herself to immerse in cultural experiences. She learned about a volunteer social justice group organized through her university which traveled abroad to help with different social programs. Through the social justice group, Laura travelled with a group of students on a 2-week trip abroad to Peru in the summer of 2010, and again to Brazil in the summer of 2011. She had the option to assist in four different areas of interest, construction, dental, health, and education, and decided upon construction and education in both locations. She fully enjoyed her trip to Peru. The group travelled to a very poor community outside of Lima, Peru, having the opportunity to integrate within the community and interact with children, men, and women. She returned the following year on a personal trip, where her experience with one of the children demonstrated her level of involvement within the community: "One of the girls I played with all the time, she came running up to me and gave me the biggest hug."

Laura's trip to Brazil reflected a different type of experience. In Brazil, she travelled again to a very poor community outside of Rio de Janeiro, but did not feel as

warmly welcomed as she did in Peru. She felt that the Brazilians did not trust her group and were suspicious of their presence. She described how the perception of her skin colour was different in Peru compared to Brazil:

> In Peru it was more if they [Peruvians] saw someone of different colour, they would run up to us [in excitement], but in Brazil it was the opposite. It was as if they would back off. I felt like it wasn't as near as safe in Brazil than I did in Peru. Like for Peruvians, if I didn't know anyone and I had a question, I would feel comfortable to go up to someone and ask them. In Brazil, I would be way too scared to do that.

The level of interaction Laura had with these two societies may have made a difference in how she perceived these cultures. Her stories about Peru demonstrated how she integrated into the society, while in Brazil, her descriptions revealed disconnection from the Brazilian society. Without an opportunity for integration, she was unable to understand cultural mannerisms, which may explain her negative view of the Brazilian culture.

Laura's discussion of the Brazilian culture demonstrated her naive understanding of cultural difference.

> I feel Brazil is more Americanized. The one thing I was shocked about was like the girls there, they are 11 years old, and they are wearing the skimpiest clothes, tons of makeup. .. Where do you get these ideas from, you're living in a shanty town [very poor town]. I don't even know where they would get the resources for that. That rather blew my mind.

Laura expressed her shock at the underprivileged Brazilian girls' attire through her words and through her intonation. Laura used her own North American culture as a comparison to try to make sense of the experience. When analyzing these data, many questions arose about Laura's decision to use the American culture as a comparison, and it would have been beneficial to deepen this insight through a follow-up interview. In addition to these extra questions, she revealed information about her understanding of cultural diversity. Laura's discussion of the Brazilian girls revealed her personal opinions of the proper attire for 11-year-old girls, along with her stereotypical understanding of how underprivileged people dress. Her comparison to the North American culture also revealed how she believed young girls should dress based on her culturally influenced perception. When analyzing the data, I could not assume that Laura's upbringing influenced her perceptions, as there were other factors to consider such as the media. I determined that Laura did not have an understanding of the situation, and relied on her previous knowledge to make sense of what she did not understand, without taking into consideration cultural differences.

Laura further developed her global awareness by taking an optional globalization course within her university program. The course encouraged Laura to connect global learning to the classroom through the creation of practical classroom strategies. This course developed Laura's understanding that globalization is a result of the movement of cultures throughout the world, and one cannot make assumptions based on visual identifications, as this only increases stereotypes. Laura's description of her teaching strategies reflected a global perspective. She learned from her experiences that even when teaching in a predominantly Euro Canadian classroom, it is important that all students

learn about diversity. She used the term "global citizens" in a way that places

responsibility on the people of the world to respect cultural differences:

> Even if I end up teaching in a school where there isn't much diversity, I still want
>
> to teach it. They still should be aware, because like we may live in one little part
>
> of the world, but we still live in a world where there are tons of cultures
>
> everywhere. I still think we have a responsibility to be in a sense global citizens
>
> and knowledgeable about other people.

**Twiga's Story**

I interviewed Twiga towards the end of her consecutive teacher education

program, with only 3 weeks left to graduate. She entered the consecutive program the

year after completing her undergraduate studies. She was the only participant interviewed

who took the consecutive teaching program. She was also the only participant born

outside of Canada, immigrating to Canada as a child. Twiga combined the knowledge she

learned from her teacher education program and personal experiences to develop a

perception of a successful teacher. However, Twiga's understanding of teaching changed

due to a lesson that she learned while teaching abroad.

Twiga greatly attributed her knowledge and understanding of cultural diversity to

her personal experiences. She was born in Romania and immigrated to Canada with her

family when she was 8 years old. She was unfamiliar with the English language and

Canadian culture, experiencing many social hardships because of her cultural difference.

She did not understand the language well, or grasp cultural references made by her

classroom teacher or her peers. With time, she overcame these struggles, but as an adult,

reflected on them as a learning tool. She believed that her struggles with social

awkwardness and a language barrier provided a way to relate with people who experience

similar challenges. Once she familiarized herself with the Canadian culture, she

supported fellow classmates experiencing the same struggles. As a future teacher, she

plans to use her personal experience as a way to connect with her students.

Twiga attended postsecondary schools in two very different communities, a

culturally diverse urban city and a small, rural town with minimal diversity, which

furthered her understanding of cultural diversity. She completed her undergraduate

degree at a large university located in an urban multicultural city within Southern

Ontario, exposing her to cultural and religious differences that existed both within the

community and amongst her peers. Initially, the dedication some students had to their

religious practices surprised Twiga, as these students would leave class for prayer or

follow strict eating habits; however, she realized that these students were simply

observing their faith. Exposure to these differences helped her gain an awareness of

religious commitment that provided a new level of respect for cultural and religious

diversity.

The location of the university where she completed her teacher education program

provided a different cultural environment for Twiga compared to her undergrad

experience. She completed a 1-year consecutive teacher education program at a

university located in a Northern Ontario rural town, which had a predominant Euro

Canadian population. Twiga could not recollect any courses that involved teaching about

cultural diversity or adapting lessons to students of cultural diversity. Twiga recalled that

some resume and interview workshops included tips on answering questions about

cultural diversity. It was interesting to note that her program thought cultural diversity

was an important enough issue that a school board might ask about it, but not important enough to be included within her program courses. This question would be fascinating to explore further in an additional study.

The university did offer an opportunity to complete an international teaching placement. Twiga took the opportunity to teach in Kenya, Africa with a group of fellow pre-service teachers for 3 weeks. Her experience abroad taught Twiga many things about herself as a person and as a professional. Her experiences in Kenya taught her how to adapt to her surroundings and the importance of catering to the needs of her students. She encountered various challenging teaching moments while in Kenya, although the process of reflection, both personally and with her group, assisted in understanding the reasons behind these challenges. She struggled with her ethnocentric perspectives on the Kenyan teaching methods. She recalled her disbelief when she observed the Kenyan teachers using the rote teaching process, a question and answer style of teaching.

> The first time I walked in, like oh my God, rote process, these people don't know anything! Then I walked out, thinking it works for them. I mean ya it's low, and you have to do it over and over and it's boring, but I mean it's the way the teachers were taught and it's the way they are teaching and it works because [students] have to [pass] a test in order for them to move on. Memorization is more important for them as opposed to getting the big idea of a concept. In order for them to move on to high school or a polytechnic, they have to pass a test in grade 8 and they can only write it twice, and if they don't pass then they can't move on and their school is done... I mean I learned rote process isn't the end of the world. I mean that's what works for them in order to pass the test and move

on, so it's what works, it's what's sustainable for them. The teachers aren't paid a

lot so it doesn't make sense for them to reinvent the wheel and take on these new

approaches.

Twiga negatively judged the educational differences through a narrow-minded

worldview. Her comments demonstrated an ethnocentric ideology of teaching, as she

perceived her own knowledge as superior. Upon reflection, Twiga recognized that she

quickly judged the rote teaching method before considering the context of the situation.

She realized that the design of the Kenyan education system was different from Ontario

and that the teaching methods and strategies reflected the appropriate education system.

She came to understand that her views of teaching stemmed from her cultural

understandings and that the educational differences were not examples of incompetent

teaching, but rather cultural differences.

Twiga taught the Kenyan students using the interactive teaching methods she

learned throughout her professional training. Twiga realized that Kenyan students had

only been exposed to the rote teaching process, which resulted in the students having to

learn how to work together to complete the group work activities. She also realized that

Kenyan lifestyles influenced Kenyan behaviour within the classroom. Twiga witnessed

that students were concerned with writing the teacher's lessons into their notebooks

rather than understanding them, and that students worked on lesson questions on their

own time with the help from fellow classmates rather than the teacher. Twiga realized

that the Kenyan lifestyle was community driven and the students had difficulty

completing worksheets independently. Therefore, she adapted her teaching methods

based on the strengths of the students:

[The Kenyan students] are very community driven, so even when you gave them a test, it was hard to tell them like look on your own paper, this is the time for you to show off what you know. They looked off one another and (...) and I just had to rethink as if it's not cheating, you just have to work together. We decided to go with more jigsaw activities or placemats ... than to work independently.

Teaching in Kenya provided Twiga with an understanding that teaching is always a learning process as it is important for a teacher to learn about his or her students and adapt teaching methods according to the needs of their students. Teaching in Kenya proved to be a turning point in Twiga's professional development as she reflected, "I don't think [Ontario teachers] had that much knowledge because my notion of what learning is and how learning should happen was kind of shattered too. And I realized how judgmental I was."

Having the opportunity to reflect on her abroad experience provided valuable personal insight. She had opportunities to reflect personally through journals or with her fellow student teachers through group discussions, both during the trip and once returned to Canada. She continued to reflect on her experience abroad through class projects and presentations.  She revealed that the reflection component of her trip was excessive, yet very beneficial because through her reflections she learned the importance of adapting to the needs of the students.

Twiga realized the responsibility as a teacher to incorporate diversity in the classroom. She felt her teacher education program inadequately prepared her as a teacher to deal with cultural diversity issues. She attributed her knowledge and understanding of

cultural diversity to her personal and abroad experiences. She believed that these experiences shaped her teaching identity as a Canadian teacher.

**Clara's Story**

Clara grew up in a suburb of a metropolitan city located in Southern Ontario. Hefton was a very diverse city, where Clara encountered cultural diversity on a daily basis within her community and throughout her school career. She explained that cultural diversity was a willingness to accept and embrace differences, and not being afraid "to go out and find out about it."

The foundation of Clara's understanding of cultural diversity stemmed from her upbringing in a Portuguese Family. Her parents immigrated to Canada in their 20s and raised their children according to Portuguese traditions and customs. She described what being Portuguese meant to her: "it's a big part of who we are; it's part of our identity." Clara referred to her Portuguese heritage often throughout the interview, as her own cultural background helped her relate to people who experienced similar challenges.

Clara grew up in Hefton, a culturally diverse city; however, her move to the small city of Grandville for university, which she described as "homogeneous" as it was not culturally diverse, provided new insight on culture.

> So when I was in [Hefton], it was more, 'let's respect people from different cultures, whether its Asian or African cultures,' whereas when I went to university, it was more native education; not so much the Asian, the African, European, but it was let's respect the native culture. So, you still have the diversity.

She reflected on her experience living in Grandville:

It definitely opened my eyes and made me realize that there is more than just

different nations, but there is a history to culture as well, not just ethnicity, not

just food, not just religion, but there is history as well.

Living in Grandville altered Clara's definition of cultural diversity. She realized

that culture also included cultural groups associated with the historical roots of a nation,

which for Canada would include the First Nations.

Clara completed six placements throughout the 4 years of her concurrent

education program. She completed her placements in both Hefton and in Grandville,

which provided her the opportunity to view diversity from a teaching perspective in two

different types of communities. She described her placements in Grandville as "visually

homogeneous." In this type of community, she found it easy to forget to teach her

students about diversity. However, since Hefton was such a diverse community, she was

constantly aware of her actions, teaching strategies, and her own awareness of avoiding

offending her students. Clara realized that she must always be conscious of who her

students are and learn about them. Her experience in Grandville helped her to realize that

a teacher cannot make assumptions regarding who her students are, as visual indications

may be misleading. She also realized the importance of incorporating diversity education

within the classroom, especially in the classrooms with minimal cultural diversity in

order to teach all students to be respectful of diversity.

As part of her concurrent education program, Clara travelled to Italy with a group

of student teachers for a 2-week teaching placement. Clara tried to adapt and fit into the

Italian culture, as she tried to do so when she normally travelled. She confessed that the

language barrier would always expose her as a foreigner, which made her feel insecure and unwelcomed. She described her experience as an outsider:

> It puts you on the other side of the equation I guess. You get an understanding of what it feels like to be an ethnic minority or that person that is different, that nobody really understands because they don't know much about you or about where you are from. I think it's a humbling experience, because you come back from that and you realize that you were looking at somebody else the same way that those people were looking at you. And you realize that well I didn't like it, I didn't feel comfortable, and how must they be feeling as this is their home. [Italy] wasn't my home, but [Canada] is their home and they're getting looked at that way. Or even if they were just visitors or anything like that, it makes you think when you're in the other person's shoes.

In Italy, the group of student teachers usually travelled together, which provided a sense of familiarity for Clara but her trip abroad also provided the experience of how it felt to be an "outsider" This insight developed her understanding of the hardships that immigrants face when in an unfamiliar country.

Living in a culturally diverse city exposed Clara to the many cultures that existed amongst Canadian citizens. She recognized that celebrating different cultural traditions was common within her society and she developed pride for her cultural heritage. Growing up in a diverse city also showed her that she was not alone when celebrating her differences. Her transition to a city that had little cultural diversity modified her definition of cultural diversity, and contributed to her recognition in the importance of including diversity education to the classroom. She noted this to be especially true for

students who never experienced diversity, as she believed it was easier to teach children about acceptance, rather than adults who were already "stuck in their ways." During her teaching placement, Clara realized that students were eager to learn about cultures and she used this interest as a classroom management tool. As a supply teacher, she uses students' curiosity as a management tool by initiating a point system throughout the day for behaviour, to use towards revealing her cultural identity. She found it easy to incorporate cultural diversity education within the classroom as long as the teacher was flexible and creative with his or her teaching methods and lessons.

**Veronica's Story**

Veronica graduated from a concurrent education program in 2010 and completed her Master of Education in 2011. She was passionate about social justice issues including respect for cultural differences. Meeting inspirational role models, her educational experience, and teaching abroad in Kenya attributed to her positive attitude towards cultural diversity in the classroom. Her passion for social justice provided an interesting teacher perspective on understanding cultural diversity.

Veronica seemed nervous and intimidated at the beginning of the interview by the use of the recording device, even though I ensured her that her identity would remain confidential. Her eagerness to provide information that she thought would be beneficial to the study based on the information given through the letter of introduction seemed rehearsed; however, she seemed to relax as we progressed with our conversation.

Veronica defined herself as Canadian, yet had a little Jamaican cultural influence within her family, as her grandparents from both sides of her family were from Jamaica. Her Jamaican roots influenced how she perceived diversity:

I would say that a little part of me was always sensitive to when people made fun

of or talked down about um (...) African American background or (...)skin colour,

because I knew that was the environment that my family grew up in.

Reflecting on her family history assisted in her realization of how hurtful

derogatory comments can be, and provided a way to connect with people of diversity.

She also demonstrated her effort to maintain a positive image by being mindful of the

words she used to describe skin colour. I interpreted her use of the word "um" and using

pauses (...), as taking time to utilize a neutral and socially acceptable word to avoid any

misinterpretation as seeming racist.

An experience within high school initiated Veronica's interest in learning about

global issues. She agreed to join a debate club in high school as a favour for a friend:

We joined this debate club, and I remember it was so over my head. I didn't know

what they were talking about because they were debating current issues. ... I

remember saying the sentence: What is Ghandi?, and everyone was laughing at

me.

Veronica expressed hurt and embarrassment while telling this story as she

reflected on her ignorance. Her embarrassment motivated her to learn about current

issues. She reflected on this experience as a turning point in identifying the importance of

educating her students on current and social justice issues.

Veronica referred to cultural diversity as a social justice issue. Cultural diversity

was a current social issue that she believed needed recognition in the classroom to

promote respect and sensitivity to cultural differences. She attributed her passion for

social justice to two influential role models within her life. Veronica met Suzy, a family

friend, early in her university career who volunteered regularly with mission trips overseas. Veronica became involved with Suzy's organization and offered assistance in fundraising events. Suzy inspired Veronica to take action on current issues and initiated her curiosity into social justice issues.

Mrs. Jones, an associate teacher during one of Veronicas teaching placements, went beyond her teacher role by organizing social justice awareness events and activities for her classroom, school, and even the local community. Some events included raising money for a specific cause and community camps that were proactive in dealing with local social justice issues. Mrs. Jones taught her students about social justice, incorporating current issues into lessons that pertained to the requirements of the Ontario curriculum. As Veronica assisted Mrs. Jones with various projects, including fundraising events, she realized that raising funds was not the only goal of fundraising; she also wanted to raise awareness in the community. Veronica acknowledged the time commitment Mrs. Jones dedicated to her teaching, ensuring the integration of social justice issues into the curriculum by continuously creating new and exciting lessons. Mrs. Jones inspired Veronica to be creative and to incorporate her passion for social justice into the curriculum. Veronica hopes to teach future students about current issues and motivate them to change the world for the better.

In February 2010, Veronica, along with a group of pre-service teachers, travelled to Kenya, Africa for a 3-week teaching placement. The group integrated into the community, interacted with the local families, and even had a discussion session with a local mother to hear stories about growing up in the community. They also participated in community activities such as the water walk the pupils took to the river to fetch water.

Teaching abroad provided the opportunity for Veronica to recognize some of the difficulties people face trying to obtain the necessities of life; yet, as she discussed her stories of difficulties and hardships, Veronica noted that the Kenyan people were grateful for what they had. Based on Veronica's accounts, her education program did not require a reflection component. However, she did recognize that the perspective on life differed extensively between the Kenyan and Canadian culture. Veronica recognized that values differed based on the needs of the culture. Travelling to Kenya provided an awareness of how culture shapes one's values. Veronica came to the understanding that culture influences people's values. I felt this learning could have been further explored if she had the opportunity to analyze the experience with direction from her program. Once back in Canada, she transitioned her lessons from abroad into the Canadian classroom, wanting to impart appreciative values to the next generation.

Education is not only important for students, but Veronica's Master of Education research revealed that it was also important for educators. While completing her Master's, she discovered that teachers have an influential role in students' education. The teacher's interest and passion for social justice determined whether these issues were included in the classroom. The knowledge base that they personally acquired influenced their perceptions on these issues. Therefore, Veronica believed that it was important to educate teachers on current issues, so that they had the knowledge to teach their students about the world in which they live.

Veronica learned through her experiences that being a good role model was an important aspect of being a teacher. She witnessed the power that an inspirational teacher had on fellow teachers, and recognized that one teacher made a difference within a

school, community, and even a school board. She discussed the importance as a teacher

of being a role model for her students, and provided an example of social justice

leadership:

> I think that we have to lead by example and if I'm making those [derogatory]
>
> jokes in public or being around those jokes or laughing at those jokes, then I'm
>
> not doing a very good job, I'm not leading by example. Eventually, some kid is
>
> going to overhear that and the cycle is going to repeat itself.

Veronica strove to create an awareness of current issues in her community

through the various fundraisers she organized, but she realized that as a teacher she had

an opportunity to teach her students about the world in which they lived and the

importance of respect for one another. The work she did for her Master's summarized it

well for Veronica; the classroom teacher decides how to teach the curriculum

expectations, whether he or she chooses to teach creatively to incorporate current issues

or follow a blackline masters predetermined lessons.

**Melanie's Story**

Melanie completed her concurrent education, teaching program and worked as a

supply teacher for a public school board in Ontario. She travelled to Italy to complete a

teaching placement in April 2009. Her teaching experience as a supply teacher during a

long-term occasional (LTO) contract contributed greatly to her understanding of cultural

diversity issues within the Canadian classroom.

Melanie identified herself as a Canadian even though her mother had a European

background. She mentioned her heritage in the beginning of the interview, but made no

further reference throughout the interview. The lack of reference suggests that her cultural heritage had minimal influence in her understanding of cultural diversity.

She grew up in a midsized city, encountering cultural diversity on a daily basis. Melanie scarcely referred to her life growing up; therefore, I tried to initiate deeper discussion using questions. The resulting data provided minimal relevance to the study questions. Her discussion on her school experience did demonstrate that as Melanie graduated to high school and then university, she experienced more interactions with people of cultural diversity. She noticed that as the school she attended grew in student population, so did the diversity among the students. This led to more interactions between students of diversity, which helped Melanie realize the role that culture played in the lives of her fellow peers.

Her interview largely focused on her current teaching career as opposed to referencing her past, as it seemed that her recent experiences had a greater influence on her understanding of diversity. Her concurrent education, teaching program provided student teachers with the opportunity to travel abroad and complete their final teaching placement abroad. She chose to travel to Italy with a group of about 20 fellow classmates. Her cultural experience abroad provided a personal understanding with the challenges associated with being a cultural minority.

Melanie could only speak one language fluently, her native English, as well as a few phrases in the French language. She travelled to Italy relying on her English, but soon realized that not knowing the native language provided a challenge. While she could get by using English within the tourist areas in which she travelled, few people spoke English in the small city where the group spent most of their time. Melanie felt frustrated

by the language barrier, as she felt it was the hardest obstacle to overcome in Italy. She felt helpless because she did not understand the language. She felt like an "outsider," as if she did not belong in the country. Melanie's struggle with the language provided a better understanding of the challenges that immigrants face when moving to a new country, which could make any simple task, such as going to the grocery store, difficult. Experiencing the hardships of a language barrier firsthand proved to be a powerful lesson for Melanie because she understood one of the daily challenges that a Canadian immigrant may face.

Her experiences in Italy provided Melanie with an understanding of how immigrants might feel when they do not understand the native language. However, her discussions revealed that her lessons learned while abroad only influenced her personal understanding of the challenges immigrants faced. She did not make connections to her professional development as a teacher. She only made a connection to the immigrants in Canada, but never mentioned how a student might be affected by a language barrier and the implications this could have on their learning and social development. Her teaching program did not require a reflection component while teaching abroad. If she had the opportunity to reflect critically on her experiences abroad, she may have modified her teacher identity to include inclusive learning strategies for students with language difficulties.

Melanie taught occasionally for 1 year and was offered a grade 9 LTO (long-term occasional) job for most of the 2011-2012 school year in a community that included a nearby First Nations Reserve. She found this teaching job particularly challenging because she was unfamiliar with the dominant First Nations culture of her students. Her

teaching position was for a grade 9 English teacher. She expressed fear when first beginning the job as her teacher education program had failed to prepare her for teaching with cultural diversity, including native education. The intimidation she felt from teaching in a diverse classroom only added to her pressure as a first-time teacher as this was her first teaching contract position; however, she realized this fear was because of the unknown, and she took action:

> I thought [teaching] was a little bit harder, because not only am I in my first year of [having my own classroom] where I'm trying to figure out what I'm doing, I also have to submerse myself into how to connect with my Aboriginal students. So I have to learn about a whole other culture while I'm trying to figure out my teaching methods.

Melanie incorporated two teaching strategies into her teacher identity to overcome her fear of cultural diversity within the classroom. She realized the importance of adapting teaching practices to the needs of students and community.

Culturally relevant teaching creates a bridge between what a student knows and the lesson taught, giving relevance to education for students of cultural diversity (Mogadime, 2011). Melanie made use of community resources to understand the native culture and some of the beliefs and values. Having an awareness of her students' cultures helped Melanie accept the differences that culture brought to her classroom. While Melanie learned about her students, she also recognized the negative social prejudices that the surrounding community held in regards to the Aboriginal culture. She supported the school's attempt to create understanding and respect amongst the students through the inclusion of special cultural integration days. Melanie's awareness of her students'

cultures and the racist attitudes of the community allowed her to adapt her teaching according to cultural issues affecting her students. I interpreted that her support for creating a respectful environment for First Nations students resulted from her personal experience of feeling like an outsider on her trip abroad.

While her early upbringing provided little influence to how she understood diversity, her experience abroad assisted in her understanding of the hardships that people with cultural differences go through. The opportunity to reflect critically on her experience abroad and connect her learning to the classroom may have provided a more professionally rich learning experience. Overall, her trip provided a beneficial experience as a Canadian interacting daily with people of cultural diversity.

**Bethany's Story**

Bethany completed her concurrent education, teaching program in April 2010, travelling to China for her teaching abroad placement in 2009. Her experiences taught her that people react differently to cultural diversity based on their knowledge and understanding of it. She felt that incorporating cultural diversity education into the classroom could help students better understand the concept and the importance of respect.

Bethany used the term "normal" often throughout her interview to describe how she believed society should perceive cultural diversity to minimize negative confrontations. Based on Bethany's use of the term normal, she suggested that frequent exposure to cultural diversity suggested a familiarity with cultural differences. Her experiences have taught her that cultural diversity is a foreign concept to some Canadians, leading to cultural misunderstandings. She believed that exposure could lead

to an understanding of diversity, and discussed the importance of familiarizing and teaching her students about cultural diversity to ensure that all students learn how to interact respectfully with fellow Canadians.

Bethany's upbringing provided her with daily interactions with people of cultural backgrounds. She referred to her family as "the United Nations" as her parents were Portuguese, but her aunts and uncles married spouses with various cultural backgrounds. Her family gatherings included cultural traditions from the various cultures. Her experiences with cultural diversity also stemmed from her community as she grew up in a large diverse city. She recalled that even though her family, community, and school included a mix of various cultures, negative occurrences rarely happened because her classmates perceived cultural diversity as a "normal" occurrence.

A turning point in her understanding of cultural diversity occurred when her family moved to a small, rural, "very Dutch blond community" when she was in her early teens. Her peers exaggerated her physical features, cultural traditions, and mannerisms and labelled them as "weird" because they were different from their own, fitting in as part of the majority of the community. Her peers could only relate to what they knew, as living in a society with a predominantly Dutch Canadian population, provided familiarity with only the Dutch culture. She described a situation when her peers exaggerated her darker skin colour:

> I was referred to as not being White, which I am obviously Caucasian. So just all
> of a sudden realising that you're considered what everyone else says....But just
> having someone point out that you're not White and you grew up your whole life

not even caring what other people's skin colour was. Then you think, "But I am White...Wow, am I not White?"

Bethany demonstrated her frustration with how the locals perceived and exaggerated her physical characteristics because she looked different from the majority in the community. Exaggerating differences demonstrated the little exposure and familiarity her peers had with diversity as she was criticized based on the physical traits that were familiar to them.

Bethany's cultural differences were acknowledged a second time when she travelled to China for a teaching placement. Her teacher education program organized the teaching placement, and she travelled with a group of pre-service teachers like herself. As Canadian teachers, the Chinese community greatly respected the group and demonstrated hospitality. Having the opportunity to sightsee provided a different experience with the Chinese culture. Bethany felt that the Chinese had little exposure to cultural diversity because of the following situation. While sightseeing, Bethany explained that there were very few Caucasians in the area, and at times, they were the only Caucasian group. The physical traits such as body type, height, and hair colour attracted the attention of the locals, and many would "stop and stare" and some even took pictures of the group, demonstrating unfamiliarity with physical differences. She explained that many in her group felt uncomfortable when these situations occurred; however, having her cultural differences identified for the second time, she realized that the Chinese reacted in this way because they had limited exposure to diversity.

Bethany tried portraying an apathetic attitude by saying she was indifferent to the teasing, but when analysing her phrases and the intonation used, she subconsciously

revealed how she truly felt. She coped with the teasing by using several approaches. She ignored hurtful words and chose to disregard her peers' opinions as shown when she explained, "It wasn't really a big deal to me. I'm pretty blinded with that kind of [hurtful] communication." She also used sympathy by recognizing that her peers had limited understanding of diversity because of the community in which they lived: "they just did not understand because their community is all they know, I didn't care because I knew it was dumb. [My peers] grew up in a bubble and I feel bad that [they] don't know any diversity besides Dutchness [the Dutch culture]." Lastly, she tried to suppress her hurt through humour. While teaching abroad, her body shape defined her. Bethany used humour to conceal her hurt feelings when the Chinese people described her as "the chunky one," but she considered cultural differences, realizing that in North America she would be a "bodacious babe." While it was a hurtful comment, she realized that people perceive physical traits differently based on their exposure to it; further comprehending that exposure and cultural bias defines and determines what is normal. Bethany demonstrated her understanding that she needed to consider cultural norms before making assumptions.

Bethany demonstrated passion for cultural diversity awareness. Her negative experiences with cultural differences angered her because she recognized that the situations stemmed from ignorance, which she believed was a result of the lack of exposure and education. As a teacher, she integrated her passion into the classroom through teaching her students about different cultures. Exploring Bethany's lived experiences facilitated an understanding of her passion to educate her students about

cultural diversity, as she believed that respect for differences stemmed from an awareness and knowledge.

<div align="center">**Comparison**</div>

The comparison of the identified categories from each narrative determined various differences and similarities. The following are common categories that resulted in the comparison.

**Location**

All participants had spent most of their lives in Southern Ontario where, at the time of the interview, they continued to live. Ontario is the Canadian province with the highest immigration population (Statistics Canada, 2013b), yet each participant had very different experiences with cultural diversity based on where they lived. For the purpose of this study, location refers to the participant's community. The experiences within these communities contributed to the participants' understandings of cultural diversity and their perception of cultural differences. The majority (5 of 6) of the participants lived in two different types of communities. They lived in either a culturally diverse community or a community that was not culturally diverse. The communities with a higher amount of cultural diversity had a larger population than the communities with minimal diversity. Within the culturally diverse communities, the participants experienced daily interactions with people of different cultures and became accustomed to diversity. Twiga's university community was inclusive of the cultural differences of its pupils, providing awareness that cultural diversity was a common part of life in Canada. Twiga explained how exposure to cultural differences provided an awareness of different cultural values:

When I went to [university], definitely there was a lot of awareness of so many cultural groups even when I was dancing. Right before our dance time there would always be a Bollywood dance group and right after us a belly dance group, and there just were all kinds of activities to cater to the more culturally diverse community at [university]. So I was definitely more aware of cult...I thought more about being culturally sensitive throughout my undergrad.

Participants, who moved from very diverse to less diverse communities, noticed that the understanding of differences varied. Clara explained that the students within communities that were not culturally diverse were "missing something." Bethany's experience of living in both a diverse community and one that was not culturally diverse, caused confusion for her due to the behaviour of her peers.

I moved to [a rural community] and everyone was Dutch. So just going from no one even thought twice about who you're friends with, my family was even intermixed, my school was intermixed and my neighbourhood was intermixed, and then moving to a very Dutch blond community... and actually realize that people point out visible minorities.... I didn't even think it was a big deal, I didn't think of it as any deal until I moved into [a rural community].

Participants realized how communities differed based on the location within Southern Canada and the cultural diversity found within that community. All participants agreed that education was the best resource to provide an awareness of cultural diversity and help students behave respectfully towards cultural differences.

**Fear of the Unfamiliar**

Participants demonstrated fear of the unfamiliar in multiple ways throughout their personal narratives. They expressed this fear of cultural diversity in subtle ways through their behaviour or reflection. They displayed their fear through a professional, cultural, and social context.

Participants demonstrated their fear of insufficient preparation by educating themselves about cultural diversity to improve their teaching practices. Laura was the only participant who grew up in a community that was not culturally diverse, and who moved to a more diverse community for university. She felt unprepared as a Canadian teacher because of her lack of experience with diversity. Her fear of not being able to relate to her culturally diverse students initiated her interest to educate herself through university courses and experiential learning such as going abroad to teach.

Travelling to a country with an unfamiliar culture revealed the participants' insecurities. Participants demonstrated behaviours that suggested their discomfort with cultural differences. Clara explained her fear of not fitting in culturally: "You feel like such as outsider. And when people look at you, you know they look at you as somebody that doesn't belong [to the community]." She demonstrated fear by avoiding integration while abroad but instead stuck to the familiarity of the travelling group. Melanie was afraid of the language barrier when abroad, staying with her fellow group of pre-service teachers. She connected the fear she felt of not understanding a language to how an immigrant might feel when living in an unfamiliar country. She realized that immigrants might settle into communities that have similar cultural populations because "it's an easier transition."

Lastly, participants revealed their fear for society. Some participants reflected on their personal experience of ignorance, while others reflected on hurtful experiences due to the ignorance of their peers. All participants demonstrated a fear of students continuing the cycle of cultural misunderstandings and prejudice as they felt the education system did not support an education that was relevant for a multicultural society.

**Reflection**

The reflection of experiences involving cultural diversity influenced participants' understanding of cultural diversity and the development of their teacher identities. The depth of reflection related to the quality of the participants' learning and meaning making of the experience (Causey et al., 2000). Critical reflection proved to be a valuable tool for those who used it; it seems unfortunate that not every participant had the opportunity to reflect critically on her experiences. Some participants felt like an outsider on their travels abroad in recognizing the differences both between their own and the unfamiliar culture. Melanie recognized that feeling like an outsider because of a language barrier helped her to understand the difficulties immigrants face when not knowing the national language. Twiga provided a more critical reflection of her teaching abroad experience. She revealed her shock of the Kenyan teachers using the rote teaching process as it was a teaching method she preferred not to use. Reflection led to the understanding that the Kenyan government designed education guidelines based on the rote process. Reflection helped her to understand the reasoning for its use. Her greater understanding of the education system helped her to recognize her judgemental attitudes. Twiga concluded that she needed to understand the situation before making judgements. She made

connections between what she learned about herself in this experience and how she could become a better teacher.

**Adaptability of Teaching**

Participants agreed on the importance of educating all students in every community about cultural diversity. Participants internalized their experiences with various communities and recognized the importance of considering the context of their teaching environments. Based on their experiences, these participants identified the importance of flexibility when teaching in a multicultural society and incorporated this quality into their teacher identity.

Participants discussed the importance of learning about and incorporating students' backgrounds into their lesson plans as a way to teach their students about cultural diversity. Melanie discussed the importance of getting to know the students and their cultural values to develop student-teacher rapport:

> It is difficult when you first start to be a new teacher and to be thrown into a classroom where you have absolutely no idea the background your students have. It makes it difficult for you to connect with them and to make it a positive learning environment for them, until you educate yourself and become aware of what they value.

Twiga presented an example of adapting her teaching methods to the needs of her students while in Kenya. Twiga learned that the Kenyan culture strongly values a sense of community and working together; therefore, she adapted teaching strategies that catered to the strengths of the Kenyan students:

[The Kenyan students] are very community-driven, so even when you gave them a test it was hard to tell them like, look on your own paper, this is the time for you to show off what you know. They looked off one another and I just had to rethink like, it's not cheating, you just have to work together, and we decided to go with more jigsaw activities or placemats and go off their need to work together than work independently.

Participants also considered the importance of adapting their teaching methods in accordance to the cultural diversity in the community. Considering the type of community and the issues within it was important for many participants when discussing integration of cultural diversity education into the classroom. All participants in some way commented on including cultural diversity education into the classroom as many communities lack their own cultural diversity. Melanie reflected that "in our community there are a lot of racist tensions," and adapting teaching methods could help eliminate cultural issues within the community. Melanie made the connection that the issues within the community influenced surrounding schools. She noticed that the students at her school brought what they had learned from society into the school community, which in this case only continued the cycle of racism. Melanie educated herself by becoming aware of the underlying issues within the community as well as the students within her classroom in order to better relate to them and ensure a learning environment that was culturally relevant. Melanie reviewed her previous conceptions of the First Nations culture, recognizing the need to develop her knowledge of the culture in order to provide a culturally relevant educational experience for her students. Her recognition of racism towards the First Nations peoples within the community also demonstrated her

commitment to educate her students about cultural stereotypes and misconceptions in an effort to create a more accepting student body. Melanie focused on connecting with her students and on social justice issues. Ultimately, as most participants commented on the need to educate their students about cultures, they recognized that the curriculum was not providing enough opportunity to do so. These participants concluded that students needed to learn about cultural acceptance. They believed that as teachers they should provide all students with an equal opportunity to learn and succeed in a multicultural nation.

Chapter Four describes each participant's narrative, demonstrating the lived experiences each individual had with cultural diversity. Narratives provide the reader with the opportunity to explore the lived experiences that have contributed to the participant's understanding. I analyzed the themes that emerged from each narrative (Appendix B) and organized them to identify the major common themes amongst the six participants. The resulting themes were influential in the participants' development of their teacher identity: geographical location, fear of the unfamiliar through a professional, cultural, and social context, reflection using a critical lens, and adaptability of teaching by recognizing students' cultural identities. The next chapter will further discuss the contribution participants' lived experiences had towards the development of their teacher identity. I discuss and compare participants' thoughts and meanings from their lived experiences to relevant literature, aiming to identify this study's contribution to the field of education in Ontario.

**CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This study explored pre-service and recently graduated Canadian educators' development of teacher identity in regards to their understanding of culture. I collected six participants' life narratives and explored their lived experiences with cultural diversity in order to examine how their experiences contributed to their understanding of cultural diversity. The participants consisted of pre-service and recently graduated teachers within the past 5 years. I chose these participants based on a location criterion, residing for most of their lives within Southern Ontario, Canada, which is an area with pockets of significant cultural diversity, as many immigrants live in this geographical area (Statistics Canada, 2013b). This study collected personal experiences and recognized that various factors that were specific to each individual shaped her identity; therefore, the results of this study focused on the understandings of participants' narratives, rather than the generalization of all Ontario teachers. My findings were based upon participants' interpretations of their experiences, how these interpretations contributed to their development of understanding, and how they integrated these understandings into their teacher identities. This chapter (a) establishes the significance of the findings, (b) identifies connections to relevant literature, (c) makes recommendations for teacher education programs, and (d) concludes with suggestions for future research.

**Discussion**

There are many different factors to consider in the development of a teacher identity, such as lived experiences. Identity can have multiple layers; professional identity is only one aspect of this (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Clara made the connection between self and identity as she described her heritage: "We [are] very

Portuguese: Portuguese traditions, big families, and we take part in a lot of cultural events. It is a big part of who we are. It's part of our identity." Considering the connection between self and identity, the collection of participants' lived experiences created a deeper understanding of how these experiences developed current understandings of cultural diversity, and how these understandings shaped teacher identities.

Studies within the literature used the Intercultural Development Inventory (Hammer et al., 2003) and the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (Bennett, 1986), to research the level of intercultural competence of teachers (DeJaeghere & Cao, 2009; Grossman & Yuen, 2006; Mahon, 2006; Vande Berg, 2009; Yuen & Grossman, 2009). These studies found that the majority of teachers have ethnocentric attitudes. A study using the IDI scale would most certainly make it possible to compare Ontario teachers to the teachers in the above studies; however, interpreting the life narratives of the participants within this study was the focus. I had assumed that Canadian teachers would have a higher understanding of cultural differences in light of Canada's multiculturalism, but these participants demonstrated multiple levels of understanding based on each of their own lived experiences.

Location influenced the lived experiences that the participants had with cultural diversity and their interpretations of these experiences. The location of a community influenced cultural diversity that participants experienced. The population size also had a major influence on the diversity of cultures found within a community. A community's proximity to a metropolitan city, First Nations reserve, and/or the consideration of cultures that had historically settled in large numbers in an area all influenced the cultural

diversity of the community. The community's cultural diversity influenced the way a participant construed her heritage, as well as how her peers perceived cultural differences. Clara displayed pride of her heritage as fellow citizens celebrated their differences amongst customs and traditions. Melanie, on the other hand, attached little importance to her heritage as her culturally diverse community unified through the similarities of the dominant European culture. The location of a participant's community also affected the way her peers perceived cultural differences. Bethany realized that while living in a very culturally diverse society, her peers accepted her cultural differences, but when she moved to a community with very little cultural diversity, her peers teased her based on stereotypical physical attributes.

Participating in a teaching experience abroad presented a beneficial learning experience for all participants in this study even though they had to overcome various hardships. Participants faced cultural challenges when teaching abroad resulting in anxiety and fear. Their behaviours and actions while abroad in unfamiliar cultures were clues in identifying this fear, which is a common reaction when experiencing culture shock (Cushner, McClelland, & Stafford, 2006; Mahon & Cushner, 2002; Merryfield, 2000). For most participants, this experience abroad was the first time they faced the challenges associated with being part of a minority culture, leading to feelings of anxiety. Participants began to demonstrate empathetic attitudes when they connected their own experiences to the everyday difficulties that many immigrants experience.

Personal experiences with cultural challenges were beneficial to these participants' learning as they felt an emotional connection to cultural diversity issues. Emotion can have a powerful impact on the development of an identity, especially a

teacher identity, given the caring nature that is required of the profession (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Participants understood their emotions differently based on their lived experiences. Bethany, who had experienced being an outsider while living in a community with little cultural diversity, was more in tune with the difficulties faced as a minority, and she was further able to develop her cultural understanding. Participants developed empathy towards students entering the Canadian classroom with minimal or no knowledge of the English language or Canadian culture; they could now relate to the associated emotional anxieties. Participating in an experience abroad definitely proved beneficial for the participants who had not had previous personal experiences with cultural diversity issues.

An influencing factor when considering the level of understanding that participants gained was reflection. The findings demonstrated the varying levels of connections that participants made when understanding culture. Reflecting on experiences and making connections was very beneficial for the participants who did this. An individual's level of connection with an unfamiliar culture provided a deeper level of understanding (DeJaeghere & Zhang, 2008; Vande Berg, 2009). Participating in an experience abroad could result in misunderstandings of cultures. Analyzing and making connections with the experience under the direction of an accompanying professor's guidance would enhance the individual's learning (Guo, Arthur, & Lund, 2009). The participants in this study, who had a reflection component as part of their program requirement, made more connections between their experience abroad and their teaching practices. The guidance from professors encouraged participants to internalize new learning into their teaching practices rather than retreat to their familiar ways (Guo et al.

2009). Clara and Twiga claimed that reflection and guidance from their accompanying professors assisted them in recognizing personal biases that hindered their judgments and further developed an understanding of the experience abroad. Reflection facilitated making connections between their learning and their teacher identities (Joshee, 2004; Mahon & Cushner, 2002; Trilokekar & Kukar, 2011; Vande Berg, 2009).

Once back in Canada, all participants brought with them a developed sense of understanding towards cultural diversity, as they recognized the significance of educating students about cultural diversity as well as being aware of the cultures of their students. These participants were interested in incorporating culture into their future classrooms, but they all recognized that in order to provide a more inclusive education, they needed to teach abroad to develop their intercultural competence. While some participants already understood their cultural heritage in relation to the Canadian culture, the trip abroad continued to provide self-reflection and revealed personal stereotypes, prejudices, and biases. Understanding personal beliefs and the cultural beliefs and behaviours of fellow citizens is an important contributing factor to teach in a culturally diverse classroom (Gay, 2010; Ladson- Billings, 2006).

Participants revealed an understanding of multicultural education ideals. They often spoke of creating a safe and respectful classroom and had ideas of incorporating the cultures of the students within lessons or having cultural celebrations through special events. These ideas would create an awareness of cultural differences amongst students, emphasizing respectful interactions within the classroom (Banks, 2006a; Nieto & Bode, 2010).

Melanie and Twiga's narratives demonstrated culturally relevant teaching. Not only did they learn about the cultures of their students, but they also used the students' strengths to enhance learning. Teaching according to each student's cultural experiences enhances his or her learning capabilities (Gay, 2002). Once teachers learn about the cultural heritage of their students, they can provide educational experiences that are relevant for their class (Gay, 2010).

Melanie modified her teaching strategies based on the Aboriginal students' needs within her classroom. Her experience teaching within a diverse classroom proved challenging at first as she was unaware that certain student behaviours reflected their cultural beliefs. She took the effort to learn about the cultures that were present within the classroom and adapted to the needs of her students, developing effective teaching strategies. Twiga provided an example of adapting to the cultural needs of students by providing different language books for students to choose from during individual reading time. She explained, "You can have them read Spanish books if they speak Spanish at home. Why not—it's a form of literacy." Twiga's strategy resembled a multicultural approach presented in Mogadime's (2011) study of antiracist and critical multiculturalism in the classroom. In Mogadime's study, an educator presented her culturally diverse classroom with dual language books to provide all students with an equal opportunity to develop their literacy skills. Melanie and Twiga grasped the concept of providing students with an education that was relevant to their cultural identity.

Participants also referenced the need to teach students about the world in which they live. Laura learned about the global citizen through her university courses and recognized the importance of integrating world perspectives into the curriculum.

Veronica also developed an understanding of the importance of including global issues in the classroom. She recognized that bringing an awareness of global and social justice issues to her students motivated them to strive for equality. While working with an associate teacher on a fundraiser focusing on a social issue within a certain country, her associate teacher incorporated lessons on the issue and country into the curriculum. Veronica was astonished at how eager the students were to learn about global issues and the world around them. The attitudes and practices of the participants from this study demonstrated that they recognized that students should be prepared for the current world in which they live. Providing students with knowledge, skills, and respectful attitudes can help them grow into competent, responsible, global citizens (Kirkwood, 2001). OXFAM (2006) argues that preparing students for the 21st century requires a global education in order to teach about the challenges of the modern world and to encourage students to contribute positively both locally and globally. If teachers teach their students about cultural and global issues, they can provide an education that is relevant for the modern world rather than simply teaching based on the standard curriculum. Veronica criticized the mandated curriculum due to its isolation from the global world. Merryfield (2000) argues that when teaching with the global citizen in mind, educators must prepare their students to take action against inequality and work towards social justice.

All participants in this study discussed methods of educating their students about cultural diversity. Veronica, Clara, and Bethany specifically noted that successfully teaching students about different cultures depended on the importance the teacher gave to this issue. The Ontario curriculum covers a lot of material; unfortunately, if cultural issues are not important to a teacher, it may have minimal or no inclusion in the daily

routine of the classroom. All participants expressed their appreciation for participating in

a teaching abroad program because it progressed their professional development in the

area of cultural understanding. Gay (2002) suggests that teaching students about culture

is dependent on the knowledge of the teacher, as teachers should not only be aware of the

cultural diversity of their students, but also modify their interactions and teaching

strategies to embrace these differences. Teachers should not consider cultural diversity as

a separate subject, but instead should incorporate it into everyday learning (Schweisfurth,

2006). Schweisfurth's study on pre-service teachers from an education program focusing

on global connections found that educators had an easier time incorporating global

education into their classrooms if they understood the curriculum expectations through a

global citizenship education lens. The participants in my study spoke little of their teacher

education programs incorporating diversity training. Only Laura revealed that she took a

course on diversity issues, while other participants claimed to have no in-class training on

cultural diversity issues, but instead learned from their practical experiences within their

required teaching placements. Perhaps if education programs provided opportunities for

pre-service teachers to view the curriculum through a cultural lens, more teachers would

practice culturally relevant education in their classrooms.

## Recommendations

While living in a multicultural society and experiencing intercultural interactions

were beneficial to the participants' learning, this study revealed that professional

development requires a more in-depth process. Living in a multicultural nation does not

result in intercultural competence. Laura lived in a predominantly Dutch Canadian

society, which resulted in a sheltered upbringing. A teacher cannot solely rely on

personal experiences, which may be limited or even biased. The findings from the six participants in this study found that these teachers learned about cultural diversity issues within the classroom through their teaching placements, including their teaching experience abroad. Laura was the only participant who claimed her teacher education program included formal learning on these issues.

Reflection was an interesting theme that emerged from this study because only Laura and Twiga participated in teaching abroad programs that included a reflection component. Clara revealed that she reflected in a personal journal while abroad, while Melanie, Veronica, and Bethany did not reflect on their experiences while abroad. However, my role as a researcher during the interviews assisted the participants when reflecting on their experiences. When participants shared their stories, I asked questions that would support critical reflection. This critical reflection demonstrated their learning gained, how they internalized this learning, and how they connected this new knowledge to their teaching practices. Participants revealed indirectly how their teaching identity developed based on their meanings made from their experiences.

My role as a researcher provided participants with guidance to critically reflect and develop their teacher identity. Participants demonstrated this development at various stages of their interview as they thought about their experiences in different ways and began to make connections. The role that I had during the interview reveals the need for creating a larger support system for pre-service teachers who participate in a teaching abroad program. My recommendations for teaching education programs that include an international teaching practice, is to include the opportunity for these pre-service teachers to reflect critically on their experience. Incorporating a support system while abroad can

assist pre-service teachers in internalizing new knowledge and further develop their teacher identity.

Demonstrating critical awareness of institutional or societal oppressions was absent within the participants' experiences. I was surprised that these participants did not discuss critical awareness to combat oppressive issues within schools or even society. Participants demonstrated a concern to teach about cultural diversity and social justice, but they failed to recognize the political issues within the institution (Kincheloe, 2008). The failure to develop a critical lens only continues the social inequities emphasized by the worldview of the dominant culture found within educational institutions (Egbo, 2009). Educators' use of critical pedagogy "focuses on the subtle workings of racism, sexism, class bias, cultural oppression, and homophobia" (Kincheloe, 2008, p. 9). Not only should educators include culturally relevant teaching as part of multicultural education, they should also critically review knowledge, and empower students to do the same (Ladson-Billings, 1992). I recommend that teacher education programs include critical pedagogy into their program to educate pre-service teachers about the social inequities found within institutions. Recognizing social inequities in the institution is an important concept not only for a globalized world, but also for Canadians living within culturally diverse societies. All these participants had the overall goal of teaching students about cultures to promote respect towards differences and create a more unified nation.

Participants were grateful for their experience abroad as they felt it was an important contribution to their teacher training. Teacher education programs should adapt their teaching program to prepare teachers to teach an education that will encourage

students to grow into mature and respectful citizens of a multicultural society and globalized world.

## Future Research

I believe that there is a lot to learn about education in Canada's multicultural nation. Cultural diversity is prevalent in many societies and educational institutions that provide an interesting context for research. Given Southern Ontario's high culturally diverse population, conducting research on participants living in this geographical area was relevant for this study. However, further research with a larger sample size, without taking away from the narrative analysis, would offer a more comprehensive view of the Southern Ontario teacher identity.

Conducting further research into the teacher education programs and the teaching abroad opportunities they offer would provide a more in-depth understanding of what teachers learn in these programs and their preparation for the culturally diverse classroom. This study suggests that teacher education programs are failing to provide a formal education on cultural diversity issues. Pre-service teachers and in-service teachers are instead considering these issues when they come across them in their practical experiences. If guidance is not available for pre-service teachers throughout their practical experiences, teachers could misunderstand their experience or not even make relevant connections to their teaching identity.

This study focused on six Ontario teachers' perceptions of cultural diversity and their development of their teacher identities. I was interested in exploring these teachers' understandings because Canada has a multicultural identity, and Ontario is a province with large pockets of cultural diversity. Students in the Ontario education system should

learn to be respectful towards cultural differences in accordance with the values of the nation. Since students spend many hours in educational institutions, the classroom is an excellent location to learn and practice these skills and values. The teachers who stand in front of their classrooms become role models, where they themselves should model acceptance and respect towards cultural diversity, while at the same time teach their students to do the same.

The participants in this study demonstrated the various experiences that a Canadian citizen could have while living in Canada. Geographical location influenced the exposure participants had with cultural diversity. Even though some participants had daily experiences with cultural differences, teaching abroad provided the opportunity to step out of their comfort zone and experience life as a minority where they experienced challenges that some of their culturally diverse students may face.

The aim of this study was to explore the perspectives of teachers living in a multicultural nation. The outcomes signify that teaching abroad provided many benefits for teachers even if they had many lived experiences with cultural diversity. The next step for the Ontario education system should be to improve the provincial curriculum to provide students with an education that is relevant to Canadian society and prepare them for the globalized world. Similarly, Ontario teacher education programs should improve so that graduating teachers are prepared and feel confident not only to teach culturally diverse students, but also to provide relevant and quality education corresponding to the values of the Canadian multicultural identity.

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**Appendix A**

**Interview Questions**

<u>Background Information</u>

    1. How old are you?

    2. In maintaining your privacy, what pseudonym would you like me to refer to

your data as throughout this study?

    3. What is your cultural background?

    4. What role did your background play in your family?

    5. What type of community did you grow up in?

        a. Urban
        b. Suburban
        c. Rural

    6. Was diversity part of your community?

    7. What does the concept of diversity mean to you?

    8. What does the concept of cultural diversity mean to you?

    9. Based on your home experiences in Canada with cultural diversity, do you feel

you have learned to be accepting of cultural differences and prepared to teach in a

pluralistic classroom?

<u>Educational Background</u>

    1. What educational background do you have?
    2. What type of community did you attend school?

        a. Urban
        b. Suburban
        c. Rural

3. Did you experience cultural diversity in your school career?
4. What education program were/are you enrolled in?

     a. Concurrent program
     b. Consecutive program

5. How many years was your education program?
6. What type of community were your teaching practices located in?

     a. Urban
     b. Suburban
     c. Rural

7. Did you experience any cultural diversity in your student teaching practices?
8. Have you taken any diversity/global courses? If so, which ones?
9. Were these courses helpful to your professional knowledge? Explain.
10. Were there any other courses that contributed to your understanding of cultural diversity?
11. Do you feel your school education prepared you as a teacher in a multicultural Canadian classroom?

## Experience Abroad

1. Why did you participate in a volunteer abroad program?
2. Where did you go? When did you go? How long was it for?
3. What kind of things did you do on your experience abroad?
4. What did you hope to gain from your volunteer experience abroad?
5. What did you actually gain from your volunteer experience?
6. How were you perceived as a Canadian in your placement? How did it make you feel?
7. Was there any particular moments that made you think about the cultural differences or that contributed to your understanding of cultural diversity?
8. Did the lessons learned in your experience abroad contribute to your understanding of diversity?
9. What did you gain in your professional development?
10. Did your perceptions of cultural diversity change from before to after?
11. How has this experience contributed to your learning as a Canadian teacher?
12. Was your trip worth it? Why?
13. Did you have a chance to come outside your Canadian bubble?
14. How would you describe the benefits of having this type of experience as a Canadian teacher?
15. Did you have a chance to reflect on your trip?
16. Did or does reflection help you to develop a clearer understanding of diversity, in particular cultural diversity?

Teacher Identity

1. What is your teacher identity in regards to cultural diversity?
2. Are diversity issues important to teacher identity?
3. What has contributed to your teacher identity in regards to cultural diversity?
4. How has your teacher identity changed after your volunteer experience abroad?
5. Do you feel growing up in Canada, and having an experience abroad, has prepared you to teach in a Canadian classroom?

**Appendix B**

**Participants' Themes**

*Laura's* themes and subthemes derived from the collected data.

| Themes | Sub-themes |
|---|---|
| Limitations | Sheltered life<br>Textbook understanding of cultural diversity<br>Assumptions<br>Perceptions<br>Naive<br>Recognition of cultural diversity<br>Ignorance |
| Globalization | Assumptions<br>Stereotypes<br>Visual cues |
| Challenges abroad | Language barrier<br>Outsider<br>Perceptions based on race<br>Intercultural competence<br>sceptic |
| Expanded world-view | New community<br>Private vs. Publically funded university |
| Perspectives | Religious perspective<br>Global perspective |
| Teacher education programs | Practical learning<br>Philosophical learning<br>Abroad experience |
| Self-educate | Improve as a teacher<br>Improve awareness |
| Reflection | Benefits<br>Connections<br>New knowledge |
| Experiential learning | Awareness<br>Involvement |
| Teaching practices | Assumptions about students<br>Do not judge<br>Passion for teaching<br>Create respect<br>Give students a voice<br>Incorporate diversity |
| Global citizen | Teaching practices<br>Create an awareness |

| | Social responsibility |
|---|---|
| Fear | Culturally diverse classroom |
| | Unpreparedness |
| | Connecting with students abroad |
| | Perception of others |
| | Teacher quality |
| Relationships | Peers |
| Social activism | Involvement |
| | Global connections |
| | Cause |

*Twiga's* themes and subthemes derived from the collected data.

| Themes | Subthemes |
|---|---|
| Immigration | Language barrier |
| | Social challenges |
| | Relate to other immigrants |
| | No attachment to place |
| Adapt to surroundings | Immigration |
| | Social challenges |
| | Change |
| | Traveler |
| | Culture shock |
| Cultural context in education | Public school board |
| | Separate school board |
| | Urban location |
| | Rural location |
| Similarities between cultures | Learning process |
| | Basic needs |
| Cultural Integration Abroad | Connection with the people |
| | Appreciative of basic needs |
| | Shattered world view |
| | Making assumptions/ being judgemental |
| | Adaptability |
| Consideration of Situational factors | Teaching process |
| | Sustainability |
| | Needs |
| | Sensibility |
| | Sensitivity vs. Judgmental |
| | Assumptions |
| Reflection | Personally |
| | Group discussion |
| | Informally |
| | Presentations |

| | Personal development<br>Appreciative |
|---|---|
| Inclusion of cultural diversity in schools | Globalized citizens<br>Instill curiosity<br>Student interest<br>Relevant education |
| Teaching Strategies | Connect with students<br>Share cultural stories<br>Experiential learning<br>Role model<br>Explore student stories<br>Flexibility with curriculum<br>Inclusive to students cultural challenges |

*Clara's* themes and subthemes derived from the collected data.

| Themes | Subthemes |
|---|---|
| Aboriginal Cultural Diversity | Proximity to Native reserve(location)<br>Inclusion in education (historical role)<br>Infrequent encounters<br>Role within teacher education program |
| Sameness | Respect cultural differences<br>Students need the same things from the teacher |
| Community | Culturally diverse societies<br>Societies with very little cultural diversity |
| Challenges of facing cultural diversity | Cause frustration<br>Require patience<br>Language barrier<br>Adaptability<br>Fear of not knowing/ belonging<br>Self- conscious |
| Teacher acknowledgment | Easy to forget cultural diversity issues<br>Predominantly Euro Canadian vs. Culturally diverse classrooms<br>Self-education<br>Get to know students<br>Become informed about the unknown |
| Culturally diverse teacher practices | Flexibility<br>Student interest<br>Management strategies<br>Experiential learning |

| Class management | Student interest |
| | student's cultural backgrounds |
| | student's personal experiences |
| | Peer teaching |
| Self- Educate | Reflection |
| | Critical reflection |
| | Personal development |
| | Professional development |
| | Experiential learning |
| | Adapt schema |
| | Open minded |
| Connection to Canadian minorities | Canadian pride |
| | Empathy |
| Exposure to cultural diversity | Benefits |
| | Negativity |
| | Normalization |
| | Recognition of cultural differences |

*Veronica's* themes and subthemes derived from the collected data.

| Themes | Subthemes |
| --- | --- |
| Grateful | Canadian Values |
| | Canadian Lifestyle |
| | Appreciate simple pleasures |
| Teach awareness | Same cultures stuck together |
| | Personal stories |
| | Mission trips |
| | Fundraisers |
| | Media |
| | Social responsibility |
| Hardships travelling abroad | Physical differences (Race) |
| | Uncomfortable |
| | Resources and necessities |
| | Culture shock |
| | Language barrier |
| Sensitivities | Race |
| | Family history with cultural differences |
| Self- educate | Global issues |
| | Lack of education on social justice issues |
| | Critical thinking skills |
| Ignorance | Embarrassment |
| | Lack of exposure to global issues |
| | Lack of relevant education |
| | Canadian pride |

| | Current generation |
| | Lack of appreciation |
| | Easily influenced |
| | Transfer of knowledge |
| | No critical thinking skills |
| Location | Social Economic Status |
| | School location |
| | Stereotype |
| Passion | Inspirational role models for fellow teachers and students |
| | Educate students |
| | Personal accomplishments |
| Cultural Diversity in Education | Integrate into curriculum |
| | Teach creatively |
| | Teacher responsibility |
| | Incorporate personal experiences |
| | Student interest |
| | Incorporating current issues |
| | Provide a relevant education |
| | Community resources |
| Role Model | Inspire change |
| | Inspire other teachers |
| | Inspire administration |
| | Inspire students |
| Relationships | Practicum teacher |
| | Family friend |
| Challenges of Including Cultural Diversity Education | Time consuming |
| | Need creativity with lessons |
| | Use of community resources |
| | Extra planning |
| | No recognition |

*Melanie's* themes and subthemes derived from the collected data.

| Themes | Subthemes |
| --- | --- |
| Embarrassment abroad | Language barrier |
| | Outsider |
| | Lack of global awareness |
| | Minority |
| | University education vs. Global awareness |
| Familiarity | Travelled in groups |
| | Easier to transition |
| | Connect to immigrants (empathy) |

| Fear | Intimidation<br>Get to know students<br>Become aware<br>Unprepared as a teacher<br>Lack of professional development |
|---|---|
| Integration into Education | Special cultural days<br>Clear community tensions<br>Inclusive |
| Adaptability | Know your students<br>Know the community<br>Adapt teaching<br>Accept differences<br>Relevant teaching |
| Location | Exposure<br>Familiarity<br>Accepting<br>Social Inequalities<br>Population size of community and school<br>Rural vs. Urban<br>Proximity to reserve |
| Aboriginal culture | Historical implications<br>Culture shock<br>Reserve vs. Off reserve education<br>Respect beliefs<br>Adapt teaching strategies |

*Bethany's* themes and subthemes derived from the collected data.

| Themes | Subthemes |
|---|---|
| Location | Rural vs. Urban<br>Separate school board vs. Public school board<br>School population<br>Societal challenges influences school focus |
| Exposure to cultural diversity | Gain awareness of hardships<br>View as normal<br>Influence perspectives<br>Gain knowledge and understanding<br>Break stereotypes |
| Unfamiliarity of Cultural Diversity | Tease<br>Exaggerated differences |
| Cultural Diversity in Education | Anti-bullying<br>Multiculturalism<br>Normalize<br>Incorporate Student background |

| | Teacher experiences |
| | Cultural events |
|---|---|
| Teacher Influence | Decide what to incorporate |
| | Decide how much to spend on the component |
| | Personal experience |
| Familiarity | Perceive as normal |
| | Comforting |
| | Gain confidence |
| | Awareness of cultural differences |
| | Understanding |
| | Focus on similarities |
| Coping mechanisms | Ignore |
| | Sympathy |
| | Comedic relief |
| Passion | combat ignorance |
| | Educate all students |
| | Expose for normalness |
| Self-educate | Become aware of cultures |
| | Ask questions |
| | Avoid ignorance |
| | Gain confidence |
| | Curiosity |
| | Experiential learning |
| Generation | Pre-disposed at young age |
| | Slow change of views/perspectives |
| Abroad challenges | Visual cues (body type) |
| | Uncomfortable with the unfamiliar |
| | Grateful for Canadian multicultural values |