Cultural Sails:
Examining the Impact of Pre-Service Overseas Experiences on In-Service Canadian Teachers

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Abstract

In response to the growing demographic of ethnically diverse students in Canada, this study sought to understand the in-trip and post-travel experiences of educators who have participated in intercultural learning opportunities abroad during their pre-service years, and how these past experiences shape their current pedagogical practices. In semi-structured interviews, participants reported that the experience of being a cultural minority in a different cultural context radically shaped their self-understanding as white educators. Findings from this study show that educators who participate in intercultural experiential learning opportunities abroad, before their in-service years in Canada, grow in consciousness of their white privilege, pursue professional development opportunities, and are leaders of social justice initiatives within their educational communities. These findings suggest that experiential learning abroad might be considered an integral part of teacher identity formation. The broad implications of the study include a focus on the distinct experiences of white teachers who grow in self and cultural consciousness, and the reported positive and enduring impact that these experiences have on their relationship with students who identify as ethnic minorities, their teaching career, and their own professional identities.

**Key Words:** experiential learning, cultural Other, intercultural education, teacher development
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Chapter One: Introduction

1.0 Research Context and Problem

As Canada’s population continues to increase through immigration, the national demographic will exponentially diversify; in fact, Statistics Canada notes that “Ontario received 36.7% of all immigrants to Canada” (n.p.). A result of this widening demographic might be seen in how the global village is becoming more intimate, thus obligating teachers to authentically familiarize themselves with diverse culture groups. An immediate and extreme way to hone one’s cultural consciousness is through intercultural experiential learning opportunities overseas.

Intercultural learning and alternative practicum placements are one way in which teacher education programs have responded to the need to culturally sensitize their pre-service students. These programs usually begin with an application process, pre-trip meetings, investigation of the host country’s social and political climate, on-site reflective journaling, and end with post-trip debriefing (Marx & Moss, 2011; Pence & Macgillivray, 2007). These learning adventures are usually expensive. Scholars have reported that pre-service teachers embark on these educational journeys around the world, especially Kenya, South America, and parts of Europe (Mayness et.al, 2013; Pence and Macgillivray, 2007; Marx and Moss, 2011). These overseas experiences tend to open educators to cultural competencies that cannot be attained in a domestic context. Teachers who have had international, experiential opportunities often reported that forming relationships with their students and hearing their stories help them refine their teaching strategies, in order to meet the needs of the student community.

By partaking in these opportunities, educators seek to be in solidarity with those who experience Otherness in the classroom. Following Kumashiro (2000), “I use the term “Other” to refer to those groups that are traditionally marginalized in society … The first approach to addressing oppression focuses on improving the experiences of students who are Othered, or in
some way oppressed in and by mainstream society” (p. 26). An intercultural experience for teachers purposefully places the teacher as the cultural Other. This process of defamiliarization enables the educator to become more aware of how familiar teaching strategies are not entirely accessible and may ostracize students through misrepresentation and reproductions of hegemony.

Teachers with intercultural experiences have been found to be more aware of cultural diversity (Marx & Moss, 2011). Marx and Moss found that teachers with intercultural development backgrounds were able to “confront their ethnocentric worldviews and begin to consider the ways culture influences teaching and learning” (p.35) in a unique and innovative way. There are, however, barriers to accessing these intercultural experiences. Participants require access to social and cultural capital that might not necessarily be available to teachers who identify with minority groups. There is also a tendency for service trips abroad to turn into tourism, which only perpetuates ethnocentric values and shapes an exclusive paradigm for participants (Savva, 2013). This positions teacher-participants as spectators of the effects of colonialism and poverty, instead of empowering them to enact structural change. Most Ontario students experience marginalization in some way, but as Canadian classrooms become increasingly heterogeneous, students will require teachers who are committed to fostering a cultural consciousness and can enact this in their teaching practice (Desrochers, 2006). Intercultural experiential learning has been shown to be one way in which this can be developed (Marx & Moss, 2011). Intercultural education opportunities are unique moments for the professional development of teachers in this regard. However, there has been little research on how experiences of cultural Otherness connect to the development of a professional identity and teaching practice throughout a participant’s career.
1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the experiences and pedagogical practices of Ontario teachers who have participated in an intercultural experiential learning program prior to working as a teacher in Canada. To explore this topic, I interviewed a small sample of teachers about: their perceptions of how participating impacted their professional practice and identities, if at all; and their reported practices in relation to diversity, culture, racism and oppression. I hope that this study will contribute to the literature on teacher education, by highlighting the experiences of teacher participants who have embarked on an intercultural experiential trip and can articulate how this experience impacted their pedagogical choices, if at all.

1.3 Research Questions

The central research question guiding this study was: what are the experiences and reported practices of Canadian teachers who have participated in an intercultural experiential trip? Subsidiary questions further guiding the study were as follows:

1. What were these teachers’ expectations about and reasons for participating in the program?

2. What were some significant moments or experiences during the program?

3. What are these teacher’s perceptions of how participating impacted their professional identities and practices, if at all?

4. What are their pedagogical approaches to diversity, culture, racism, and oppression?

1.4 Reflexive Positioning Statement

Experiential learning opportunities with a Dene community and in parts of India and Europe have profoundly formed my identity as a teacher-researcher. In Saskatchewan, I found
myself in the heart of a community that was still geographically in Canada but felt very new. I remember being cognizant of my identity as a Black-Canadian in a remote part of Canada that was not very Black. This awareness and experience of cultural Otherness, which could only come from lived experience, truly informed my undergraduate years; and I embarked on a few more intercultural experiences, throughout my undergraduate career, to further cultivate this consciousness. It was in the midst of a new temperature, new smells, and relationships and geographical contexts that I became more aware of my place in a global context. I am familiar with the student understanding of these trips, because of my personal experience, but I was curious about how these experiences impact educators also. Experiencing other cultures shaped my life by providing me with a critical lens to understand the teaching vocation, and informs my interactions with people who identify with a culture that is different from mine. I want to encourage my future students to become aware of the importance of their social locations, and empower them to create a positive and sustaining impression in our ever-changing, culturally diverse world.

I am the daughter of immigrant parents and am of Afro-Caribbean descent. I was consistently a visible minority in my classrooms, from kindergarten to graduate studies. I have had only five teachers of colour during those first eighteen years of schooling. I can recall too many encounters with educators who unfairly homogenized the black experience, perpetuated generic understandings of blackness, and then isolated my voice for quasi expert feedback and other forms of discriminatory and insensitive pedagogy. There needs to be a growing concern for students who are traditionally the cultural Other and who struggle to survive in this hegemonic schooling system: “students whose group affiliations are not traditionally represented in the school curriculum often feel excluded, but when students see their own language and culture in
classroom content and materials, academic achievement improves” (van Garderen & Whittaker, 2006, p. 13). Student success is intimately related to how students and their distinct cultural experiences are represented and the educators and course materials they encounter. Perhaps the pedagogical result of teachers who pursue opportunities for intercultural engagement and social justice is that they might allow for marginalized students to realize their potential. Intercultural experiential learning is transformative because it cultivates a greater sense of who one is in relation to a deeper notion of plurality in the world. In pursuit of the best teacher education practices and more socially just classrooms, more research should be given to the impact of intercultural education on educators.

1.5 Preview of the MTRP

This research project is divided into five chapters and concludes with references and appendices. Chapter One has been an introduction to the research topic, problems, context, purpose and questions. Chapter Two is a review of relevant literature, especially studies that connect post-intercultural experiences and social action, such as developing inclusive classrooms. This chapter facilitates a dialogue among experts in the fields of intercultural education and teacher education. Chapter Three outlines my methodology. I took a narrative approach and documented the stories of the participants interviewed; chapter three further fleshes out the overall research plan. Chapter Four shares research findings and makes divergent and convergent connections to the literature. Chapter Five connects the research findings to the fields of intercultural education and teacher education, and spotlights any areas in need of further research.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I review the literature in the field of intercultural experiential programs for teachers in pre-service programs. I examine intercultural experiential placements through teacher reflections, and paradigms of culturally sensitive teaching practices. Intercultural education refers to the induction of cultural sensitivity and diversity acceptance at the individual level (Guo & Jamal, 2007). I examine themes related to intercultural teacher education, and I state how these experiences might connect to anti-oppressive pedagogical practices. Also, I review research on international teacher exchange or preparation programs in order to discover how these pre-service strategies contribute to teacher development and practice. Finally, I identify gaps in the literature on experiential programs for teachers, and recommendations that have been suggested by scholars in the field. I draw on sources from Canada, the United States of America, and some sources from Europe that are familiar with the climate of culturally-responsive teaching in relation to intercultural pre-service teacher programs.

2.1 Intercultural and Experiential Programs: Current Trends in Teacher Education

In this section, I discuss how intercultural education fits within teacher education. I stipulate the necessity for in-service connections, and I also describe the experiences of teachers within and after their experience abroad, according to research findings. The demographics of most teacher education programs reflect a cultural homogeneity unlike the student population of North American classrooms (Goodwin, 2004). In addition to experiencing a lack of diversity among their peers, some teacher candidates are also underprepared to culturally respond to the needs of their multicultural students (Goodwin, 2004). Moreover, some faculties of education are
not providing cultural immersion programs that can facilitate deeper cultural awareness for educators (Cushner & Mahon 2002). The scholarly literature reveals that teacher education schools often isolate multicultural perspectives and pedagogical approaches from the rest of the curriculum (Ngai 2004). Also, according to Villegas and Lucas (2002) “[field experiences often] offer prospective teachers their only opportunity to build a contextualized understanding of culturally responsive teaching” (p. 137). It is an imperative for teachers to be well-formed in cultural sensitivity, because of the exponentially increasing cultural plurality in Canadian schools. According to some studies (Cushner & Chang, 2015; Marx & Moss, 2011), graduating teachers are increasingly culturally incompetent. Since scholarly studies (Appleyward & McLean, 2011; Marx & Moss, 2011) suggest that teacher candidates need to encounter a cultural worldview that is culturally different from their own, experiential intercultural programs could benefit the teaching profession as a whole, because they promote ongoing learning. The experience of teaching overseas has been known to impact teachers’ personal and professional development. Research also suggests that teacher education could benefit from an increase in cultural sensitivity training (Nieto, 2006, p. 46). However, it has been found that international field placements are often elective courses and are not a compulsory graduation requirement (Appleyard & McLean, 2011). Treating culturally relevant pedagogy as an appendage to teacher training tends to privilege classroom and textbook learning; traditional teacher formation usually begins from a position of dominant discourses (Carignan, Sanders, & Pourdavood 2005), in which marginalized voices are often excluded.

2.1.1 Intercultural experiences as teacher education

Intercultural learning and alternative practicum placements are one way in which teacher education programs have responded to the need to culturally sensitize their pre-service students.
These overseas opportunities have been known to provide a significant impact on the professional identities of preservice teachers, and are beneficial for their intercultural development (Cushner & Mahon, 2002). These programs usually begin with an application process, pre-trip meetings, investigation of the host country’s social and political climate, on-site reflective journaling, and end with post-trip debriefing (Marx & Moss, 2011; Pence & Macgillivray, 2007). Research suggests that reflexive teaching, that is, continual reflection and journaling, could deepen the experience of pre-service teachers who are abroad (Trilokekar & Kukar, 2011). Despite the expense of these learning adventures, student teachers are encouraged to fully immerse themselves into the communal life of the host country. Scholars have reported that pre-service teachers embark on these educational journeys around the world, especially in parts of Africa, South America, and parts of the UK and Europe (Moss & Marx, 2011; Maynes, Allison, & Julien-Schultz, 2013; Sharma, Rahatzad, & Phillion, 2013; Trilokekar & Kukar, 2013). These overseas experiences tend to open educators to cultural competencies that cannot be attained in a local context (Marx & Moss, 2011). Teachers who have had international, experiential opportunities often reported that forming relationships with their students and hearing their stories helps them to refine their teaching strategies, in order to meet the needs of the student community (Mayness, et al., 2013).

2.2 Intercultural experiential program participants’ experiences

Reports from participants who have travelled abroad suggest that their experiences impacted their worldview and self-understanding. Factors influencing their international practicum might have included where they were placed (geographically), the demographics of the area, and whether or not they kept a journal (Pence & Macgillivray, 2008). North American teachers, who leave the continent to teach abroad for a stint, might undergo a type of double
consciousness, in which they negotiate their cultural identities with that of the host country (Sharma, Rahatzad, & Phillion, 2013). Likewise, Cushner and Chang (2015) also echo the importance of reflection and cultural training throughout the overseas experience, in order to maximize the impact on teacher practices and cultural competencies.

### 2.2.1 Overcoming ethnocentrism

This section discusses how some participants negotiated their own identities, while abroad. Studies that found that participants struggled with issues of privilege and examined issues of self – in relation to a perceived Other. Marx and Moss (2011) found that there was a prevalence of ethnocentric perspectives among preservice teachers who lack intercultural development. When their teacher-participants used North American culture as a standard for assessing host countries, they had to grapple with the preconceived stereotypes and racism that they brought to their experiences (Cushner & Mahon, 2002; Malewski et al., 2013; Pence & Macgillivray, 2013). In Malewski’s et al.’s(2012) study of teacher candidates in Honduras, they found that teacher-participants expected their students to be “poor and dirty” (Malewski et al., 2012, p. 27) and unable to speak English. They were also astonished by the rich history of the Mayan ruins and the negative impact that the United States has had on Honduran economics. Similarly, Pence and Macgillivray (2008) found that one of their participants stereotyped students as underachieving based on their socio-economic status and linguistic ability; the participant realized that this stereotype limited how she was able to assess her students. Dealing with perceived normativity, especially cultural norms, based off of one’s experience in their home country requires some negotiation once they travel abroad.
2.2.2 Participant growth in cultural awareness and culturally responsive teaching

Cross-cultural field placements tend to be described as prime opportunities for preservice teachers to gain a critical understanding of how culture is a part of learning (Marx & Moss 2011). Mwebi and Brigham (2009) conducted a study with Canadian teacher participants, who are currently full-time teachers, that embarked on a practicum placement to Africa, during their pre-service years. Upon returning to teach in Canada, these teachers mentioned that they make their students aware of their Canadian entitlement and privilege. Being in Africa informed their understanding of diversity and how they read their seemingly homogenous classroom, at home in Canada. Pre-service teachers might more effectively learn cultural awareness pedagogies if they are integrated throughout teacher education programs instead of being offered as elective courses. Not all teachers become culturally responsive educators after their formal training. Sometimes intercultural learning and global awareness are treated like professional development or extra-curricular opportunities. However, Marx and Moss (2011) claim that in order to productively teach diverse student bodies, intercultural education and cross-cultural immersion should be considered “a pre-requisite for culturally responsive teaching” (p. 36).

A reason why pre-service teachers are recommended to participate in experiential learning opportunities might be because these experiences allow for an adoption of culturally relevant and responsive pedagogies and discussions of social justice issues at the classroom level. Mwebi and Brigham (2009) found that their teacher-participants encouraged an Afrocentric approach to teaching, after their practicum in Africa.

Scholars have found that intercultural learning, especially in international, experiential contexts, can increase teacher readiness to engage in culturally relevant and responsive teaching.
Intercultural experiences might be considered necessary curricular components for pre-service teachers, because they grow in cultural competency, in a way that might exceed the bounds of the classroom.

Studies (Marx & Moss, 2011; Sharma et al., 2013) have shown that experiential learning abroad can increase the cultural consciousness of educators. Thus, in order “to be culturally responsive, preservice teachers must first become culturally conscious and interculturally sensitive” (Marx & Moss, 2011, p. 36). Here, Marx and Moss (2011) found that intercultural experiences are a component of developing culturally responsive teachers. Santamaría et. al (2009), echo this finding, when they discuss the transformation that took place in their American participants who completed a placement in Mexico; the participants were much more inclined to participate in self-reflection and investigate the unique ethnic and linguistic needs of their students.

In summary, intercultural education and its benefits in the classroom might address various issues pertaining to diverse settings. Classrooms can be considered synecdoches for the diversity that exists on a global scale, however, teachers might be disconnected from the experiences of their students, which could include the perspective of those who are traditionally cultural minorities. There might be an urgency for the current model of education to become more responsive to globalization in a way that mandates social justice and extends beyond the superficial expectations of multicultural pedagogies.

2.2.3 Cultural Otherness: Confronting majoritarian identities in new contexts

Terms such as ‘disorienting,’ ‘dispositioning,’ and ‘cultural outsider’ are used by a variety of scholars to describe how teacher participants might undergo a process of self-actualization as
a marginalized member within a new and unfamiliar cultural context (Kumashiro, 2000; Mwebi & Brigham, 2009; Trilokekar & Kukar, 2011; Sharma, Rahatzad, et al., 2013). Cushner and Chang (2015) argue that intercultural and international teacher education programs tend to inadequately prepare teachers unless teacher educators draw explicit attention to the contours of “living and teaching within another cultural setting…[and] address such issues as cultural self-knowledge, [and] cultural other knowledge” (p. 175). However, Marx and Moss (2011) found that their participants did not like the label “cultural outsider,” although their interview findings align with the literature on cultural dissonance, since this recognition of being different became a catalyst for understanding the host country’s cultural norms.

Participants in Trilokekar and Kukar’s (2011) study utilized experiences of racism and being racialized as opportunities to empathize with Canadian students, who might be treated in a similar way, while teaching in China. In contrast to Asian-Canadian participants who took part in the same trip, and who experienced privileges because of their ethnic similarities to the host population, Yvonne, a Black-Canadian participant, stated that “the students [in China] would look at [me] funny and just stare, and just make [me] feel very uncomfortable ’cause I was the outsider. And I remember saying to myself, ‘Now I know how it feels, when a person comes to Canada and they feel like the outsider’” (p. 1145). Yvonne claimed to become aware of her blackness in a way that she was not cognizant of while living in Canada. Furthermore, participants connected this experience to a means of empathizing with new immigrants and racial minority students who live in Canada. Despite the development of their cultural consciousness, these participants contribute to maintaining a gap in the literature of experiential teacher education, because they did not explicitly connect their feeling of being an outsider to their identities as future Canadian Teachers (Trilokekar & Kukar, 2011). In this study, racism and
racial dynamics defined how teachers reconciled their own cultural identities within a new cultural context. Racial discomfort contributed to their learning. Much literature describes the experience of white candidates; however, few studies include the perspectives of pre-service teachers who identify as cultural minorities (Cushner & Mahon, 2002; Trilokekar & Kukar, 2011).

More than an act of cultural sensitivity, intentionally becoming an outsider might be an act of insurgence, that is, deliberately choosing to diverge from traditional, hegemonic teaching settings. According to the findings of Mbugua (2010), having the experience of cultural othering can inculcate a sense of cultural “empathy for minority students” (p. 95), in North American classroom contexts. Similarly, Marx and Moss (2011) describe this experience of unsettlement as “culture shock” or “cultural dissonance” (p. X); this foreign experience resonated with participants who travelled to the United Kingdom as well, and had to adapt to cultural dissimilarities.

The experience of cultural Otherness tends to be connected with racialization. A participant’s visible similarity to the majority culture in the host country can impact their ability to find cultural homeostasis. Unlike participants of colour, who habitually undergo double-consciousness, white participants tend to become aware of their whiteness and privilege in explicit ways, since these realities are usually masked by their visibly majoritarian status in North America.

The demographic of the teaching profession is generally “white, monolingual, middle-class women” (Nieto, 2006, p. 75; see also Sprecher, 2013). This statistic also translates into the demographics of participants in experiential, intercultural programs. Living as a foreigner in a
new country might cause people who traditionally belong to culturally dominant groups to confront a profound sense of Otherness. A white participant in Savva’s (2013) study found that, while teaching in a predominantly conservative, Muslim country “being blue eyed and light haired is difficult ... everyone is staring at you and it makes you feel different ... at the mall – you are allowed to show your knees until about 4pm” (p. 220). White participants in Savva’s study were culturally reprimanded for things that were and were not within their control.

Similarly, participants in Mwebi and Brigham’s (2009) study identified as white minorities while in Africa. They reported that Africans would point at them and touch their hair and skin.

Experiencing cultural immersion as an outsider displaced these teachers from both their host country and Canada. The literature proposes that an experience of Otherness in a new country, might lead white pre-service teachers to empathize with cultural minorities back home (Mwebi & Brigham, 2009; Trilokekar & Kukar, 2011; Savva, 2013). Teachers were also confronted with the stereotypes and prejudices that they held about the culture of the host country (Pence & Macgillivray, 2013; Cushner & Mahon, 2002), which led to critical self-reflection.

Some white participants of intercultural experiences also felt culturally displaced because of the privilege associated with white skin. White participants were also confronted with preconceived qualifiers that the host country had of white North Americans, such as wealthy, educated, and tourist (Trilokekar & Kukar 2011; Sharma et al., 2013). Both studies also found that participants became critically aware of the economic forces that differentiate North America from the global south, and also create disparity within the context of the host country. Educators who taught in affluent neighbourhoods or private schools of the host country, tended to become insular and did not expose themselves to the vulnerability of becoming the cross-cultural “Other” (Savva 2013; Pence and Macgillivray 2013). Contrarily, in Sharma et.al’s (2013) study, some
teachers developed a messiah or saviour complex and wanted to save the children who they encountered in the global south. Other educators were grateful for their North American privilege, and they left their international placement with a sense of being thankful for the (material) things that they had back home, and felt fortunate because they were not members of the cultural minority group – indigenous people of the host country (Sharma, et al., 2013). Some teachers, exhibited ethnocentrism, and tended to normalize North American standards as absolute norms for educational practices, opposed to the seemingly exotic pedagogy that they were working with, in a new cultural context (Marx and Moss 2011).

2.2.4 Language as a support and a barrier in an experiential teaching context

As a Black-Canadian, English speaker in China, Trilokekar and Kukar’s (2011) participant Yvonne, mentioned above, reported that she had the rare opportunity to empathize with students who are a minority and are English language learners, in Canada. Similarly, other studies (Cushner & Mahon 2002; Malweski et al., 2012; Savva, 2013) reported that participants gained sympathy with Spanish-speaking individuals who are marginalized in the United States because they do not speak English. Some participants attempted to use electronic translators, while abroad, which interrupted the flow of their classroom and led to unintentionally insulting administration. The inability to speak their native language was frustrating for pre-service teachers and their students. Some students also refused to respond back to these pre-service teachers in their native language. (Malewski et al., 2012). Unlike these findings, Maynes et al. (2013) reported that their participant was eager to learn Swahili, in order to more deeply immerse into Kenyan culture, which he describes as “understanding what it is like to live in a third world country and depending on aid to survive” (p.158). Moss and Marx’s (2011) review of literature speaks to the experiences described in the above studies: “the concern with study abroad
programs in English-speaking countries is that the ease of immersion facilitated by a shared language might let pre-service teachers avoid the cultural dissonance and feelings of being a cultural Other that is so vital to intercultural growth” (p. 44). Studies (Marx & Moss, 2011; Trilokekar & Kukar, 2011) whose participants spoke the language of the host country or were ethnically similar to the dominant demographic of the host country have reported being aware of their privileges during their stay, and experienced ease and praise by host peoples.

These experiences of cultural Otherness, confrontations with personal privilege, and acknowledging new cultural supports and barriers are integral pieces of reflection for participants. Though temporary, these experiences tend to shape their identities as educators, once they return to North America. Some participants are able to extract meaning from their time overseas, in such a way that the experience informs their professional identity and cultural consciousness. The following section will describe findings which suggest that salient in-trip experiences continue to influence teacher practices, pedagogical decisions, and their relationship with students and colleagues.

2.3 **Long term impact on teacher-participants**

In a study of American pre-service teachers on a placement in Italy, Pence and Macgillivray (2013) found that before engaging in these trips, most pre-service teachers had limited to no intercultural teaching experience. Views that pre-service teachers hold of the host country, their students and parents also, have been found to be based in ethnocentrism and/or religious and cultural stereotypes (Marx & Moss, 2011; Pence & Macgillivray, 2008). However, preservice teachers can become critical of their cultural context at home in relation to their new, unfamiliar surrounding (Cushner & Mahon, 2002; Savva, 2013; Trilokekar & Kukar 2011).
2.3. Impact on practice

Examining the practical implications of intercultural experiences on teacher-participants’
domestic pedagogical practices is of key importance for my study. After participating in these
experiences abroad, teachers appeared open to further professional development. However, in
their mixed-methods study of student-teacher experiences before and after their overseas travel,
Cushner and Chang (2015) reported that “the majority of students will not develop interculturally
merely because they are ‘immersed’ on their own in another culture. Simply being exposed to a
new and different culture does not seem to be sufficient to develop intercultural
competence” (p.175). In other studies (Cushner & Mahon, 2002; Mayness, et al., 2013; Pence &
Macgillivray, 2008; Trilokekar & Kukar, 2011), preservice teachers have reportedly been
surprised by how much a different cultural context changed them as individuals and not only as
teachers. These experiences can enable them to critically reflect on the schooling experience,
from the perspective of students.

Other long-term effects include reported growth in self-confidence and self-efficacy, an
openness to teaching abroad, developed future education plans, and greater awareness of their
own cultural status (Cushner & Mahon, 2002; Trilokekar & Kukar 2011). Cushner and Mahon
(2002) found that some American- pre-service teachers explicitly connected their international
experiences to their future classrooms and how they might interact with students who are new
immigrants. For participants, these trips tended to result in a changed understanding of the
teaching profession. Some pre-service teachers report having a change in their philosophy of
teaching, upon return (Cushner & Mahon 2002). Cushner and Mahon (2002) also found that
participants expressed a deepened belief in multicultural education -as a result of their time
abroad. For the Pence and Macgillivray (2008) study, participants, almost unanimously, had very
positive experiences abroad, and the participants who were challenged by curricular practices in Italy used those moments as opportunities for creativity and new teaching strategies.

Mwebi and Brigham, (2009) found that teacher participants noticed a difference in how they were perceived in their immediate communities: “I also feel sometimes like I am seen differently, by the community, my students, and the staff. I am seen as ‘someone who had been to Africa: I struggle with what that actually means and how it has changed me or makes me different” (p. 418). This participant was reportedly deeply transformed by her experience in Africa and often wonders if she left a part of herself there. This teaching experience in Africa is something that the participant continues to reconcile with her school community and herself.

2.3.2 Globalizing the curriculum

Studies (Mayness et al. 2013, Trilokekar & Kukar, 2011) have concluded that intercultural teacher education programs have had a lasting and positive outcome on teacher participants. Some teachers, years after the trip, incorporate artefacts from the trip into their classroom such as indigenous understandings of sustainability and citizenship education into their course material or showing their students photographs from Kenya (Mayness et al., 2013). These participants also suggested that they had the opportunity to “reexamine their curriculum views, their world views, and their expression of personal empowerment” (p. 155). These experiences helped the participants to grow, professionally, as teachers: “I design units and lessons based on things I have learnt in Kenya, such as sustainability” (p. 158). Similarly, Mwebi and Brigham (2009) found that their teacher participants also intentionally integrated primary sources from their experience in Africa into the social studies curriculum, through pictures, and videos. One teacher reported that she “could not even imagine what it would be like to teach these units without
international experiences [in Africa]” (p.422). Being outside of their comfort zone encouraged teachers to experiment and take risks with mainstream pedagogical practices (see also Trilokekar & Kukar 2011). In summary, overseas experiences have a living and lasting impact on participants. In particular, the unique cultural exposure that pre-service teachers receive from these experiences seems to impact their pedagogical decisions, their relationship with their colleagues, and who they are as teachers. However, there are still some discrepancies and unanswered questions within the literature that require more research.

2.4 Conclusion: Identifying gaps and the rationale for future study

My research project fills several gaps that scholars have alluded to in the literature regarding intercultural experiential placements. Educators of colour are an understudied population in this body of research. Likewise, apart from Mwebi and Brigham (2009), few scholars have interviewed the coordinators of intercultural experiential placements. How these experiences are practically useful for Canadian classrooms is another area in need of more study. This type of research is important, because Canada’s population is continually diversifying and experiential learning placements might be good pedagogical preparation for novice teachers.

Cushner and Chang (2015) found that most faculty who teach intercultural courses to pre-service teachers, do not have formal cross cultural teaching experience themselves (p.175). Pence and Macgillivray (2008) mention a literary gap when they emphasize the need for more research on how pre-service teachers reflexively internalize their time abroad, in connection with their future practice with ethnically diverse students. More research is needed on how pre-service teachers engage in reflective practices during their time abroad and the longevity of the practical and professional impact of their time overseas (Brindley et. al, 2009).

I would also argue that more research needs to be done that explicitly connects culturally
relevant pedagogy to the experiences of teachers who have had intercultural placements abroad. More research should investigate the impact on their professional identities and classroom practices. Likewise, *decolonization* discourses might not always be readily available in pre-service teacher education settings, which does not give them the tools to critically think in this way: “there is little scholarship that examines how pre-service teachers engage in the process of decolonization to challenge neoliberal influences in education and develop multicultural awareness during an international cross-cultural field experience” (Sharma et al., 2013, p. 366). The literature might need to more explicitly connect the impact that experiences abroad has on teachers’ instructional strategies and the inclusiveness of their classrooms.

As above, there is also a lack of research on the experiences of pre-service teachers who identify as cultural minorities, which calls the accessibility of these programs into question. The participants in many studies (e.g. Pence & Macgillivray, 2008) found that intercultural, experiential placements tend to be white, which might be a significant barrier in the field of intercultural teacher education. Likewise, Cushner and Mahon (2002) reported that less than 10% of their participants were educators of colour. Although the ongoing development of teachers is important, intercultural experiences might highlight economic, social, and cultural capital discrepancies between educators, despite the trip’s ability to relate dominant groups to marginal experiences. The cost of these trips might be a barrier for educators of a minority status. Thus, a placement program which is supposed to address issues of racism and cultural sensitivity, might actually perpetuate systemic racism, by marginalizing some teachers from these experiences. Outlining which demographic of teachers usually participate in these activities might provide insight into the lack of diversity among educators in Canadian classrooms. Given these aforementioned gaps, my study will contribute to the literature by examining the lack of voice
representation from educators of colour through a critical observation of how teachers abroad negotiated their own whiteness, seeking out how intercultural experiences impact professional practice, and including the perspectives of a program coordinator.

In this chapter, I reviewed literature pertaining to the field of intercultural and international experiential programs. I examined how teachers experience a sense of otherness while abroad and the implications of that experience for their curriculum and professional practice. I synthesized a variety of gaps in the literature, in order to highlight the relevance of my study. In chapter Three, I define and describe a variety of methodological strategies that enabled me to collect findings and analyze data.
Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.0 Introduction

The impact of experiential programs on the reported practices and identities of teachers is the topic of my research project. In this chapter I explain my research methodology. First, I describe a general understanding of the research approach, procedures, and instruments of data collection. I identify some strengths and limitations, barriers, and supports within the literature on ethical consideration, and I connect the relevance of these to my research project. The chapter concludes with a rationale for my methodological choices and a summary of key points.

3.1 Research Approach & Procedures

In this chapter I explain the relevance of qualitative research to my study. Qualitative researchers generally retrieve data using interviews, observational field notes and other non-quantitative measures. Unlike quantitative research, which depends upon a positivist approach and numeric data, qualitative research seeks to understand the experiences of a particular subjects. This paradigm values the many facets of human experience and requires reflexive approaches (Saldaña, 2011). Williams (2015), describes qualitative methodology as the gleaning of non-numerical data, in order gain insight on a particular area, without making generalizable claims. Because my project is probing the experience of Canadian teachers in experiential, intercultural and, overseas placements, the data that I collected is a reflection of the lived experiences of my participants while they were abroad. The term phenomenology, which best encompasses the essence of my research endeavour, explores what can be known about the lived aspect of human experiences (Saldaña, 2011; Hays & Sigh, 2012). Phenomenology validates human experience as a means of knowing and evaluating the world (Shank, 2002). My research probed the development of cultural consciousness, while teachers are internationally practicing
during their preservice years. Terms such as “cultural Other” or “culturally displaced” are used within the literature to legitimate how teacher-participants described their experiences.

3.2 Instruments of data collection

For my study, the primary source of data collection consisted of audio-recordings from semi-structured interviews with teacher-participants and field notes. The literature identifies a continuum of ways to conduct question-answer interviews, with structured and unstructured methods at either polar end. Structured interviews consist of a rigid set of questions that must be answered in a particular order. This approach standardizes data, by decreasing the qualitative aspect. Structured approaches are usually used in quantitative studies (Saldaña, 2011; Hays & Singh 2012). In contrast, unstructured interviews allow for more fluidity, at the expense of being able to consistently synthesize data. Semi-structured interviews tend to utilize an interview protocol, with a variety of pre-planned prompts and can take place in a variety of locations (Saldaña, 2011). This interview style privileges the participants voice and experience and enables them to illuminate the phenomena being studied. Since the pace of the interview is directed by the participant, some questions might be added or omitted, which is not possible within a structured interview. As a result, my project consisted of individual, in-person, semi-structured interviews, with open-ended questions. Thus the interview became an organic process, a fertile ground for narrative exploration and unique perspectives (Hays & Singh 2012). My interview protocol was divided into a few sections, each consisting of appropriate questions regarding: biographical information, time abroad, impact on professional practice and personal life. Though Appendix B comprises the full protocol, some example questions include:

1. In what ways did language act as a barrier or support during your time abroad?

2. Please describe some aspects of your time abroad that continue to influence you. In
what ways do these experiences distinguish you from your teacher colleagues? (who have or have not had similar international experiences)

3. How did your time abroad prepare you to teach in a multicultural setting?

3.3 Participants

In this section, I discuss the criteria for participation in my study, and I describe the ways in which I recruited participants. I also provide a brief biography of each participant, keeping their identities anonymous.

3.3.1 Sampling criteria

The criteria for becoming a participant in my study were as follows:

- must have participated in an organized intercultural teaching experience (outside of the United States and Canada) abroad, and/or the program coordinators who organize these trips;
- this must have taken place during their pre-service program or before formally teaching in Canada;
- and teachers must have at least one year of classroom teaching experience, in a Canadian context, after their experiential trip.

The criteria for participation are connected to my study’s research objectives. The preservice component of the criteria is integral, in order to fully understand the trajectory of how these teachers developed a cultural consciousness. A purpose of this study was to examine the impact that these trips have on the professional identities of teachers, which is why I have specified that they must have teaching experience after their trip. In-service professional development differs from pre-service teacher development. These teachers also had the valid qualifications to teach and were actively doing so. The literature (Cushner & Mahon, 2002) has shown that current
teachers are practiced participants for the qualitative study of intercultural experiential placements.

3.3.2 Sampling procedures

Sampling refers to the method by which researchers select participants from a particular subgroup. My sample size consisted of interviews with three participants, who have experience teaching in a country outside of North America through organized intercultural experiences. However, there are a variety of different sampling methodologies. Purposive sampling refers to the intentional process of selecting a sample from a certain population (Hays & Singh, 2012; Silverman, 2010). Research has found that theoretical and purposive sampling are often used interchangeably, though they do differ, insofar as theoretical sampling develops a sample in relation to a theory. Finally, snowball sampling, a subgroup of convenience sampling, refers to the use of one’s immediate social networks to find participants and solidify a sample (Hays & Singh, 2012; Silverman, 2010). This sampling method produces a ripple or snowball reaction by leading researchers to potential participants, within a short amount of time (Hays & Singh 2012). Given the parameters of my research project, small scope and time constraints, a snowball sample was the most feasible approach for my study. Some of my strategies for recruitment included attending teacher guild meetings, conferences, contacting connections within school boards, and program coordinators that facilitate these international experiences. I provided a brief overview of my study and my information, instead of asking people to participate. When contacts did provide me with the name of someone who would be a good participant, I asked if I could use his/her/their name as a point of reference.

3.3.3 Participant biographies

I sampled across Canada and found three participants for my study, who are all educators
with intercultural experiences abroad and self-identify as white. **Mark Atkins** has traveled abroad many times as both a participant and coordinator of intercultural experiences. He has worked in education for over twenty-five years and continues to guide pre-service teachers on intercultural experiences. For the purpose of this interview, Mark focused on his experience as a teacher in southern Africa.

**Joanna MacDonald** is currently a French teacher. She has also taught for over twenty-five years. During the interview, Joanna reflected upon the time she spent as a teacher in the Caribbean with a religious-based intercultural experience program. She describes her current school environment as culturally and economically diverse.

Finally, **Maria Di Giovanni** has been teaching in Canada for seven years. She currently serves as a secondary school Chaplain. Throughout the interview, Maria focused on her pre-service experience with a religious-based intercultural experience program in East Africa. Maria defines the demographic of her school community as mainly low-income, English Language Learners (ELL), and newcomers to Canada.

### 3.4 Data Analysis

This section briefly describes the process of analyzing and coding raw data. My study was primarily contingent upon verbal data. Analyzing data is a way of making sense of research findings in a tangible way. Hays and Singh (2012) describe the process of data analysis in this way: researchers transcribe and code data, while being cognizant of themes that might arise, and recognizing patterns or explicit quotes that might answer the research question. Coding is sometimes described as the process of categorizing catchphrases and key words, that are often found in the literature and also reported by respondents (Saldaña, 2011). Silverman (2010) suggests that data analysis can take place during and following the interview. He also advises
that researchers should contextualize how their participants use categories. The research should always be aware of his/her/their biases. Likewise, I was aware of the implications of my own biases as a young, educator of colour, who has international teaching experiences.

3.5 Ethical review procedures

The credibility of good qualitative research is tethered to the ethics that guide the research study. Ethics informs how researchers understand subjectivity (Packer, 2011). The relationship between the participant and the interviewer is predicated on the ethical treatment of gathering data and sharing findings (Merriam et al., 2002). There were no known risks associated with my study. I respected the confidentiality of respondent answers by ascribing a pseudonym to each of them. Silverman (2010) notes that consent sheets should be meticulously written and should sufficiently describe the research project. The participants were not coerced into participating in the study; not only is this an unethical practice, but it would also obscure how they respond. And I was sure to thoroughly discuss the consent letter before he/she/they signed. Their privacy remains protected. Free, voluntary participation and informed consent, that provides truth and clarity about research purposes, are ethical practices that are integral to qualitative research (Silverman, 2010) and were deployed in this study. I maintained transparency with my participants before and after the interview, and reminded them they could refuse to answer any question or withdraw from the interview at any time. Moreover, if asked, I was open to providing them with transcripts of their answers, for their consideration and review, and in order to authentically represent findings. In order to decrease the chance of potential hazards, I stored all data pertaining to their interview on password protected hardware. Silverman (2010) also encourages novice researchers to have continual contact with their research supervisor, in order to discuss issues that may arise with ethics and data analysis.
3.6 Methodological limitations and strengths

Methodology defines the techniques that are used to discover and research a phenomenon (Silverman, 2010). Although convenience and snowball sampling have a variety of benefits, Saldaña (2011) cautions researchers against using this method because it can obscure results and the relationships that researchers have with their participants, if they knew them prior to the study, which has many ethical implications. My use of snowball sampling limited the breadth of the types of participants in my study, thus the results cannot describe the general experience of teacher who have experience with intercultural programming. In addition, Hays and Singh (2012) describe convenience sampling as “the least representative sampling strategy” (p. 419). Moreover, Silverman (2010) encourages researchers to avoid asking their overarching research questions directly, as this can also impact participants’ responses. Despite the fact that interviewing participants has the potential of recording richer data, this method also has its limitations, because retrospective analyses tend to be romanticized or embellished in some way. The lens of the present distorts how one sees past experiences, which can render some findings unreliable (Silverman, 2010).

3.7 Conclusion: Brief Overview and Preview

In this chapter, I provided an overview of methodologies as they pertain to my study. I reviewed the research of a variety of scholars, in order to identify these methodological conclusions. I described approaches for recruiting participants, discussed the ethical implications of my study, and proposed a variety of data analysis strategies. I identified criteria for participation in my study and some sampling procedures that I used, in order to solidify participants. Finally, I highlighted some strengths and limitations of semi-structured interviews and convenience sampling. In Chapter Four, I discuss the findings from these interviews.
Chapter Four: Findings

4.0 Chapter Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine how the pre-service experience of teaching in a foreign country reportedly impacted educators’ pedagogical practice in culturally diverse parts of Canada. In Chapter One, I considered the Ontario and broader Canadian context for research on intercultural experiences for pre-service teachers. Then, in Chapter Two, I discussed the findings presented in literature by scholars in the field of intercultural teacher education. In this chapter I discuss and analyze the findings from the three in-person interviews described in my methodology chapter. While a majority of Canadian classrooms are culturally diverse, all of the participants in my study were white. The findings of my study bring together and speak across these participants’ experiences before, during, and after the trip. This chapter also addresses my research questions:

1. What were these teachers’ expectations about and reasons for participating in the program?
2. What were some significant moments or experiences during the program?
3. What are these teacher’s perceptions of how participating impacted their professional identities and practices, if at all?
4. What are their pedagogical approaches to diversity, culture, racism, and oppression?

In what follows, the findings of my study are broken down into three overarching themes related to how these experiences abroad (1) challenge white teachers to confront the pedagogical implications of their whiteness, since all participants in this study identified as white, (2) shape how these teachers develop their professional practice, and (3) influence how these teachers can connect to students who are often marginalized. This chapter also discusses how each
participant’s experience either aligns with or diverges from scholarly literature pertaining to the intercultural experiences of beginning teachers.

4.1 Whiteness as a Factor for Intercultural Engagement

My interpretations of the way each participant discussed how their lived experience of whiteness shaped their time abroad and also informs how they interact with students in Canada remains an unanticipated finding. While abroad, whiteness reportedly made some participants experience a feeling of minoritization, confront their own privilege, and confide in other white teachers about their experience of cultural Otherness.

4.1.1 “Oh my God, I’m white!”: Awareness of ‘minority’ as both experience and status

Intercultural experiences provided these teacher participants with the unique opportunity to reflect on how race might impact their identity as teachers. In contrast to their regular experience of belonging to the dominant culture group in Canada, participants in my study reported an inverse experience of minoritization because attention was drawn to their whiteness when they were abroad. Whiteness tends to be perceived as the norm or standard in Western society; however, this was not necessarily the case in the regions that the participants taught in, which were predominantly populated with black people: Joanna taught in the Caribbean, Mark taught in southern Africa, and Maria taught in East Africa. Negotiating majoritarian statuses outside of one’s comfort zone was a topic lengthily discussed in the literature I reviewed in Chapter Two.

When asked to describe whether or not she was ethnically similar to the dominant group in the Caribbean, Joanna recounts that “I was a very visible minority and that was very weird”, which indicates that this new minority status was something out of the ordinary for her. Because she was the very obvious racial minority in her Caribbean village, Joanna was often an object of
stereotypes that some Caribbean people had of white people, and “they had pretty strong perceptions of white people”. Qualifiers that are covertly associated with whiteness in Canada, like ‘educated’ or ‘wealthy’ are suddenly amplified once these teachers are transported into a new cultural context. Similar to the findings in Mwebi and Brigham’s (2009) study of Canadian teachers reflecting on their pre-service experience of being visibly different in Africa, the participants in my study also reflect a radical shift in self understanding because of this growth in self-awareness.

Maria, like Joanna and the participants in the Mwebi and Brigham (2009) and Savva (2013) studies, was confronted with a physical sense of racialization: “we had little kids coming up to us, screaming, crying, they had never seen a white person before … yeah, like shocked, dismayed, like they want to touch you, they want to touch your hair”. Being excluded from the dominant culture group compelled them to reflect on how the experience of racialization is not an invisible facet of identity. This transformation of self in relation to the dominant other also caused some participants to reflect and make connections to their lives in Canada, contrary to participants in Trilokekar and Kukar’s (2011) analysis, who envisioned Canada as a “race-less” society, and did not make explicit connections between their experiences of racialization abroad and cultural identities in Canada. As Mark notes:

It struck me as funny, we took a class picture and I got it developed and they sent it back to me and I go, “Oh my God, I’m white!” I didn’t even, like I didn’t really realize that I was so, that I stood out so much, you know? Because you weren’t used to that in the Canadian culture, standing out. And uh, um, so, uh it was interesting, when kind of the roles of the majority and minority are reversed.
Mark’s response reflects a growth in cultural consciousness that could not have taken place in most parts of Canada. Because the customs of mainstream North American society privilege whiteness and mask its authority (McIntosh, 1988), Mark, like the other participants in my study, articulates the surprise and realization that he has not had to think about his own race before. Joanna concurs: “[The Caribbean] made me maybe a little bit more aware, when I got back, of what white privilege is, and how it is a real thing.” This recognition of whiteness is a countercultural form of personal growth, because it disrupts the perceived default nature of whiteness and does not sustain a meritocratic myth, often perpetuated by hegemonic discourses. Despite becoming more cognizant of their whiteness, however, the participants were immersed into a foreign cultural context and so became cognizant of how race operates in different cultural-social membranes. Although participants were humbled by their new minority status, they also came to the realization that their whiteness was a unique characteristic, which afforded them unearned power and advantages, while they were in the new host country.

4.1.2 White guilt and white privilege

Despite their experience of becoming a racial minority, participants in my study were also aware of how they benefitted from privileges associated with whiteness, unlike non-white cultural groups that are unusually marginalized. These experiences of privilege often manifested themselves in access to resources, either within the host country or in Canada, and feelings of white guilt.

Similar to findings in studies by Trilokekar and Kukar (2011), and Sharma et al., (2013) on how assumptions of wealth or tourism carry colonial undertones and can brand the experiences of teacher participants, Joanna, Mark, and Maria also experienced similar labels, like “tourist” and “Toronto Star”. Joanna seems to have tried to resist them by more fully integrating
into the culture. She lived in the same village as her students, and adopted the agricultural based lifestyle, in order to find solidarity in explicit ways. She encountered discriminatory practices which she accounts as a personal experience of ‘racism’ when her landlord wanted to unfairly raise her rent: “[we] made her understand that I was not some millionaire, just because of the colour of my skin. So that’s the only thing I could say is racist”. Joanna’s sole experience with ‘racism’ still provided her with an opportunity to “opt-out” of that type of discrimination, and is not a true reflection of power and systemic oppression associated with racialized subjugation (hence my scare quotes). Similar to Angela, a white participant in Trilokekar and Kukar’s (2011) study, Joanna also struggled to see how her privilege was still active and operating despite the mistreatment she was experiencing from somebody. Privilege might often act as a buffer to interrogating racism, like the colonial reasons why her landlord might have treated her this way.

The colour of Joanna’s skin affords her the ability to come and leave the Caribbean. On the other hand, her landlord, whose ancestors involuntarily came to the island and whose progeny remain there, does not have access to the same geographical or socio-economic mobility.

Contrary to being a victim of racism, Mark recalls a moment in which he not only recognized his privilege but manipulated it to make life more comfortable while living in southern Africa:

And then, once in a while, there’d be challenges like the water would be shut off or uh you know, there was no meat in town for a week, or uh something like that. But those were all things you overcame. [Coughs] probably more inconveniences than actual huge problems. […] but] you catch yourself using your North American privilege sometimes either to make connections or to get something that was in short supply or whatever, you know?
Firstly, Mark underplays the impact that having access to substantial food and water can have on a community. By labelling these crises as ‘inconveniences’, he downplays the reality of people living in this area who experience the frequent absence of key, life-sustaining resources like water and food. However, this finding also suggests that Mark is wrestling with the idea of Western privilege and entitlement. He is, after all, cognizant of issues of access to resources. It is worth considering that intercultural experiences may only simulate the experience of cultural Otherness, since participants can find loop holes that negate feelings of marginalization.

Unlike Mark and Joanna, Maria’s acknowledgement of privilege connected to the access to education that she has in Canada. She remembered her time in East Africa and stated that “girls were not allowed to come [to school…] Education was really only a place for boys. And [girls] needed to work whatever jobs they could to help support their families”. Maria really struggled with this gendered reality as a social justice issue. Seeing young girls playing outside of the school compound, unable to enter in, was one of the most challenging parts of her time in East Africa. Maria became increasingly aware that her access to education was a privilege, and that throughout her life she was coached in the direction of high education:

Like, going to school for me was a nonissue. You move to a neighbourhood that has a school, you go to school, you go for free, and you go to high school, and then your teachers there promote you to go and get a further education. And at this place, they’re not even allowed a summer school program, it’s not even considered a part of government education. So that was definitely a moment when I felt, “whoa”.

By encountering a new schooling system and a different cultural approach to pedagogy, Maria was challenged to make cross-cultural connections that she did not think she would need to consider before. In congruence with Cushner and Mahon’s (2002) understanding of how
overseas programs impact novice teachers, Maria’s grappling with global issues demonstrates how mind-opening these overseas experiences can be. This new recognition of her own unearned privilege, in contrast to young girls in East Africa, is a nugget of information that she shares with her students in Canada, thus rippling the effect of that cultural experience.

The connotation of white people entering a country that has a history of colonialism mirrors a power dynamic that transcends time. Dissimilar to the findings of Sharma et al.’s (2013) study of preservice teachers in Honduras, where a participant articulated feeling ‘grateful’ for her American privileges, all three of my participants described a struggle with knowing they have comforts back home, and a sense of shame while living in a new and foreign cultural context. This is a feeling is frequently described as “white guilt” (Matias et. al, 2014). To illustrate, Joanna became very emotional as she recounted her struggle with guilt: “you even feel guilty when you miss your home” she said, because home is vastly different from life in the global south. Ultimately, Joanna makes large connections between her comfortable life back home and a life with more economic and social challenges in the Caribbean. She sees that these disparities have a global connection as well: “You didn’t choose that lifestyle, it was given to you and until you went to this new place, you didn’t even realize the disparity, you know. You see pictures and stuff, read about [it] whatever, [but] you never lived it.” Joanna realized that this same unchosen ‘lifestyle’ was also given to Caribbean people. Hard work does not necessarily predict privileges, perhaps people are victims of historical, cultural, and economic circumstance, cradled in a bed of chance. This also means that systems of oppression sustain the comfortable lifestyle that she longed for, while in the Caribbean.

Reading newspaper articles or watching the news does not compare to the lived experience of economic disparity attained through intercultural trips. Guilt can arise from this
unveiling: from realizing that white people do not have to think about how white privilege operates nor that a comfortable life is often maintained locally and globally at the expense of those who are historically disenfranchised. Trying to reconcile life back in Canada with a new understanding of what a lack of privilege looks like in the Global South underpins the experiences of my participants. One way in which they made sense of these feelings of guilt was by sharing their struggles with teachers who have experienced similar situations.

4.1.3 White solidarity as reflexive practice

Though scholars Pence and Macgillivray (2008), and Cushner and Chang (2015) found that teachers participate in reflexive practice while overseas, participants in my study met with fellow participants in small groups, as outlets, as a means of teasing out their temporary experiences of cultural Otherness. For my participants, this identity negotiation needed to take place among other white people. Mark described belonging to a network of European and North American “expatriates”, while in southern Africa. Moreover, after recalling a vivid experience of witnessing an East African teacher “pull[ing] the kid up by the scruff of his neck, and he like slapped him in the face”. Maria remembers feeling awful; “I thought, oh my God, if I wouldn’t have said anything, this kid wouldn’t have received this kind of punishment”. Through highs and lows and other reflective practices, Maria and her team of teachers built reflection into their end of day routine, in order to unpack some of their experiences: “you’re looking forward to talking to your fellow Canadians about what you’ve seen, heard, smelled, it’s kind of like a reassuring thing”. Trilokekar and Kukar’s (2011) participants also emphasize the importance of debriefing experiences with people who have similar backgrounds, noting that this process can be a positive way for participants to digest experiences. When asked what kind of things were shared during these reflection events, Joanna mentioned that it was
some of this sort of cultural stuff we’d been experiencing. And just to talk [about] how we’re feeling and maybe to say some of our frustrations, that we wouldn’t feel comfortable saying to some of our Caribbean friends… cause [we] didn’t want it to look like we were criticizing them or whatever. So, just to be able to talk with like-minded people who are going through a similar experience. It was very helpful.

Although conversing with teachers of a similar background seemed to provide my teacher-participants with a safe space to vent about their frustrations, Joanna has also been empowered to speak out against acts of racism that she sees or hears in the staffroom. Overall, reflection with similarly-situated others – whether in discussion circles or journaling – was an integral component of how the participants in my study sifted through their intercultural experiences.

In this subsection, I discussed the impact of white privilege on teacher participants who are engaged in intercultural activities abroad. I examined how perceived understandings of whiteness impacted how participants reflected on life before their trip, and instigated a sense of cultural recognition and appreciation of Otherness after their trip. These profound experiences abroad propelled teachers toward further professional and personal growth.

4.2 Teaching in the sand: Intercultural trips as gateway to professional development

This second theme responds to the following research question: how does their time abroad impact their in-service, professional identities? Teachers who participated in this study mentioned that their experience abroad helped them gain confidence and resourcefulness that still impacts their current practice. Similar to the findings of Pence and Macgillivray’s (2008) in which American pre-service participants teaching in Rome described an increased sense of self-confidence in their skills and abilities as teachers, and a participant in Mayness et al.’s (2013) study who reported that “teaching in Kenya helped me ‘grow up’ as a teacher much quicker”, my
participants also reported a growth in personal development and professional readiness. Their encounter with new teaching environments and interaction with new culture groups helped them establish a solidified teacher identity.

Joanna and Maria were both in a context in which they had to teach students in a way that explicitly prepared students for government-mandated standardized testing. When Joanna speaks about teaching in the Caribbean she says “oh I like autonomy, that I kind of got to totally develop my own programs”. Although she does not recall seeing any ministerial documents, having internet access, or attending professional development workshops, Joanna tapped into community resources in order to innovate her teaching. She describes a time when she used butcher paper from a local butcher shop to teach the students how to prepare for the written portion of the exam. This instance of being a self-sufficient teacher still resonates with Joanna: “It gave me huge confidence … I’m not afraid to go off script … I don’t necessarily feel I need to follow the curriculum to the T. and um, yeah I, I like to be creative about things, and I feel, I learned how to do that, out of necessity, back there.” Joanna reportedly became her own point of pedagogical reference and cultivated the creative ability to deviate from the standard curriculum and take ownership of her classroom. As a result of participation in intercultural programs, she reports a degree of autonomy that is conversely not reported in the literature. In a study of how intercultural experiences might function as professional development for American pre-service teachers in England, Brindley et. al (2009) identified some forms of professional development, but autonomy and self-efficacy was not one of them. The authors are very clear that the professional development potential of these programs needs more research.
Resourcefulness out of necessity has reportedly also contributed to Maria’s professional readiness. While in a rural village in East Africa, Maria recounts the lack of material resources she had to work with:

I remember saying this out loud, to the fellow Canadians, ‘Jesus taught in the sand, now we have to teach in the sand.’ Literally we are like writing the ABC’s, in the dirt on the ground. So when I say that to colleagues here, in the most humblest approach, not to say like, you should be like thankful for what you have … in terms of professionalism, I kind of like to ah, [pause] connect back to my experience in East Africa, just really learning how, like you don’t have a computer at your desk, in your class, well some teachers don’t have classrooms.

Intercultural programs provided Maria with a readiness that she says she does not see in her teacher colleagues. Because she has experience teaching under extreme conditions, not having access to technology or expensive pedagogical gadgets is not a hindrance to her ability to effectively teach. In this way, intercultural travel opportunities might also function as a way in which novice teachers can develop self-efficacy skills before formally entering the classroom in Canada.

4.2.1. “Even if it puts you into debt, do it.”: The permanence of intercultural experiences

Within this study, teachers who participate in an intercultural learning opportunities before they begin formally teaching in Canada participate in social justice initiatives within their school community, and also are inclined to travel abroad again. Similar to participants in Mayness et al.’s (2013) study of a diachronic analysis of how a pre-service teacher to Canada, who also articulated an interest in ecology and social action, my participants are actively involved in social justice initiatives in their school communities such as the Gay-Straight-
Alliance, Eco-Club, etc. Likewise, all three of my participants either have already or are planning to embark on another experience. Mark has coordinated multiple experiential learning trips to various parts of the world for secondary school students and teacher candidates and pursued a master’s degree in education shortly after his return from Africa. His experience abroad propelled him to further inquire into his practice: “[travelling has] been a positive influence you know, in term of how it’s influenced my teaching…even my master’s uh degree, I went back to find out how” to improve the programs. Joanna is also interested in pursuing more international teaching opportunities, and potentially training teacher candidates in other parts of the world. Maria, the youngest of the three participants, is following a similar path:

I met one of [my professional] goals that I made when I was in India which was just to take a group of students to experience experiential learning. Now I’ll be doing it for the second time this year when I take a group to [a region in Africa]. Um, another kind of goal that sprouted, kind of in the midst of all these kinds of trips that I’ve taken, is to earn a sort of Master’s degree in social justice.

The desire to pursue life long learning is a trend among my participants. Their participation in these intercultural experiences acts as a catalyst for further professional development. This finding is important because it shows that teachers in this study who embark on intercultural experiences before formally teaching in Canada, are open to fostering a cultural consciousness Cushner and Mahon (2002) through more travel, and they are also interested in enriching their practice through more research.

4.3 Impact of Empathy on Pedagogical Practice: Connecting with Marginalized Students

Participants in this study referenced language barriers and experiences of being an outsider as evoking a sense of empathy for their current students who might be newcomers to
Canada. This finding roots the notion of cultural consciousness development that takes place in experiential learning into a practical context: the Canadian classroom. This finding also articulated how intercultural teacher programs prepare teachers to teach students who are ethnic minorities. It also indicates that teachers who participate in these overseas programs tend to incorporate trip artefacts into their curriculum materials, and are capable of empathizing with students who experience marginalization.

4.3.1 Local language: Barrier or support?

Unlike other studies that focus on intercultural programs for novice teachers, the participants in my study mentioned that language barriers were not a significant impediment to their stay abroad. However, awareness of the local language enabled them to develop empathy for current students who might be English Language Learners (ELL).

Learning the local language is an integral part of accessing the host culture (Maynes et.al. 2013). During Mark’s intercultural experience in southern Africa, the main language of instruction was English, since there are too many tribal languages that would need accommodating. However, anytime he tried to speak some of the local languages, he would become aware of his lack of fluency. Mark recalls trying to pick up the language; he would speak and “people would chuckle at the way you pronounce things and so on. But I think there was always an appreciation for trying”. Similar to Mark, a participant in Cushner and Mahon’s (2002) study was also very self-conscious about learning the local language and needed to overcome his “fear of sounding stupid” (p. 51). Because of this experience of gaining familiarity with a local language, the participant reflected that they will be able to relate to newcomers to America or new students who might ELLs. Similar to Mark’s experience, Maria relied on an older student to interpret her lessons for the younger children. In this way, “English skills created
a language barrier” (Trilokekar & Kukar, 2011, p. 1146). However, she was able to navigate through East Africa because common street signs were written in Italian or English; the city reflects the legacy of colonialism in this way.

For participants in my study, cultural immersion also meant becoming aware of the fact that language can either facilitate relationships between students and their teachers and allow people to feel included in a culture or bar them from access to cultural competencies. Contrary to Maria and Mark’s experiences, Joanna’s knowledge of the local language enriched her stay and enabled her live like her students. She describes the Caribbean as linguistically diverse, with English, Creole, and French as common tongues. For Joanna, “being able to speak the same language helped me to um, not assimilate, but to appreciate the culture better”. Language competence helps to facilitate cultural coalescence. Having a lived experience of Otherness in a new cultural context seems to give teachers the opportunity to empathize with students who are often marginalized by the mainstream schooling system (Savva, 2013). One of Savva’s participants who held ethnocentric presumptions about Spanish speakers in America began to interrogate their own biases while abroad.

4.3.2 Connecting with students who are ethnic minorities

Experiences with language as a barrier or support evoked a sense of empathy in my participants that made them consider the needs of underserved students in Canada. For my participants, this readiness to engage students who are often considered minorities is tethered to their intercultural experience. For example, when Joanna reflects on how she needed to adapt to the British education system in the Caribbean, she was able to draw direct connections to students at her current school without being prompted:

We do get quite a few new kids. We’re getting a big influx of Filipino students at my
school, direct from the Philippines. Um and so you know I, I kind of get that they don’t know the whole interworking of how school is here. That just because they’ve been to school, doesn’t mean it’s a, you know, universal experience everywhere. So, I think I tend to be a little better at kind of helping those kids, or at least appreciating that they might not understand, you know, this is recess now, what does that mean? Like, they might not have recess, exactly in the same way at their school, back where they were.

Joanna was reportedly able to translate her experience in the Caribbean into the Canadian context. Her global awareness of the differences between pedagogy and schooling in various countries is deeply rooted in her own teaching background abroad. Joanna’s deconstruction of education as a heterogeneous not ‘universal’ reality is a key finding, because it reflects a broadened worldview, and a respect for the prior experiences that students bring into the classroom.

Similarly, Maria recently received a new student into her classroom, recognized her accent and decided to ask her where she is from. She found out that the student is East African and shared some of her experiences teaching in East Africa with her:

I told her some of the experiences I’ve had and she just started to cry and she said ‘honestly, people don’t even know where my country is, it’s so nice that you know, thank you for the welcome’.

Maria’s international experience provided her with an organic gateway to build relationships with new students in her classroom. Perhaps the experience of travelling abroad continues to live with an educator and permeates into other parts of their practice. This finding successfully attends to a gap identified by Trilokekar and Kukar’s (2011), who recommended that more
research be conducted to explore how empathy shapes the identities and practices of teachers who have been cultural outsiders in countries overseas.

Joanna was also able to channel this notion of empathy and common understanding into how she approached her curriculum; she infuses artefacts from her trip into her everyday teaching practice. As a French teacher, when she approaches the Carnival unit, which takes place during Black History Month (February), she often talks about how Carnival takes place in other parts of the world outside of Quebec, like the Caribbean and Louisiana. Sometimes she speaks in her Caribbean accent to showcase her diverse experiences, or in an attempt to connect with students of Caribbean decent, she comments on how she enjoys certain foods they bring for lunch and asks how their families prepare the dishes. Her accent might be interpreted as an embodied cultural artefact. By using her international experience to connect with students, Joanna validates their cultural identities as assets. Likewise, by sharing her knowledge of Caribbean culture with her students, she shows them that she is learning alongside them and is open to receiving their cultural richness. In the early 2000’s when the Caribbean was affected by a severe hurricane,

We did a fundraiser to try to raise money to help [a school] repair their roof … with the permission of the principal, [I] dumped the French lessons for a few days and actually taught lessons about the [Caribbean] … I was going to be going there at March break, so … we actually like made a big [Caribbean Island] flag and we had a bulletin board and we talked about different aspect of [the Caribbean] and I tied it all also into our early understandings of climate change, at that time.

Through this Caribbean-focused, school wide project, Joanna directly connects her experience abroad with how she teaches. Though Maria, who recalls and participants in Mayness et al.’s
(2013) and Mwebi and Brigham’s (2009) studies integrate stories and photographs from their trips into their lesson plans, Joanna’s pedagogical approach is distinct because she layers her personal encounter with this country, sustainability, social justice, and culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995) into how she uses her international experience to teach. Integrating trip artefacts and building relationships with students that foster an appreciation for cultural diversity are a few ways in which my participants put their empathy into practice.

4.4 Conclusion

In connection to my research questions, the findings of my study unpack the in-trip and post-trip experiences of teachers who pursue intercultural experiences prior to entering teacher education. In this chapter, I discussed the implications of their in-trip experiences on their current teacher practices by examining three overarching trends and connecting them to existing literature on intercultural experiences. These emerging themes included interrogating whiteness as a vehicle for privilege while teaching in colonized regions, exploring how intercultural programs shape teacher readiness and equip teachers from a globalized world, and synthesizing how these abroad experiences, create empathy and influence everyday classroom practices, especially in ethnically diverse schools. Each theme represents a diachronic and sustained change in professional identity and cultural outlook from in-trip to current career practices, for each participant. In Chapter Five, I will discuss the implication of these findings for the teaching profession, especially for teach education programs, while recommending ways in which The Ministry might also continue to support teachers. In this final chapter, I also situate my study within an established canon of intercultural literature, and suggest recommendations for further study that highlight the limitations of my research, and other gaps that need to be addressed.
Chapter Five: Conclusion

5.0 Introduction and Chapter Overview

In this chapter, I conclude my research project by providing the implications of my research findings and identifying further areas in need of research. By revisiting my self-positioning statement in Chapter One, the literature reviewed in Chapter Two and recommendations made by my participants, as stated in Chapter Four, I will develop a comprehensive discussion of next steps for intercultural experiences, and from my own social location and positioning.

5.1 Overview of Key Findings and Their Significance

Findings of this study show that educators who participate in intercultural experiential learning opportunities before formally teaching in Canada develop awareness about the implication of white privilege, cultivate their professional identities, and are pioneers of social justice initiatives within their school communities. These findings suggest that experiential learning abroad might be considered an essential component of how teachers grow in self-understanding. In response to the growing cultural diversity of classrooms in Canada, this study unearthed the in-trip and post travel experiences of teachers who have embarked on pre-service intercultural learning opportunities. Stemming from this research project’s investigation of the impact of teacher experiences abroad, this chapter discusses the pedagogical implications of cultural Otherness and whiteness, and stipulates implications and recommendations for educational stakeholders in intercultural experiences and Canada’s educational landscape as a whole.

In semi-structured in-person interviews, participants reported that the experience of being
a cultural minority in a different cultural context radically shaped their self-understanding as white educators. Likewise, teaching in under-resourced areas reportedly provided participants with a sense of confidence and self-reliance that continues to influence their current practice. These intercultural experiences also propelled teachers to become social justice ambassadors in their educational communities.

5.2 Implications

The broad implications of the study include a focus on the distinct experiences of white teachers who grow in self and cultural consciousness, and the reported positive and enduring impact that these experiences have on their teaching careers and professional identities. As teacher education programs and ministries of education in Canada try to adapt to increasingly global and culturally diverse classrooms, travelling abroad might be a way to equip teachers with hands-on and immediate cultural sensitivity training. Ultimately, this study asks teachers to connect their in-trip experiences with their current pedagogy, thus analyzing – on a small scale – the degree of teacher readiness for an ethnically plural settings. From these three individual experiences I will try to extrapolate what they might mean for education as a whole and other bearings for future study and scholarship.

5.2.1 Broad implications for classroom community spaces

The findings from this study suggest that students who belong to minority groups may feel disconnected from their white teachers, including teachers who have travelled abroad and grown in an awareness. This disconnect may in part exist because teachers do not have enough access to adequate anti-oppressive resources during their in-service years. The lack of board or Ministry intervention to support students who are frequently marginalized in schools may
impede the longevity of how intercultural experiences influence in-service teacher practice.

In contrast, however, parents of students who are English language learners (ELL), or newcomers to Canada, might also find an ally in educators who have had these experiences. Building teacher-parent-community partnerships is an important part of ensuring a student’s success. The empathy that participants reported to have with students might also help to support the parent community. By integrating the parent voice into the classroom and affirming parent culture groups, parents may feel validated and included into their child’s learning experiences.

Experiential, intercultural education is still an elective or extracurricular component of teacher education. Despite the positive experiences reported in this study, educators who embark on intercultural experiences are still the minority in their profession. This reality might be because of the time commitment, distance from family and friends, and the expenses associated with such travel. In addition, the majority of teachers who embark on these experiences are white (Cushner & Mahon, 2002; Trilokekar & Kukar, 2011). Perhaps, this status quo might also suggest that a majority of teachers do not see the necessary value in travelling abroad, simply to be reminded of their privilege, which might call into question the validity of these experiences. Even though there might be a desire among educators to become more familiar with other pedagogies, travel might not be their preferred medium to develop that competency.

Lastly, there may be an inconsistency among faculties of education and independent programs who offer intercultural experiences. Because these intercultural experiences are not mandatory, and their preparation processes are not regulated, the opportunities that these experiences provide might contribute to a lack of standardization among faculties of education. There might be dissent amongst participants of intercultural experiences as to whether or not
these programs should be uniformly integrated into pre-service teaching programs. Some former participants were advocates for their integration, and others recognize the validity of choosing not to travel abroad. Travelling abroad does not necessarily make one a cultural expert, as people who do not travel abroad still have the capacity to be good teachers. The work to create globally conscious and culturally aware teachers is still in process.

5.2.2 Narrow implications for the young teacher-researcher

Conducting this study gave me the opportunity to evaluate how my own social positioning, as a young educator of colour, might shape my future interactions with more experienced and privileged teachers as well as students; this realization also stems from the implicit power dynamic that permeated the interviews. Interrogating whiteness was not an original object of this study, nor did I sample for white educators. However, I learned new concepts from their experiences in predominantly black countries that were completely foreign to me, because they are traditional holders of power. If a majority of the teacher profession consists predominantly of white women (Nieto, 2006; Sprecher, 2013), then it is important for me to investigate the social locations of my colleagues and seek to empathize with their perspectives. I am also learning that as these teachers grapple with the implications of their whiteness; part of any teacher’s praxis includes how their particular privilege informs the way they teach. One of my participants said: “I’m kind of in a place where I’m trying to decide as a teacher now, how much you should see the colours of the students in front of you, and how much you shouldn’t.” They were discussing whether or not race and racialization are important components of the student-teacher relationship, and in front of a teacher candidate of colour, which I found very interesting. I have to wonder if temporarily travelling to a different country really does make one an expert on Otherness, and the implications of this type of empathy. Perhaps this empathy has
the potential to be countercultural and create spaces for marginalized voices. I hope that the teaching profession does not erase me or my experiences, and I will strive to make visible the lived experiences of students and the resources they bring to the classroom.

5.3 Recommendations

As a short-term goal, I would recommend that the Ministry of Ontario (2013) update the Capacity Building Series document on Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP). With the recent influx of refugees to Canada, the cultural milieu in classrooms have radically changed in four years and will continue to do so. Additionally, the document examines the disposition of a CRP educator but does not fully discuss how this mindset is cultivated or impeded. I think specifics could be added to highlight how a socio-cultural consciousness is developed. This project might include consulting the voices of educators of colour, teachers who have travel abroad experiences, and educators who identify as Cultural Workers. In this way, policymakers will have a document that is more congruent with the lived experiences of teachers and students who actively participate in CRP.

I would also recommend that teachers who have travelled abroad through intercultural experiences find ways to support and mentor each other. All three participants were encouraged to travel abroad for the first time by previous teachers. Likewise, Mark and Joanna, who have been teaching for over 20 years, build relationships with younger teachers in their educational communities who have intercultural experiences in their dossier. Perhaps the organizations that coordinate these trips should consider creating a mentorship program to foster dialogue among teachers and create a time and space to facilitate this interaction. Maybe school boards might also consider creating an on-line platform as a means of supporting these teachers, giving them a way to professionally develop and share experiences through dialogue. Alternatively, this
intergenerational dialogue between participants at different stages of their career might be an informal exchange, created by word of mouth.

Boards of education are also encouraged to capitalize on educators who have these overseas experiences, and sustain their inquiry into CRP practices, by providing them with adequate social justice education resources. Perhaps teacher federations might consider advocating for boards to provide these materials. Additionally, anti-oppressive classes and workshops should be a compulsory component of in-service teacher development.

Teachers who embark on these experiences should make an effort to connect with students who are (ELL) or recent immigrants to Canada. The findings from this study imply that classroom demographics are changing in such a way that demands adequate teacher response. Recalling Maria’s anecdote of a student who recently arrived in Canada from Eretria, Maria originally brought the new students outside into the hallway to discuss a uniform infraction then learned about her student’s circumstances. She was able to deepen her connection with that student by tapping into her own lived experience in East Africa. This story is a message to students and teachers alike that building relationships and knowing the stories of the co-learners in your classroom are important, and part of the learning process. In a similar way, Joanna uses her understanding of adjusting to a new schooling system to empathize with students who might be newcomers or ELLs. Having educators who identify as being familiar with cultural Otherness might benefit traditionally marginalized students. Because of their experiences abroad these teachers are accustomed to being culturally porous and willingly engage in cultural exchange.

As a long term goal, I would also recommend that organizations that choreograph intercultural learning programs intentionally provide pre and post briefing. They should integrate
anti-oppressive and anti-racist components into their formation programs, and encourage their participants to evaluate their own social locations and unearned privileges before travelling to a new cultural context. Journal writing and connections between their travel, theory, and practice might also become a long-term benefit for pre-service teacher-participants. Intercultural programs and their coordinators are encouraged to be self-reflective and examine whether or not they produce an overconfidence in the degree to which intercultural opportunities impact teacher participants. Perhaps this perceived readiness might prevent teachers from integrating inquiry into their professional practice. Does travelling abroad predicate an authority on cultural consciousness? In addition, in countries where implicit racial power relations coat the relationship between teacher-participants and the students in their host country cannot be denied: a colourblind approach might be detrimental to participant growth and in-trip interactions. Recruiters for these programs should also seek to diversify the participant groups that travel with them.

5.4 Areas for further research

Due to the small scale nature of this study, the findings were unable to address all parts of intercultural experiential programs. Significant gaps in the literature still remain, and further research is necessary. I would suggest that future researchers exclusively interview educators of colour. Minority voices are not usually represented in literature on intercultural experiences. By addressing this void in the literature, scholars begin to validate the experiences of people who self-identify as ethnic minorities. I would also recommend a cross-case analytical study of students’ experiences who are taught by the same teacher in different countries. This might provide a more complex analysis of how participants teaching practices changed over time. Including student voices sheds light on an inverse experience of the effectiveness of teacher
pedagogical practices. Finally, I would recommend that future researchers use an anti-racist or post-colonial framework when approaching the topic. Likewise, the topic of whiteness, in-trip and in-service, deserves more scholarly attention. Whiteness became an unexpected and unintended object of this research project and impacted the direction of my study.

5.5 Concluding comments

As Canada’s classroom demographics continue to reflect the multiethnic nature of our world, educators will have a responsibility to pedagogically stretch themselves, through life-long learning. Intercultural experiences provide pre-service educators with a cultural immersion opportunity at the beginning of their career, one that has a lasting impact on their professional and teacher identities. This study fleshes out what that lasting impact can look like, and the findings suggest that these educators continue to pursue professional development and social justice initiatives in their immediate educational communities. More importantly, this study reveals some of the enduring racial and colonial tensions that take place between students and teachers abroad and in Canada. The participants reflected on their white privilege in a way that is often challenging in the current teaching system which consistently affirms and privileges whiteness.

The findings of this research pay homage to legitimate cultural Others who have attended or will attend school in Canada. To the students who never had teachers that looked liked them and always wanted to know why, I dedicate these findings to you. For policymakers and teacher-educators who are searching for feasible ways to encourage culturally responsive educators, these findings are of significance to you. And finally, for educators, who might wonder about the long-term impact of an international, intercultural experience, please be aware of the responsibility and humility that is required for the development of a socio-cultural
consciousness. Strengthening our teacher identity through deliberate cultural immersion remains an audacious task.

References


Appendix A: Informed Consent Letter

Date: Day – Month – Year

Dear ___________________________,

My name is Chanelle Robinson and I am a student in the Master of Teaching (MT) program at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto (OISE/UT). A component of this degree program involves conducting a small-scale qualitative research study. My research will focus on the experiences of educators who have teaching experience abroad, with intercultural experiential programs. I am interested in interviewing teachers who have experience of teaching overseas, while participating in an experiential program, during their preservice years. I think that your knowledge and experience will provide insights into this topic.

Your participation in this research will involve one roughly 60-75 minute interview, which will be transcribed and audio-recorded. I would be grateful if you would allow me to interview you at a place and time convenient for you, outside of school time. The contents of this interview will be used for my research project, which will include a final paper and informal presentations to my classmates. I may also present my research findings via conference presentations and/or through publication. You will be assigned a pseudonym to maintain your anonymity and I will not use your name or any other content that might identify you in my written work, oral presentations, or publications. This information will remain confidential. Any information that identifies your school or students will also be excluded.

The interview data will be stored on my password-protected computer and the only person who will have access to the research data will be my course instructor. You are free to change your mind about your participation at any time, and to withdraw even after you have consented to participate. You may also choose to decline to answer any specific question during the interview. I will destroy the audio recording after the paper has been presented and/or published, which may take up to a maximum of five years after the data has been collected. There are no known risks to participation.

Please sign this consent form, if you agree to be interviewed. The second copy is for your records. I am very grateful for your participation.

Sincerely,

Chanelle Robinson
Consent Form

I acknowledge that the topic of this interview has been explained to me and that any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I can withdraw from this research study at any time without penalty.

I have read the letter provided to me by Chanelle Robinson and agree to participate in an interview for the purposes described. I agree to have the interview audio-recorded.

Signature: ______________________________________

Name: (printed) __________________________________________

Date: __________________________________________
Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Principal Researcher: Chanelle Robinson

Thank you for your participation in my research study. The entire interview will be between 60-75 minutes. Please know that your identity and all answers will be kept confidential, and that you may choose to end the interview at any time.

PRE-INTERVIEW
1. Introduce the researcher (myself)
2. OPENING SCRIPT:

   Hello, my name is Chanelle and I am a Master’s student at OISE. I am hoping to learn more about teachers who have travelled and taught abroad, and how the teaching profession can learn form their experiences. I am going to ask you some questions about your time abroad and your current teaching practice. The interview questions are divided into five sections and should take between 60-75 minutes to complete.
3. Provide consent form (explain and discuss any questions they might have and collect signed copy); bring at least two copies to the interview
4. Discuss any questions that the participant might have about the study
5. Test audio recorder
6. Begin recording
7. State the date and time, begin the interview

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION
1. Did you attend teacher’s college in Canada? Where?
2. How long have you been teaching in Canada?
   a) Are you currently teaching?
   b) If not, what would you describe as your current occupation and responsibilities?
3. What subjects and grades have you taught in the past?
   a) Are you currently teaching?
4. Why did you decide to become a teacher?
6. Can you describe the demographics of the students in your school community?
   a) SES, languages, cultural backgrounds etc

7. What does multicultural education look like, in your classroom? In your school setting?
8. How does your experience abroad help you to connect to students who are ethnic minorities?
9. What supports currently exist within your school community that support students who are cultural minorities?
   a) How have these supports been (un)helpful?

[THE FOLLOWING BIOGRAPHICAL/PRE-TRIP QUESTIONS (#1-5) PERTAIN TO ONE PARTICIPANT WHO IS A COORDINATOR OF EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING TRIPS FOR TEACHERS]
1. Can you describe the purpose of your organization ___________?
2. Can you describe the participants who usually embark on these trips?
   a) Teachers, students, retired professionals
   b) Canadians? Nationality?
3. Do group leaders accompany participants on these experiences?
   a) If so, what role does the group leader play?
   b) If not, why?
4. Which geographical regions does __________(organization) usually travel to?
   a) Global south?
   b) Europe?
   c) Which countries?
   d) What is the significance of these locations?
5. How long are these trips?
   a) What is the significance of the trip’s length, if any?

PRE-TRIP QUESTIONS

For the purposes of this interview, an experiential learning trip will refer to the experience you had abroad with an organization or teacher education program that
provided an organized opportunity for cultural immersion, teaching experience, and pre/post trip briefings.

PRE-TRIP QUESTIONS
Reflecting on your own experience,
6. How did you hear about this travel opportunity?
7. What country did you travel to?
8. When did you travel? (month and year)
9. How long was your trip?
10. In what ways did you prepare for your time abroad?
11. Can you describe the demographics of the people who travelled with you?
12. Why did you decide to embark on a trip to __________?
13. Were there any financial supports or barriers that you experienced, before traveling abroad?

IN-TRIP QUESTIONS
1. Can you please describe the demographics of the __________ host country?
   a) Prompt: How is this similar/dissimilar from Canada?
   b) What else did you observe about the demographics?
2. Can you describe a typical day that you had, while abroad?
   a) Prompt: What was the most challenging part of your day?
   b) Did you practice any routines in your day?
3. What were some of the challenges or rewards that you experienced, while teaching with a new pedagogy?
   a) How so?
4. How were you perceived by people living in the __________, host country?
   a. How did you know you were perceived that way?
   a) Were you ethnically similar to the dominant culture group of the host country?
   b) In what ways do you think locals’ perceptions of you would have changed if you were another race/nationality?
5. Did you speak the language of the host country?
   a) IF YES: How did knowing the local language affect your stay?
   b) IF NO:
      a. How did you feel frustration due to the language barrier?
b. How did students/colleagues react to your lack of knowledge of the language?

16. Some North American teachers who teach abroad have claimed to experience a sense of cultural disorientation while overseas. How might you relate this to your own experience?
   a) How, if ever, were you made aware of your own privilege as a North American?

17. Would you say that you witnessed racism during your trip? If yes, please describe.
   a) ADD PROMPTS (to self, to other participants, to locals, of self, of participants, of locals, etc.)

18. Did you engage in any reflective practices during your trip?
   a) If yes, what kinds?
      a. How do you think this reflection impacted your trip?
      b) If no, why not?

19. What was the most significant thing that you learned about yourself, while abroad?

POST-TRIP, IN-SERVICE QUESTIONS
1. Please describe some aspects of your time abroad that continue to influence you.
   a) How do you know? Can you elaborate?

2. In what ways has your time abroad has influenced you professionally, as a teacher?
   a) Was this a positive or negative influence?

3. Do you talk about your trip with your students and colleagues?
   a. (if yes) How do they respond?

4. How would you say you integrate what you learned abroad into your everyday classroom practice?

5. In your opinion, what are the benefits of an experiential learning trip?
   a) What are the drawbacks?

6. In what ways do these experiences distinguish you from your teacher colleagues who have or have not had similar international experiences?

7. In what ways would you say your time abroad prepared you to teach in a culturally diverse setting?
8. Please tell me about a time in which you directly connected your experience abroad with your classroom teaching.
   a) What was this lesson/unit plan about?
   b) What resources did you include, if any?
   c) What pedagogical strategies did you use?
9. Have you experienced any challenges when you incorporated parts of your trip into your classroom teaching?

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

1. Do you think this kind of experience should be standard in teacher education?
   a) Why or why not?
2. What advice would you give to pre-service teachers who are considering an experiential learning trip?
3. As someone who has international teaching experience, what goals do you have for your future practice?
4. Would you embark on another intercultural experiential placement? Why or why not?

Thank you for your time and participation.

CLOSING SCRIPT:

1. Turn the audio recorder off and notify participant that the interview is now over
2. Thank participant
3. Ask him/her/them if they have any questions for me