

**International Education Graduate Students' Conceptualizations of
Multiculturalism and Multicultural Education: Implications for the
Teaching of Multicultural Education at a Western Canadian University**

By

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ABSTRACT

Understanding how international education graduate students conceptualize multiculturalism and multicultural education will arguably inform the teaching that they experience during their programs and impact their learning along the way. This premise was motivated by my experiences with the concepts in question as an international graduate student and relying on the critical multiculturalism framework of McLaren (1994). A synthesis of seven international graduate students' conceptualizations of multiculturalism and multicultural education showed that most of them had experiences with diversity and preconceptions of multiculturalism and multicultural education that differed from their experiences in Canada.

Therefore, I argue that professors of international students need to seek, and then pay attention to their students' voices in their silent struggles of meaning-making with these concepts, whether the lectures are on multiculturalism and multicultural education, or professors are engaged in multicultural practices and the observance of its policies during lectures. I believe that such fundamental concepts and practices in education and society should not be taught or observed without considering how international students themselves make sense of them. Otherwise, like some of the study participants explain, international students may wonder from time to time whether they are simply

‘factory goods’ in the hands of a so-called multicultural system that churns them out as finished Canadian ‘products.’

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Upon completing this thesis, I cannot but join Cicero (106-43bc) in saying: “I wish to be adorned with every virtue, yet there is nothing which I can esteem more highly than the being and appearing grateful. For this one virtue is not only the greatest but is also the parent of all the other virtues” (n.p). Hence, with the weakness of mere words full of gratitude, I wish to thank the almighty God for His divine graces that have seen me through another academic milestone.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my lovely daughter, Amara Mandy for the joy and encouragements she gives me. May God bless her, Amen.

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Chapter One – Introduction

The overall aim of this research study is to understand how international education graduate students arrive at their conceptualizations of multiculturalism following their preconceptions and lived experiences while studying in one Western Canadian university. It also addressed the implications for the teaching of multiculturalism and multicultural education, particularly for international graduate students in education as it concerns meaning-making. From the perspective of an international student and motivated by my personal experiences, my discourse is limited to the philosophical and sociological dimensions of multiculturalism. The goal of the study was to unearth some personal stories that lie beneath these preconceptions and lived experiences with the aim of examining any similarities and differences in those conceptualizations.

The significance is that it will contribute to the knowledge and understanding of how international education graduate students conceptualize multiculturalism and multicultural education. My review of previous studies reveals some gaps in knowledge and research on the voices of international students regarding *their* conceptualizations of multiculturalism and multicultural education. However, I do not argue for any new definitions or offer a critique of multiculturalism.

Arshad-Ayaz (2011) listed education among the top social problems encountered by racialized immigrant communities in Canada as they attempt to

integrate into Canadian society without becoming alienated in the process. While the multiculturalism policy aims at managing difference and diversity politically, she has held that multicultural education aims at managing diversity in the classroom. And “in teacher education programs it has led to alienation for both the majority and minority group student teachers” (Arshad-Ayaz, 2011, p. 72). Gay (1994) equally argued that efforts to comply with certain learning practices “may lead to cultural adaptation, marginality, alienation, and isolation” (p. 10). This may not have been captured point blank on international education graduate students and the teaching of multiculturalism. But given my own experiences, I was curious to learn more from this study, how international graduate students conceptualize multiculturalism and multicultural education based on their day-to-day experiences. No doubt, their lived experiences include education and the learning practices mentioned above.

After an extensive review of literature on critical multiculturalism and critical multicultural education (Freire, 1970; Gay, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1998; McLaren, 1994; Nylund, 2006), it does appear that the undemocratic teaching of multiculturalism and multicultural education as white Anglo-Saxon ideology may lead to some pedagogical issues, including miseducation, marginalization, alienation, and isolation. Therefore, I argue that international students’ perspectives and voices as a minority group matter so much on this topic.

The study relies on McLaren's (1994) critical multiculturalism as the theoretical framework, while the conceptual framework proceeds from the review of aspects of previous scholarly works in Chapter Two which are relevant to the study. These previous works are particularly important in establishing the thoughts, and in building the conceptual framework for this research. I argue that a good understanding of international education graduate students' perceptions of these dominant concepts will perhaps inform the teaching that they experience during their programs and can also probably impact their learning along the way.

Background and Context

My graduate studies in Canada have brought me face to face with the concepts of multiculturalism and multicultural education. I became aware of these concepts and how they were enacted soon after I started attending the new student orientations, career workshops, and subsequently, lectures in my graduate classes. Multiculturalism, inclusion, diversity and other related terms and issues were always part of the discussions, so I began to see them as hallmarks of the university and Canadian culture. Previously, as an international student in Italy, there was no such pervasive discourse on multiculturalism while acknowledging and celebrating cultural diversity in the university, so I found this to be particularly interesting and became increasingly curious about what this would mean for me and others.

In Canada, my preconception involved mutual integration and social inclusion among international students from diverse ethnic cultures. With the etymology of ‘multi’ and ‘culture,’ (many cultures) in mind, I had a mental picture of the university as a microcosm of international students from diverse social and cultural backgrounds. I thought that these students belonged to different international students’ cultural associations according to their places of origin. And as such, that the university would have an umbrella inter-cultural association; a kind of committee drawn from these different cultural groups which coordinated their socio-cultural activities on campus in the name of ‘multiculturalism.’ I think it is important to underscore that this was my *preconception* of multiculturalism. And for me, it illustrates how the preconceptions of international students can differ so much from the day-to-day realities they face.

At the level of the university, one may ask: How well does the new host university notice and address these international students’ challenges, especially regarding such dominant concepts whose meaning in Canada may vary from these students’ backgrounds? I think that this is particularly important for international graduate students in education and particularly if they intend to stay in Canada after graduation.

So, I learned that I was confusing multiculturalism with the notion of inter-culturalism which is a bilateral or multilateral agreement among minority and

major cultures to accommodate one another (Barrett, 2013). However, the emphasis on diversity in Canada remains so different, as multiculturalism appears in almost every discussion, and is sometimes used differently by different speakers (Barrett, 2013) and in varying contexts. That is what sparked my curiosity!

Philosophy begins in wonder, according to Whitehead (1938) and all educators are obliged to reason critically, whether they are philosophers or not. Through a critical quest for a better understanding, I discovered that *multiculturalism* refers to a system aimed at holistically managing socio-cultural and ethnic diversity with all the ancillary aspects, including education, social justice, economy, language, etc., (Ciftci & Gurol, 2015). I also began to think of *multicultural education* in line with them, as a pedagogical approach that fosters cultural pluralism among teachers and students toward achieving educational equality. According to scholars (Banks, 1993, 2013 & 2017; Gumbo, 2001), this implies curricular reforms and transformations to ensure equal educational opportunities for all students to become effective citizens among a diverse and democratic society, despite gender, ethno-social and cultural diversities. And so, the promises of educational equality in multicultural education without discrimination gave me some initial assurances and motivations.

At most Canadian universities, it is hoped that international students will contribute to the academic community to foster cultural awareness for a better

cross-cultural and educational experience for all. While they bring economic, cultural, and linguistic benefits to their host countries, Chen (1996) observed that international students also have needs and certain expectations as they experience both cultural and linguistic challenges in their new learning environment in a new country.

During lectures, I further discovered a plurality of scholarly voices on diverse conceptions of multiculturalism. Some authors agree on *two* forms of multiculturalism, namely: conservative multiculturalism and liberal multiculturalism (McLaren, 1994; McLennan, 2001; Perry, 2002). Other authors (Banks, 1993; Coulthard, 2007; Dhamoon, 2004; Gorski, 2006; James, 2009; Kwak, 2017; Kymlicka, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1998; & Syed, 2010) have suggested that there are *four* types include the first two as well as what is known as post-multiculturalism and neoliberal multiculturalism. Some of the scholars subscribe to these notions of multiculturalism, while others critique “the gaps between what we *say* we do and what we *actually* do” (Hasinoff & Mandzuk, 2015, p. 14), in terms of both multiculturalism and multicultural education.

Beyond these diverse meanings, Critical Race Theory (Ladson-Billings, 1998), Critical Theory (Ciftci & Gurol, 2015; Skovsmose, 2005) and Critical Multiculturalism (McLaren, 1994; Nylund, 2006), and Anti-racist education (Mansfield & Kehoe, 1994; Thomas, 1987) offer greater critical insights that minimize skepticism and motivate one to start asking questions. These theories

were discussed during some of my lectures as alternative and critical perspectives on diversity and inclusion, while multiculturalism extends to *policy* for addressing the cultural diversity in the country.

It has been noted that multicultural education alongside positive anti-racist education material is supposed to remain the educational means for Canada to achieve “intergroup understanding harmony opportunity and equity” (Mansfield & Kehoe, 1994, p. 425). However, within my own learning experiences, these other theories were neither presented as alternatives, nor latest models that have replaced multicultural education in other institutions. So, my study pivots on what I observed in the Faculty of Education at a Western Canadian university. The status quo outside this case may be considered if the population is widened to include more than one institution.

In addition to the “academic challenges [and] culture shock” (Chen, 1996, p. 2) experienced by many international students, I struggled with the meaning of multiculturalism as a dominant Canadian ideology. The meaning turned out to be contextual in the new environment, and not just as new vocabulary to be learned. In fact, I have had to reconstruct my idea of ‘culture’ and embrace the meaning of multiculturalism as a dominant concept. I encountered a notion of culture that is broader and more inclusive in my new academic environment compared to what I had become accustomed to in my home country. Apart from capturing the new meaning, I also had to make some intellectual and attitudinal readjustments

to accommodate the concept's broader and more inclusive meaning in real life. These attest to the fact that international education, though a form of social mobility, has its problems (Kim & Kwak, 2019). According to Gay (1994), "if the attitudes, values, and knowledge that teachers have about culturally different students are improved, then the decisions they make and actions they take in planning and implementing programs will reflect these changes" (p. 26). Similarly, I believe that if university authorities become aware of the challenges experienced by international education graduate students and choose to react accordingly, it can equally impact the teaching of multicultural education.

However, my review of the literature in this area shows that the research to date has yet to hear the voices of international students on *their* conceptualizations of multiculturalism and multicultural education and how those conceptualizations compare to their preconceptions before arriving in Canada. I believe that we have also not heard enough about their lived experiences as they relate to these important all-encompassing and widely accepted concepts. On the other hand, it is curious that studies abound on the perspectives and attitudes of *student teachers* toward multicultural education (Gezer, 2018; Mujawamariya & Mahrouse, 2004; Mysore et. al, 2006; Schoorman & Bogotch, 2010a, 2010b; Syed, 2010; Yilmaz, 2016). These studies examine student teachers' attitudes toward issues of socio-cultural differences, similarities, and cultural interactions. The attitudes toward multicultural education center mainly on curriculum and

course content, and the attitude toward managing diversity within the multicultural education context. But why is there so much emphasis on student teachers' attitudes in these areas and not international graduate students, particularly those studying in education?

Purpose and Goal of Research

The purpose of this research is to understand how international education graduate students arrive at their conceptions of multiculturalism because of their preconceptions and their lived experiences while studying in a country that likes to pride itself on being so multicultural. The goal of the research was to unearth some personal stories and, in the process, look at similarities and differences in those conceptualizations. I will also address the implications for the teaching of multicultural education.

In the literature review, I critically explore the diverse notions of multiculturalism and multicultural education. More specifically, I explore conservative multiculturalism, liberal multiculturalism, post-multiculturalism, and neoliberal multiculturalism. I discuss the similarities and differences among these conceptualizations of multiculturalism and multicultural education. I also expound on critical multiculturalism, critical multicultural education, and the educational goals of multicultural education.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its quest to fill the perceived gap in literature on the voices and lived experiences of international students on *their* conceptualizations of multiculturalism and multicultural education. To achieve this, I have examined international education graduate students' conceptualizations of multiculturalism and multicultural education as they navigate their studies and other academic and social endeavours in Canada's and their university's multicultural milieu. Critical multiculturalism critiques the imposition of knowledge and meanings of concepts on students that ignores democratic education (Freire, 1970; McLaren, 1994; Nylund, 2006). The review of existing literature on international education graduate students' conceptualization of this dominant concept appears to leave a gap which this study hopes to address.

Education has been depicted as a project of colonization and de-colonization (Schoorman et al., 2019) as well as domination and liberation (McLaren, 2003). Gay (1994) has argued that “educators often engage in ‘miseducating practices’ because of their failure to understand the cultural characteristics of their ethnically, racially, socially, and linguistically diverse students” (p. 12). He equally believes that efforts to comply with certain learning practices “may lead to cultural adaptation, marginality, alienation, and isolation” (*Ibid.*, p. 10). Arshad-Ayaz (2011) has made similar claims, listing education as

one of the social problems that characterise the integration/alienation of racialized immigrant minorities in Canada. While these arguments may not have been directed particularly to the teaching and learning of multiculturalism and multicultural education among international students, I believe that there are potential applications to this study.

Hence, my research raises questions and arrives at answers on how multiculturalism as an Anglocentric assimilationist ideology and policy is conceptualized by a cross-section of international students. Part of the significance will be its contribution to the literature on how the study participants dialectically arrive at their own conceptualizations. It will add to any existing knowledge on whether there are pedagogical implications of teaching this concept to international education graduate students in a democratic or undemocratic manner and either recognizing or ignoring their preconceptions of the ideology. It uncovers the extent to which international education graduate students' conceptualizations of multiculturalism and multicultural education are shrouded in misconceptions. This among other benefits will encourage international students to be culturally sensitive teachers themselves who, according to Ladson-Billings (1998), will improve students' lives if, and when they become teachers in Canada.

Like the Hegelian dialectics of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis (Hegel, 1807), I uncover preconceived notions and how they are deconstructed by the

anti-thesis of lived experience and other epistemic factors such as scholarly arguments proposed in the educational literature on this topic. I discuss the reconstruction of ideas from the anti-thesis which then becomes the synthesis, and thus, a new conceptualization that considers both theory and practice. Through Critical Multicultural Education and critical thinking, this study hopes to interrogate societal norms to make well-informed decisions on salient social issues for effective societal transformation (Banks, 2004; Ciftci & Gurol, 2015). Therefore, I hope I add to the understanding of how international graduate students in education conceptualize multiculturalism and as such, I believe it has useful implications for the teaching of multicultural education.

Scope of the Study

To delineate the scope of this study, I have identified four dimensions of multiculturalism cutting across the various multicultural ideologies, policies, and attitudes. While there are sociological, psychological, political and philosophical dimensions of multiculturalism, the scope of this study focuses specifically on the sociological, the political, and philosophical dimensions. Without prejudice to the diverse meanings and perspectives of multiculturalism, the study limits the meaning of the concept to political policies aimed at managing diversity for a just and equitable society. These dimensions of multiculturalism are covered by the conceptual and theoretical frameworks of the study. But the psychological dimension is also addressed in international students' conceptualizations of the

multicultural self and their unique perceptions of the multicultural environment at the university.

Positionality

As I have already suggested, my personal experiences as an international graduate student in education constitute the primary motivation for this research. From that perspective, my own lived experiences and conceptualization of multiculturalism began with my own preconception of multiculturalism as being akin to inter-culturalism. That is, a mutual relationship among different cultures, different from the political notion of culture within Canadian multiculturalism which is intertwined with race and difference (James, 2009). My preconception was later deconstructed by the intersection of both my lived experiences and the scholarly arguments I have read and heard since I arrived.

This deconstruction, just as Derrida (2008) argues, does not imply a new meaning or truth but a method of reasoning and an open-ended process of questioning as an end. In other words, for me, multiculturalism became clearer both as a *term* describing cultural diversity and as a *policy* for cultural diversity in Canada. Unlike my preconceived notion of inter-culturalism, multiculturalism has been presented as official policy of the Government of Canada (Canadian Multiculturalism Policy, 1971), aimed at addressing cultural diversity in the country. My experience, then, has motivated me to study other international students' conceptions of multiculturalism and multicultural education.

Theoretical Framework

Any research study needs a clear underlying structure and framework that provides the lens through which the researcher studies the phenomenon and understands other problematic social interactions (Collins & Stockton, 2018; McMillan, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This refers to the theoretical framework of research, and in this study, I relied on Critical Multiculturalism Theory by Peter McLaren (1994). According to him, this critical framework “challenges meaning systems that impose attributes on the Other under the direction of sovereign signifiers and tropes” (McLaren, 1994, p, 107). Democratic education (Freire, 1970) allows the student a voice for personal critical input. And in favour of this, I agree with critical multiculturalism (McLaren, 1994; Nylund, 2006) that the imposition of knowledge on the student by the teacher ignores issues of power which impose meanings of concepts such as multiculturalism on international students. This framework therefore helped me to explore the implications of democratically considering international education graduate students’ conceptualizations of this dominant concept in the teaching of multicultural education within the Canadian context.

According to Nylund (2006), the major influence of the critical multiculturalism perspective is on the work of Paulo Freire (1970) and his passion for democratic education. So, McLaren (1994) was influenced by the critical pedagogy of Freire (1970). Part of his influence also came from the criticisms of

critical multicultural education against the social transformation project of liberal multiculturalism. The critique was based on the failure of the project to transform social and democratic change to critical multicultural education (Banks, 2015; Ciftci & Gurol, 2015; Gorski, 2000). Thus, McLaren developed his idea of critical multiculturalism “from the perspective of a resistance, a poststructuralist approach to meaning” (p. 98). He stressed the impact of language and representation in the meaning-making process and construction of identity.

The theory of Critical Multiculturalism according to him centres on the fact that “differences are produced according to the ideological production and reception of cultural signs,” (p. 104). Hence, he insisted on the notion of critical multiculturalism which contends that “representations of race, class, and gender are understood as the result of larger social struggles over signs and meanings” (p. 98). Contrary to the superficial transformations of liberal multiculturalism, he emphasizes the greater importance of transforming socio-cultural and institutional relations “in which meanings are generated” (*Ibid.*). He does not accept multicultural education’s “overly simplistic and naive view of the wider social and cultural power relations” (Nylund, 2006, p. 28). Like Freire (1970) who favoured dialogue and rejects the imposition of knowledge on the student by the teacher, Nylund (2006) agrees with McLaren (1994) that such views overlook those subtle forms of power play that impose meanings of concepts like multiculturalism on international students. And with this framework, I explored

the implications of discovering and recognizing international education graduate students' conceptualizations of the dominant concept of multiculturalism in the teaching of multicultural education within the Canadian context.

My preference for McLaren's critical multiculturalism as the theoretical framework for this study follows his view that:

Critical multiculturalism calls serious attention to the dominant meaning systems readily available to students and teachers, most of which are ideologically stitched into the fabric of Western imperialism and patriarchy. It challenges meaning systems that impose attributes on the Other under the direction of sovereign signifiers and tropes (McLaren, 1994, p, 107).

This raises the need for a democratic education setting where the student has a voice for personal critical input. For Sleeter and McLaren (1995), only critical multiculturalism will pursue such democracy of diverse voices and perspectives. And this is what will guarantee openness to a plurality of conceptualizations. I agree with McLaren (1994) that critical educators must not impose their intellectual positions on students. He argued that students' voices should not be drowned out while the teacher claims to speak for them. This may obscure the need to pay attention to international education graduate students' conceptualizations of multiculturalism and multicultural education, even though it would not alter the dominant meaning in that context.

Critical multiculturalism shares the influence of Freire's critical pedagogy project with other theories such as Critical Pedagogy (Sleeter & McLaren, 1995), and Critical Race Theory (CRT) (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Most importantly, critical multiculturalism demands an openness to the plurality of knowledge. Critical race theory encourages storytelling to analyze among other things, presuppositions (Delgado, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1998). And Freire's critical pedagogy opposes the univocal and singular approach to education that imposes dominant concepts, without first reviewing students' preconceptions. To achieve a transformative pedagogy for educational equality and social justice, Sleeter and McLaren (1995) agree that the personal experiences of students and teachers are particularly important factors.

Experience does not speak for itself but must be problematized to grasp its ideological interests (Giroux & McLaren 1992). Can the personal experiences of international graduate students in education and their conceptualizations of multiculturalism be exposed without a dedicated research study like this one? And how else can the ideological and other related issues that characterize such experiences be understood and addressed if they are not raised as research problems? Therefore, I have chosen a theoretical framework that will critically examine multiculturalism and part of that critique will include why international graduate education students' conceptualizations of the concept have been neglected up to now. It lends a voice to the intersection of both the socio-cultural

and the academic lived experiences of international education graduate students and is embedded within the scholarly arguments found in the literature on this subject.

Research Questions

My purpose in this study is to discuss how international graduate students in education conceptualize multiculturalism and multicultural education from their preconceptions to their educational and lived experiences. Based on McLaren's (1994) critical multiculturalism theory, I pose the following questions:

- i. What are the various meanings and scholarly conceptualizations of multiculturalism and multicultural education as found in the literature?
- ii. How do international graduate students in education conceptualize multiculturalism and multicultural education, from their preconceptions to their lived social and educational experiences? In other words, what are the similarities and differences between their preconceptions and their new conceptions, and what might the implications for their teaching be?
- iii. To what extent is McLaren's (1994) framework of Critical Multiculturalism relevant for understanding the perceptions of international graduate education students' conceptualizations of these concepts and for the teaching of multicultural education overall?

Considering the high population of international students in Canada (Guo 2016; Kim & Kwak, 2019), the prevalence of the issue of multiculturalism and multicultural education, and the gap in research on international students' conceptualizations of multiculturalism and multicultural education, I believe that this research is indeed pertinent. My desire to focus on international graduate students in education came from the fact that I am one of them and my personal experiences constitute the primary motivation for the research.

Therefore, I concentrated on the diverse conceptualizations of multiculturalism and multicultural education from the perspective of international graduate students in education. I also studied how the intersection of preconceptions and lived experiences influenced the conceptions of international students and the implications for their teaching. I am hopeful that the results of this study has provided relevant implications for the teaching of multicultural education in Canada and perhaps even abroad.

Chapter Two – Review of the Literature

This section critically reviews and analyzes the recent literature and scholarly dialogue on multiculturalism and multicultural education across journal articles and books mostly within the last decade. It responds to the research questions, beginning with: What are the various meanings and scholarly conceptualizations of multiculturalism and multicultural education as found in the literature? To further the discussion on international education graduate students' conceptualization of multiculturalism and multicultural education, and the implications for the teaching of multicultural education, the chapter covers the following broad topics: Multiculturalism, Canadian multiculturalism, and conceptualizations of multiculturalism. The conceptualizations of multiculturalism include:

- i. Conservative multiculturalism,
- ii. Liberal multiculturalism,
- iii. Post-multiculturalism, and
- iv. Neoliberal multiculturalism.

In this chapter, I dialogically draw out the similarities and differences between these conceptualizations of multiculturalism using the theoretical framework of critical multiculturalism. This has helped to address some similarities and differences between the preconceptions and new conceptualizations of international education graduate students about

multiculturalism and multicultural education following the second research question. Other topics discussed this chapter include: Multicultural education, critical multicultural education, educational goals of multicultural education, and a critical evaluation and conclusion.

Multiculturalism

The discourse on multiculturalism generally revolves around cultural, racial, ethnic, and socio-economic diversity issues; often including gender, sexual orientation, and religion (Aynur & Murad, 2016; Banks, 1993). The challenges of coping with diverse ethnic and cultural identities for national unity necessitated the formulation of policies aimed at managing and promoting equal participation of ethnic and cultural minorities, with equal access to common socio-economic resources in society (Ciftci & Gurol, 2015; Vertovec, 2010). And according to Ciftci and Gurol (2015), these policies have been identified as *multiculturalism*.

Sharing Kazancigil's (1994) thoughts, Ciftci and Gurol (2015) have defined multiculturalism as “a systematic and comprehensive response to cultural and ethnic diversity, with educational, linguistic, economic and social components and specific institutional mechanisms,” (p.1). In other words, multiculturalism is a government response to managing the socio-economic and other challenges of ethnic and cultural diversities and this involves developing and implementing multicultural policies that try to ensure social equality among the entire population.

Kymlicka (2010, p. 97) recalls that “ideas about the legal and political accommodation of ethnic diversity have been in a state of flux for the past 40 years around the world. A familiar way of describing these changes is in terms of the rise and fall of multiculturalism.” Historically, the development of multiculturalism dates back between the 1960s (Arshad-Ayaz, 2011; Kwak, 2018; Yilmaz, 2016), and 1970s to the mid-1990s (Kymlicka, 2010). Echoing Ciftci and Gurol (2015) on the origin of multicultural policies, Kwak (2018) notes that it became necessary in the 1960s to enact a policy to address the growing diverse settler population in the face of immigration policies and anti-discrimination agitation by racialized groups. Studies conducted by Guo (2011), Kymlicka (2010), and Yilmaz (2016) have shown that multiculturalism surfaced in the United States in the 1960s and in Canada in the 1970s. It later appeared in Australia in 1973, and Sweden in 1975.

Still on the early trends of multiculturalism, Kymlicka (2010, p. 97) attests that “from the 1970s to mid-1990s there was a clear trend across western democracies towards the increased recognition and accommodation of diversity through a range of multiculturalism policies and minority rights.” The concept was officially linked to the policies of Pierre Trudeau’s Liberal administration in Canada in 1971 regarding national minorities and immigrants, and their cultural, ethnic, and socio-political demands. Kwak (2018) wrote that in that year, multiculturalism became the policy “to accommodate French Canadian claims in

the form of the “two founding nations” construct and to symbolically recognize and promote Canada’s growing demographic diversity” (p. 4). According to Yilmaz (2016), in the U.S. in the 1960s, the concept grew from a civil movement to a political movement. As such, it brought about new socio-political, cultural, and educational meanings. And in Europe, Kastoryano (2018) points out that the concept aligns with other issues relevant to the countries’ structures and recognition of specific geographical and linguistic issues.

Multiculturalism is a complex and dynamic concept given the diverse perspectives that crisscross the various scholarly conceptualizations. Ghosh (1995) has presented it as an old and dynamic concept whose meaning is still evolving. In his words, it covers a lot of “social ideas and possibilities [but] is still hotly debated and highly controversial” (Ghosh, 1995, p. 233). For Gale and Staerkle (2019), it is a multifaceted concept, while Kastoryano (2018, p. 1) has called it, “the most controversial [of the] theoretical and normative approaches regarding the question of diversity and integration [...] to redefine citizenship and nationhood.” And as a descriptive concept and abstract ideology (Gale & Staerkle, 2019), multiculturalism acknowledges and values cultural diversity, fairness, and equality among groups and intergroup identities in society.

Multiculturalism is also conceptualized as “political theory and a public policy” by Gale and Staerkle (2019, p. 1), just as Taylor (1994) describes it as ‘the politics of recognition.’ As a policy, Gale and Staerkle (2019) maintain that

it cushions the shortfalls of members of subgroups “through affirmative action and minority rights” (*Ibid.*). The abstract perspective is less controversial while the concrete policy notions raise more debates and oppositions (Gale & Staerkle, 2019; Sears et al., 1999). These divergent views fall into two aspects of multiculturalism, as a set of policies, and practices aimed at creating a harmonious society in the face of ethnic and cultural identity issues, and other socio-economic diversities.

Despite these diverse meanings of multiculturalism and more, suffice it to note that scholars generally agree on its objectives of promoting the cultural integration of minorities, encouraging their active social participation in society, recognizing their cultural roots and diversities, and recompensing their historical disadvantages (Green & Staerkle, 2013; Kymlicka, 2001). But how far has multiculturalism been able to achieve these widely agreed-upon beliefs? Whether or not multicultural policies and practices properly address the inequalities, barriers, and social justice constraints of the interrelationship of these factors, especially among diverse cultural minorities, is the point of debate among scholars. This diversity of perspectives has given rise to other notions aside from politics and government policy perspectives. Also, some scholars (Gale & Staerkle, 2019; Kymlicka, 2001) have raised concerns about the extent to which the theory agrees with other perspectives, such as the individualistic worldview of liberal societies.

On this note, Verkuyten and Martinovic (2006) have noted that multiculturalism opposes the individualism of Western liberal societies which holds *individuals* culpable for their fate and personal achievements. So, multiculturalism focuses on the collective, rather than on the individual. Gale and Staerke (2019) argue that it recognizes the roles of certain external factors beyond the individual including shared disadvantages that plague common affiliations. Hence, multiculturalism is perceived as a multifaceted concept, ideology, and policy. As a descriptive concept, it focusses on cultural diversity in society. And as a prescriptive ideology and a collection of public policies, it ensures equitable management of diverse groups and their cultural diversities in society, especially a multicultural society like Canada. So, one may ask: How then do international graduate students in education conceptualize multiculturalism and multicultural education? It will be interesting to learn to what extent these multifaceted meanings and notions are reflected in their preconceptions and lived social and educational experiences.

Canadian Multiculturalism

Among other immigrant-receiving countries, Canada is noted as the forerunner of multicultural policy at the federal level. According to Ghosh (1995), “Canada was the first country to have a policy of multiculturalism at the federal level (1971) which was followed by an Act eighteen years later” (p. 231). Kastoryano (2018, p. 2) puts it thus:

The official definition of multiculturalism by the Royal Commission on Multiculturalism gave political legitimacy to the concept through the constitutional definition of multiculturalism used in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. This view was officially accepted as the fundamental characteristic of the Canadian State.

Thus, Canadian multiculturalism became an official policy of the government and was described as the politics of recognition of non-white, Indigenous and immigrant cultural groups. The document promised to support and preserve the cultural freedom of all individuals and the diverse ethnic groups in the country (Canadian Multiculturalism Policy, 1971; Coulthard, 2007). And suffice it to reiterate that Canadian multiculturalism existed since the late 1960s (Arshad-Ayaz, 2011; Kwak, 2018; Yilmaz, 2016.) According to Arshad-Ayaz (2011), the focus of the policy in Canada has proceeded from its earlier response to diversity and aims at managing differences and diversity issues at both provincial and national and levels.

Kymlicka (2010) has described multiculturalism as “a set of public policies [and] a political project [mediating] the relationship between ethnocultural minorities and the state” (p. 99). But does that policy also speak for Canada’s Indigenous people as well as immigrants? Kwak (2018) has described it as a symbolic recognition of cultural diversity, and “a flexible racial governmentality that enables white settler society to ignore calls for institutional change” (p. 4).

She believes that by implication, it fosters a power imbalance that marginalizes the Indigenous and other racialized groups in Canadian politics and development. Consequently, she observes that “these developments have white settlers remain normative political authorities that consult ‘others’ as part of their governing capacities” (*Ibid.*). Indigenous and other racialized groups in society are designated as subjects whose involvement in the power equation depends on the comfort of dominant political authorities.

Also, within party politics, multiculturalism in Canada is a political tool for racial realignment of neoliberal governance. This political instrument works to gain a voting advantage for the Liberal party from ethnic communities and to change the façade of the party by appealing to official bilingualism and inclusion of racialized minority politicians (Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21, 2019; Kwak, 2017). So, we can delineate as the political notion of multiculturalism in this context, all the arguments that portray multiculturalism in the light of government policies and politics to manage public affairs and the diverse minority cultures.

Contrary to political claims however, there is the notion that the liberalist notion of multiculturalism in Canada is currently a flexible resignification of multicultural discourse and logic toward a pattern of governing racialized populations. Scholars such as Coulthard (2007), Kymlicka (2010), and Kwak (2017) have accused it of sustaining the Anglo-white settler identity as supreme,

symbolically recognizing minorities while disregarding the visible impacts of racism, and the Indigenous peoples' struggle for self-determination for decades. While the government promises to assist diverse cultural groups and immigrants in preserving their cultural freedom and to recognize their cultural impact on Canadian society, Wayland (1997) has argued that the bane of multiculturalism is its political motivations. Hence, Li (1999) has labelled it as a mere *symbolic* recognition of diversity in the name of government policy.

Another major issue in Canadian multiculturalism is the way culture is conceptualized. Kymlicka (2010) has depoliticized how culture is intertwined with racism, racialization, colonialism, and imperialism in the Canadian context and James (2009) has insisted that 'cultural differences' is the euphemistic code for race, used in masking racism in the Canadian state. He has further argued that the notion of culture in multiculturalism which focuses on differences shields the racial dichotomies in society. But Kymlicka (2010) believes that multiculturalism aims at fostering relations of democratic citizenship as it relates to issues of ethnic and racial diversity.

So far, from my vantage point as an international graduate student in education, the concept of multiculturalism seems well articulated and scholarly defined. However, to what extent do educators ask their students whether the meaning of multiculturalism being taught differs from students' own preconceptions? One may also wonder whether the meaning in theory

corresponds with students' lived social and educational experiences. But also, the question may arise as to why their perspectives on multiculturalism and multicultural education are important at all. Why, in fact, should teachers care about what their students think? This should become clearer in the discussion on critical multiculturalism and critical multicultural education below.

Conceptualizations of Multiculturalism

Thus far, I have tried to define and provide different perspectives of multiculturalism in general, and Canadian multiculturalism and I have limited my discussion to the political and policy conceptions of multiculturalism for managing diversity. I also noted in the previous chapter that there are diverse scholarly conceptions of multiculturalism that plague the claims of the political and policy conceptions. To answer the research question that seeks to better understand the various meanings and scholarly conceptualizations of multiculturalism and multicultural education, this subsection will explore the following: i) conservative multiculturalism, ii) liberal multiculturalism, iii) post-multiculturalism, and iv) neoliberal multiculturalism. After discussing each of them individually, I will identify some of their similarities and differences in the evaluation and conclusion of this chapter.

Conservative Multiculturalism

Conservative multiculturalism refers to “the traditional multicultural perspective” (Hopkins-Gillespie, 2011, p. 2) which believes in the supremacy of

Western Anglo-centric culture as the standard of comparison (Syed, 2010). It leans toward limited political reforms that are not opposed to reason and it acknowledges a hierarchy of authority in the community (Skorupski, 2015). Hopkins-Gillespie (2011) has identified the objective as the integration of diverse populations into society. This is an assimilationist agenda into the institutionalized and dominant ‘Western-centric’ universal culture.

The assimilation believed to be at the core of conservative multiculturalism is criticized for its failure to alter the power and privilege structures of society which favour one group and marginalize others. Rather, part of its intention is to “marginalize and dismiss the different experiences of students/clients of colour and avoid a power analysis of institutional forms of racism” (Nylund, 2006, p. 29). One might argue then that the conservative approach to multiculturalism is not a significant reform of government policies in recognition of diversity.

From this traditional perspective of conservative multiculturalism (Hopkins-Gillespie, 2011), therefore, culture and the universe are fixed and absolute entities. In his view, it is tolerant of inequalities but welcomes other cultures within certain ethnocentric limitations. Its form of cultural diversity is fundamentally assimilationist in nature (Nylund, 2006) as it positions and reinforces white hegemony like an “invisible norm” for grading other ethnicities (McLaren, (1994, p. 49). A feature that many would say distinguishes Canada and the U.S. is that the U.S. expects newcomers to assimilate to a much greater

extent than in Canada where newcomers are encouraged to retain their distinct cultural identities. Syed (2010) also observes that diversity within conservative multiculturalism is perceived as a deficiency, and assimilation into the Anglo-centric culture is projected as the solution to class differences.

The idea of conservative multiculturalism as it has been discussed thus far then revolves around pro-traditional political attitudes toward “values, identity, and citizenship” (Karim, 2008, p. 60) in society. Any form of dynamism or liberal alteration that does not align with reason, and which undermines the hierarchy of authority in the community (Skorupski, 2015) unsettles the conservative norms. “Societal integration and disintegration” are essential in multicultural policies, says Karim (2008, p. 60). But while it facilitates the integration of immigrants into Canadian society, conservative multiculturalists may see it as “serving to unravel the country’s social fabric” (*Ibid.*). Hence, integration carries an assimilationist agenda (Nylund, 2006) that reinforces the dominant “invisible norm” (McLaren, 1994, p. 49) of hegemony and social imbalance in virtually all sectors of society.

Liberal Multiculturalism

While conservatism appeals to tradition against modernity, Skorupski (2015) explains that liberalism promotes modernity and Western civilization. Dhamoon (2004 & 2006) has made the case that liberal multiculturalism in Canadian political thought places a premium on the diversity of cultures, thanks

to the influences of Kymlicka (1995) and Taylor (1992). In her view, “Liberal multiculturalism has firmly situated ‘culture’ in the context of relations between dominant groups and minority cultures. The effect of this has been significant in locating the discourse of identity/difference in mainstream political theory” (Dhamoon, 2004, p.1). On one hand, it acknowledges diversity through its inclination toward pluralism and neutrality in the public sphere when necessary (Dhamoon, 2006; Loobuyck, 2005). On the other hand, however, it limits the scope and depth of the conceptualization of culture “to ethnicity, nationhood, and linguistic difference without addressing other modes of difference or intersections of difference” (Dhamoon 2004, *Ibid.*). Hence, culture remains a nomenclature attributed to the ‘other’ (Dhamoon, 2006), whose limited conceptualization defeats its effects on the notion of culture.

Notwithstanding liberal multiculturalism’s tendencies toward pluralism and diversity, Kymlicka (1995) has observed that it identifies populations according to groups, and their rights as group rights. Liberalists believe that multiculturalism is an effective mechanism for managing diversity (Kymlicka (2010), a pattern of governing racialized populations (Coulthard, 2007; Kwak, 2017; Kymlicka, 2010). This “management” of diversity resembles that of conservative multiculturalism which fosters the Anglo-centric settler identity as supreme, symbolically recognizing minorities, but disregarding the visible impacts of racism, and the Indigenous peoples’ struggle for self-determination for

decades (Coulthard, 2007; Kwak, 2017; Kymlicka, 2010). According to Dhamoon (2004), it disregards multiple forms of power and sees power as “one-directional and uni-dimensional” (p. 15). While overlooking racist, patriarchal, and sexist systems of meaning-making (Kymlicka, 1995), this variant of multiculturalism believes that justice demands that cultural minorities be assisted in their involuntary external burdens – the religious and state demands on persons.

Apart from the issue of whiteness as the silent norm for racial and ethnic comparisons, liberal multiculturalism equally creates racial identities that maintain perpetual differences among people, says Perry (2002). While Nylund (2006) acknowledges some major contributions of liberal multiculturalism, he argues that its mode of managing diversity is essentialist in nature, it overlooks social inequalities and by implication, it breeds stereotyping. Kymlicka (2010) on the other hand, defends that “in the long-term, the only viable response to the presence of large numbers of immigrants is some form of liberal multiculturalism” (p. 109). He insists that its policies actively foster mutual understanding and respect which comfortably receives immigrants in mainstream institutions. But as Hasinoff and Mandzuk (2015, p. 14) opined, it depends on the extent to which these ideas mirror “what we *actually* do” when it comes to implementation.

Post-multiculturalism

According to Gozdecka et al. (2014), global anxiety and scholarly agreement have long predicted “the end of multiculturalism” (p. 52). This is due to issues of limited respect and tolerance for minorities, discrimination, and racism both in Canada and other multicultural societies (Vertovec, 2010). These issues have increasingly been ignored during the overt recognition of cultural diversity for which post-multiculturalism is known. And the agitation has yielded a broad consensus among scholars and policies on the advent of a ‘post-multicultural’ era (Banting & Kymlicka, 2015; King, 2005; Kymlicka, 2010; Vertovec, 2010).

Post-multiculturalism, according to Vertovec (2010) therefore, emerged intending to promote the “recognition of diversity and the maintenance of collective national identities” (p. 83). This produced the post-multiculturalists’ notion of multiculturalism as “a feel-good celebration of ethnocultural diversity” [centred on the] 3S model of multiculturalism in Britain – samosas, steel drums and saris” (Kymlicka, 2010, p. 98). This idea of post-multiculturalism seemingly ignores the Indigenous population while focusing invariably on immigrant groups whose external cultures seem more noticeable and are celebrated. These recognitions and cultural celebrations according to James (2009) are momentary, and never alter the systems, awareness, and relations that have created and

sustained the structures of racism for decades. But is that the true picture of post-multiculturalism?

Kymlicka (2010) and Vertovec (2010) have opposed what they have seen as the misinterpretation of multiculturalism which gave birth to post-multiculturalism. Kymlicka (2010) believes that “the post-multiculturalist critique is largely off-target, primarily because it misidentifies the nature and goals of the multiculturalism policies and programmes that have emerged over the past 40 years during the rise of multiculturalism” (p. 104). He counters the critique that post-multiculturalism is more attracted to immigrant cultures than Indigenous cultural celebrations. The view of multiculturalism solely as “the apolitical celebration of ethnic folk customs” (p. 102) he argues, refers only to immigrant groups, and does not amount to ignoring Indigenous peoples’ cultures. Kymlicka has claimed that not only does it place significance on their traditional lands, culture, and religion, but it equally renders them economically and politically significant. He has stated that:

All three familiar patterns of multiculturalism, therefore – for indigenous peoples, national minorities and immigrant groups – combine cultural recognition, economic redistribution and political participation. In this respect, the post-multiculturalist critique that multiculturalism ignores economic and political inequality is simply off the mark (p. 102).

But he does not deny the fact that multiculturalism policies have known about existing inequalities well enough to resolve them if the policies so intended. For instance, Vertovec (2010) attests that it reverses the early-twentieth-century form of assimilation. Without renouncing the dominant recognition of diversity, it pursues a strong sense of common national identity alongside the recognition of cultural diversity in assimilation.

In defence of post-multiculturalism, Vertovec (2010) explains that it reforms “the strong emphasis on conformity, cohesion, national identity and dominant cultural values, in practically all the contexts in which such new policies are being implemented” (p. 91). The reform now tasks immigrants to personally accept the necessity and importance of diversity as part of the desire to belong and settle in a new society. But like other public policies, Kymlicka (2010) argues that they also possess adverse and unforeseen effects that may have accidentally “obscured or exacerbated inequalities or weakened the welfare state” (p. 103), despite (or) depending on the political intentions of the policies and state actors. And as multiculturalism has evolved, Gozdecka et al. (2014) have seen a link between the primary characteristics of post-multiculturalism and neoliberalism.

Neoliberal Multiculturalism

The notion of multiculturalism shifted to neoliberalism in the early 1980s as a political ideology and idealist thinking dominating government policies and

thought in Canada. As an ideology, Walsh (2011, p. 861) describes neoliberalism as “a series of political-economic and moral changes derived from the marketization of societal and governmental arrangements.” This was the kind of political and idealist thought dominant within government policies and politics. Neoliberalist “moralization of freedom” was critiqued by Gozdecka et al. (2014, p. 60) as giving birth to novel forms of racism, perhaps including some tenets of multiculturalism.

In 2013, Kymlicka wrote that “the defining feature of neoliberal multiculturalism is the belief that ethnic identities and attachments can be assets to market actors and hence that they can legitimately be supported by the neoliberal state” (p. 109). Gozdecka et al. (2014) equally raised the issue of commodifying citizenship and the moralization of freedom as the nature of neoliberalism. In his observation, Kymlicka (2013) has stated that the tendency to create effective market actors and competitive economies are fundamental aspects of neoliberalism. He believes that this should not be supportive of multiculturalism. Notably, the ideology was initially opposed to the multicultural transformation of societies, ethnic relation structures and the politics of multiculturalism for protecting the identity of those relations. Later, neoliberals uncovered something useful in multiculturalism “that could be built upon” (Kymlicka 2013, p. 109). Contrary to the earlier notion of multiculturalism “as a pathology of the interventionist welfare state,” they discovered some useful

“elective affinities” with the potential for “neoliberal multiculturalism.” Hence, ‘neoliberal multiculturalism’ and its novel ideas of multiculturalism in Canada have taken root.

This shift in perspective came to define and illuminate the ideological framework of Canada’s political climate toward individualism, restructuring, and market-based policies during the said era. Walsh (2011, p. 871) revealed that through an “economic rationale of migration policy” in multiculturalism, neoliberalism impacts on neoliberal multiculturalism. This shifted the focus of multiculturalism from its commitments to the welfare and integration of the diverse immigrant society.

Neoliberalist multiculturalism does not place prominence over certain individual cultures and ignores the rest as was alleged in post-multiculturalism. Rather, its politics of recognition in Canada classify both the Indigenous, non-white, and other racialized cultures alike, as ‘others’ who are consulted based on utility (Kwak 2018; Kymlicka, 2010). Hence, Coulthard (2007) suggests that Indigenous societies need to evolve some critical self-recognition which could empower them to de-subjectify themselves from the politics of recognition and seek a form of freedom that would not replicate their present form of oppression.

So, ethnic identities and attachments are marketing assets in neoliberalist multiculturalism, says Kymlicka (2012). He notes that “ethnicity is a source of social capital” (p. 110) that can be promoted by the state through legitimizing

ethnic minorities as “partners” for the neoliberal state. Contrary to social liberalism, nationalism, and equality, it is more concerned about “immigrant entrepreneurship, strategic cosmopolitanism, and transnational commercial linkages and remittances” (Kymlicka, 2012, p. 112). But despite such lofty goals, socio-economic issues related to poor economic structures and distribution, issues of inequality, unemployment, and labour rights continue to exist.

Neoliberalism shares some features with post-multiculturalism and conservative multiculturalism. About post-multiculturalism, Gozdecka et al. (2014, p. 59) has suggested that “the paradoxical tendencies of post-multiculturalism become particularly manifest when viewed from the perspective of neoliberal governmentality.” This mirrors Foucault’s (2007) discourse on population, government, and security which he saw as a ‘problem of government.’ Using the neologism of *governmentality*, he focused on the mode of governance and the actors aimed at managing and controlling populations through what Foucault (2007) called the constant interplay of power between the authority and the object.

Between neoliberal multiculturalism and conservative multiculturalism, Kwak (2018, p. 8) has written that a “conservative definition of multiculturalism could be achieved through the neo-liberalization of multicultural discourse.” This tactic deploys neoliberal logics in redefining multiculturalism to govern racialized populations. Thus, neoliberalist multiculturalism in line with the

dominant trend of other notions of multiculturalism is not an exception in making the Anglo-white settler identity normative and in reserving the privilege of power for a few. It also white-washes social justice issues that favour the privileged percentage of the population with power and marginalizes others.

Critical Multiculturalism

In Chapter One, I discussed Critical Multiculturalism as the theoretical framework of the study. Based on different scholarly views (Nylund, 2006; Shih, 2018; Sleeter & McLaren, 1995), I infer that critical multiculturalism is a critical approach to multiculturalism aimed at addressing structural and institutional inequalities in modern educational institutions within an increasingly multicultural society. I also deployed the same critical framework to examine the diverse conceptualizations of multiculturalism.

One may ask: To what extent is McLaren's (1994) framework of Critical Multiculturalism relevant for understanding the perceptions of international graduate education students' conceptualizations of these concepts and for the teaching of multicultural education overall? This critical framework also assists in asserting the importance of their perspectives on multiculturalism and multicultural education.

Following McLaren (1994), the dialectical conceptualization of multiculturalism and multicultural education by international education students is a form of 'construction of meaning' within their own identity. Within the

dialogical nature of critical multiculturalism and critical pedagogy, there is the need to critically explore the extent to which their preconceptions and lived experiences may influence their conceptualizations of a major concept like multiculturalism. Deploying critical multiculturalism, it becomes necessary to ask some critical questions. This includes finding out from international education students whether their university teachers dialogically accommodate their conceptualizations of an important concept like multiculturalism, or whether the dominant concept is univocally imparted to them.

McLaren's Critical Multiculturalism Framework

McLaren (1994) has reasoned that the “representations of race, class, and gender are understood as the result of larger social struggles over signs and meanings” (p. 98). Such diversity flows from “the ideological production and reception of cultural signs” (p. 104). This understanding is of great importance for the transformation of socio-cultural and institutional relations where “meanings are generated” (*Ibid.*). Nylund (2006) has commented on McLaren’s (1994) critique of multicultural education over “an overly simplistic and naive view of the wider social and cultural power relations” (p. 28) which characterize the political and policy conceptualizations of multiculturalism. Hence, critical multiculturalism captures most of the basic features that characterize critical thinking.

Bailin et al. (1999) delineated three basic features of critical thinking based on educators' understanding. It aims at "making up one's mind about what to believe or do." The thinker seeks "to fulfil standards of adequacy and accuracy appropriate to the thinking." And "the thinking fulfils the relevant standards to some threshold level" (p. 287). Hence, it covers the thinker, the thought, and its purpose. In a related manner, critical multiculturalism in its purpose seeks to justify multicultural beliefs based on clear relations between statements in the construction of meaning and identity (McLaren, 1994). The critical multiculturalist is open to a plurality of knowledge which promotes dialogue in critical pedagogy (McLennan, 2001) and the plurality of voices in a democratic education classroom (Freire, 1970). From this emerges a conceptualization of multiculturalism that has critical thinking at its core. It elevates critical multiculturalism beyond the crisscross of political and policy perspectives to a critical enquiry into the claims of multiculturalism.

Beyond the conceptualizations of multiculturalism that revolve around politics and government policies, critical multiculturalism problematizes multiculturalism's "dominant meaning systems" (McLaren, 1994, p, 107) to which educators and learners are exposed. Other conceptualizations of multiculturalism ideologically weave these normative meanings into "Western imperialism and patriarchy" he says. On the contrary, critical multiculturalism, in

McLaren's (1994) view, opposes dominant meaning frameworks that hide under power privileges to push dominant and normative attributes on others.

Critical multiculturalism acknowledges the democracy of diverse voices and perspectives in multiculturalism (Sleeter & McLaren, 1995), hence, the importance of international education graduate students' perspectives on multiculturalism and multicultural education. Such freedom of expression and reasoning is necessary when teaching a major concept to new students; one which may either be new to them or that assumes a new meaning to them. Alongside critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970; Shor, 1993; Sleeter & McLaren, 1995) and critical race theory (Ciftci & Gurol, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 1998), critical multiculturalism insists on this openness to the plurality of knowledge and deploys the same in multicultural education as we shall see later in critical multicultural education. What the students think may not alter the meaning of the dominant concept. But the extent their teachers understand or misunderstand what they think will arguably impact on the teaching of multicultural education.

Multicultural Education

Like the varied conceptualizations of multiculturalism, multicultural education shares similar difficulties in terms of a lack of consensus among scholars who work in this area. Most schools and the press according to Banks (1993), narrow it to curriculum reform on ethnic, gender, and other cultural content. This makes it a transformational project of school curriculum and

practices aimed at ensuring equal educational opportunities and social mobility for all students despite their diverse ethno-social backgrounds, social classes, and genders (Banks, 1993; Gorski, 2009). Its major factors include the interactions between race, ethnicity, class, gender, and exceptionality. Banks (1993) has argued that the difficulty in achieving a consensus notion among scholars lies in the sensitive nature of these major factors. This sounds different from the diverse ideas of multiculturalism that sometimes expose the gap between what is *said* and what is done in the name of multiculturalism.

Ghosh (1995) noticed that “in societies where education has been monocultural and assimilationist, multicultural education is a recognition of ethnocultural diversity, and a response to the equality issue in modern democracies” (p. 232). But acknowledging diversity should not be limited to the curriculum alone. Gorski (2000) talked about a holistic self-transformation of the teacher, the schools and schooling, and society in general as the transformation goals of multicultural education. Ciftci and Gurol (2015) have offered a definition that also incorporates elements of the democratic education of Freire (1970) discussed earlier. They present a different and critical perspective on multicultural education, not just as curriculum reformation but more importantly, as a democratic approach to teaching and learning. Ciftci & Gurol, (2015) have stated that:

Multicultural education is an approach to teaching and learning, based upon democratic values that foster cultural pluralism; in its most comprehensive form, it is a commitment to achieving educational equality, developing curricula that build understanding about ethnic groups, and combating oppressive practices (p. 11).

These complimentary notions portray a combination of the diverse conceptualizations of multiculturalism in multicultural education: both the political and policy perspectives, and the notion of critical multiculturalism. Despite the disparity of scholarly voices, however, Banks (1993, p. 3) has claimed that there is “a high level of consensus about its aims and goals.” And in whichever way it may be conceptualized, he also insists that the project must involve institutional change.

Historically, multicultural education emerged from the United States and has surfaced in Canada, Australia, and Britain. Schoorman and Bogotch (2010a) commenting on Banks (2004) noted that its emergence in the United States was “in the aftermath of the Civil Rights Movement, with content integration, prejudice reduction and equity pedagogy as key dimensions of educational practice aimed at redressing the historical marginalization of non-dominant ethnic groups” (p. 79). But it first became federal policy in Canada in 1971, and became an Act eighteen years later, says Ghosh (1995). According to him, “the impact of multicultural policy in education has varied widely across Canada because the

legislation is federal, while education is a provincial responsibility” (pp. 231-232). However, Schoorman and Bogotch (2010a) observed that its attention has currently shifted from cultures and histories to broader issues of power, with roots in critical pedagogy and social justice.

The impacts of critical pedagogy and critical multiculturalism on multicultural education can be seen in Gorski’s definition of multicultural education. In 2010, he wrote:

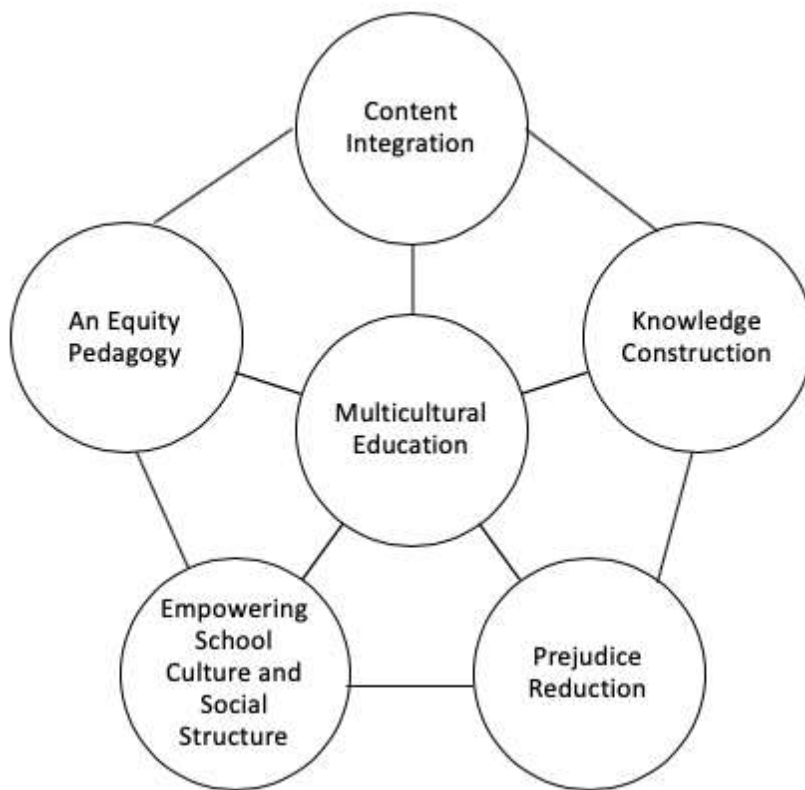
Multicultural education is a progressive approach for transforming education that holistically critiques and addresses current shortcomings, failings, and discriminatory practices in education. It is grounded in ideals of social justice, education equity, and a dedication to facilitating educational experiences in which all students reach their full potential as learners and as socially aware and active beings, locally, nationally, and globally (para. 6).

This definition outlines issues of policy and practice, a critique of the status quo and a critical quest for radical novelty that changes society by properly educating the individual to achieve full educational and societal goals. And Gorski, (2000) opined that multicultural education considers the school to provide the basis for transforming society for social harmony. Hence, multicultural education, he says, aims at affecting social change.

Banks (1993) discussed five dimensions of multicultural education, namely: i) content integration, ii) knowledge construction process, iii) prejudice reduction, iv) equity pedagogy, and v) empowering school culture and social structure.

Figure 1

James Banks' Five Dimensions of Multicultural Education (Erbas, 2019, p. 144).



According to Erbas (2019, *Ibid.*), these five dimensions “cover the many facets of multicultural education.” On the first two dimensions, Banks (1993, p. 7) wrote:

Content integration [...] describes any approach that is used to integrate content about racial and cultural groups into the curriculum.

The knowledge construction process describes a method in which teachers help students to understand how knowledge is created and reflects the experiences of various ethnic and cultural groups.

The prejudice reduction dimension of multicultural education focuses on how teachers assist students in building positive attitudes toward racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity (Banks & Banks, 2010). Equity pedagogy ensures that teachers across all disciplines modify their teaching methodology to enhance “the academic achievement of students from diverse racial, cultural, gender, and social-class groups” (Banks & Banks, 2010, p. 22). Lastly, according to Banks (1993), the concept of an empowering school culture and social structure seeks to establish a school culture that serves all students, particularly those from diverse ethnic and cultural groups. This involves the restructuring of the school culture and organization to “promote gender, racial, and social-class equity” (Banks & Banks, 2010, p. 22) among students.

Banks (1993) asserts that these five dimensions are “conceptually distinct but highly interrelated” (p. 7). They impact the school one way or another as part of cultural or social order. He has critiqued the rather narrow conception of multicultural education as merely “activities for special days and occasions” (Banks 1993, p. 37) in the post-multiculturalist notion of multilateralism. Instead,

he has advocated for a more profound understanding and implementation of the concept for effective and meaningful reforms in the educational context.

Assessing the transformational project of multicultural education, Ladson-Billings (1998) and Gorski (2006) have critiqued the approach of conservative curriculum transformation as a failure. According to them, it failed to provoke students to question the contradictions of American ideals and lived realities (Ladson-Billings, 1998). It fell prey to the post-multiculturalist notion of interpersonal relations and celebration of diversity (Gorski, 2006), and the trivial and superficial celebrations of diversity in the name of multicultural education (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Multicultural education is also accused of not demonstrating an understanding the dynamics of the wider structural oppression in structures sidelined by liberal multiculturalists (McLaren, 1994). As it grapples with its inability to cover issues of equity and justice, race, and racism in the educational context, it is believed that the true form of equity and respect for Canadian diversity rests with a pedagogy that would raise and address the issues, realities and impacts of race and racisms.

As multicultural education focuses on curriculum reformation, Leonardo (2002) has argued that the cultural adaptations in the official school curriculum are part of multiculturalism projects using education to sustaining dominant white supremacist ideologies. Meanwhile, Ladson-Billings' Critical Race Theory constitutes one of the major critical approaches to multiculturalism. It has helped

to globalize education by adapting non-white cultures, partnering “with critical race theories to arrive at the racialized core of knowledge production in schools” (p. 46). But according to Leonardo, whiteness and racialization still occupy central positions in many national educational curricula. While scholars agree that the conservatives’ notion of multicultural education is ‘watering down’ traditional schooling, the author calls on multicultural educators to strengthen their re-politicization of multicultural education toward the missing understanding and experience between good will and the poor impact on diverse minority students.

Critical Multicultural Education

Critical multiculturalism, as earlier established, analyzes different approaches to multicultural education. Apart from exceeding the study of cultural differences and building human relations, it covers issues of historical, economic, and sociopolitical marginalization of groups. And while multicultural education aims at “educational equality [and equal opportunity to] educational success and mobility” (Banks, 1993, p. 3), critical multicultural education addresses the “inequitable structures” (Schoorman et al., 2019, p. 1) which may militate against the attainment of the above goals of multicultural education.

Western education traditionally is a tool of the multiculturalism project whose inequitable structures pay lip service to the promises of educational equality and equitable social mobility. In their dialectical perspective on

education as colonizing/de-colonizing, Schoorman et al. (2019, p. 1) explain that “critical multicultural education recognizes education as potentially colonizing and oppressive.” By implication, education aims at impacting the dominant supremacist ideologies, norms, and applications on students undemocratically (Banks, 2004; Ciftci & Gurol, 2015; Leonardo, 2002). But critical multicultural education according to Schoorman et al. (2019), promotes education as “a liberatory process of critical conscientization” (*Ibid.*). Thus, according to them, one becomes conscious of the power play in policy and practice and becomes aware of one’s roles in promoting them or otherwise when the critical multicultural education paradigm is applied.

Ciftci and Gurol (2015) write that “transformation is a term at the center of critical multicultural education” (p. 11). They relate the fundamental goal of multicultural education which is the transformation for social and democratic change (Banks, 2015; Gorski, 2000) to critical multicultural education. For them, critical multicultural education ensures this social transformation by helping to institute, apply, and foster social justice and equality. Commenting on McLaren (1998), they argue that this critical perspective on multicultural education perceives teaching from a critical multicultural standpoint as questioning the social structure critically from a social justice point of view. As multicultural education demands a critical review of all aspects of teaching and learning (Gorski, 2000), the critical multiculturalist curriculum, according to McLaren

(1994), ensures that teachers discuss how various students are subjected to ideologies and discourses in the politics of signification. This openness to discourses resonates with the critical multiculturalists' approach, and in the democratic education of Freire's (1970) critical pedagogy. It raises the importance of teachers to democratically allow students to give voice to their thoughts in class. This includes the preconceptions of international education graduate students on multiculturalism and multicultural education, and their latter conceptualizations.

For critical multicultural education to achieve democratic education where minority students can approach ideologies and discourses with openness, critical theorists (Freire, 1970, 1998; McLaren, 1994) have advocated for a serious social change and institutional change in the school system. For instance, Ciftci and Gurol (2015) have called for a holistic critical evaluation of social and educational institutions for this critical transformation project of multicultural education to be effective and functional. They argue that since "education is carried out through teachers" (Ciftci & Gurol, 2015, p. 2), that they need not be left out in the critical transformation; otherwise, their competencies within the critical multicultural education practice will vary.

The theory of critical multicultural education according to Ciftci and Gurol (2015) broadens the liberal multiculturalist educational program and teaching and stresses the importance of structural change. They maintain that it supplies the

“cultural framework and context as to how unequal power relations are maintained at a structural and institutional level in daily interactions” (p. 3). Bridging these inequitable structural and institutional relations would mean allowing more openness to students’ views, conceptualizations as well as a more active epistemological participation in a democratic educational setting.

Critical multicultural education also encourages cultural diversity and *intercultural* students (Ciftci & Gurol, 2015); that is, students who are competent in navigating across cultures. It also promotes pedagogical programs and procedures, social relations, and school democratic initiatives (McLaren, 2003). Aside from the dialectical perspective on education as “colonizing/decolonizing” (Schoorman et al., 2019, p. 1), McLaren (2003) has also presented similar contradictions in analyzing schools as “sites of *both* domination and liberation [which] reproduce class relationships but also can serve as a site where these class relationships can be contested” (p. 132). Within this contradiction lies the future of critical pedagogy that will revolutionize the school system. Ciftci and Gurol (2015), re-echoing popular scholarly opinions, note that the institutional changes needed in multicultural education projects imply a comprehensive critical evaluation of institutions and education in all respects. Thus, the inequitable structures that likely stifle the cultural diversity and intercultural identity of students, educational opportunities, social relations and

so on, will be properly addressed in the educational and institutional transformations.

This holistic and critical evaluation of social and educational institutions calls for critical thinking and transformation skills among teachers, says Gorski, (2010). For Ciftci and Gurol (2015), teachers need to develop social, personal, and professional competencies to be able to rise to the task of critical multicultural education. Thus, “the world must change,” said Hopkins-Gillespie (2011, p. 4), if radical and multiculturally competent teachers critically commit to denouncing the subjectivities that hinder the critical transformation agenda of critical multicultural education.

Educational goals of Multicultural Education

So far, multiculturalism has been identified as a policy, principle, concept, and phenomenon associated with socio-cultural diversity and other differences within the concept of culture and cultural coexistence, which enriches and reforms society (Banks & Banks, 2010; Parekh, 2000). Multicultural education, according to Yilmaz (2016), provides the *medium* through which these issues of diversity are learned and internalized. He has defined multicultural education as “an intellectual concept, a reformist movement and a process [whose] basic idea is that all students have the equality of opportunities in education without being subjected to racial, ethnic, social class, or gender discrimination” (p. 2). This

captures the reformist project popular in various works of J. A. Banks, as the primary objective of multicultural education.

According to Banks, (1993), the reformation project is central to the goals of multicultural education. He has written that:

A major goal of multicultural education, as stated by specialists in the field, is to reform the school and other educational institutions so that students from diverse racial, ethnic, and social-class groups will experience educational equality. Another important goal of multicultural education [...] is to give both male and female students an equal chance to experience educational success and mobility (p. 3).

Banks observed that the level of the influences of the interactions of race, class, and gender on education has increasingly agitated the minds of multicultural education theorists. Although the different theorists lay varied emphasis on these variable factors, he has underscored “an emerging consensus about the aims and scope of multicultural education” among them (Banks, 1993, p. 4) in the early stages.

Another important educational goal of multicultural education is to train students “for societal critical thinking and societal change and improve their decision-making capabilities” (Ciftci & Gurol, 2015, p.11). This is achieved by involving students in critical decision making on issues of social importance, encouraging them to take initiatives, engage actively in pursuing social change

and democratic values. The primary commitment of multicultural educators is the education of the citizenry and leaders for harmony in a characteristically diverse society, said Banks (2015). Multicultural education constitutes the process and movement for the educational reform that will enable these goals to be realized. And critical multicultural education offers the critical thinking component geared toward effective societal change. As part of its goal, it seeks to instill critical decision-making capabilities on students as members of society.

Further, Ciftci and Gurol (2015) have maintained that multicultural education ensures that this transformation, especially in social justice and equality, is related to teachers first, and then to educational institutions, education systems, and society, more broadly. This belief is buttressed by Gorski (2010) for whom this underlying goal involves the self-transformation of the teacher, the transformation of schools and schooling, and that of society. To achieve these transformation goals, Ciftci and Gurol (2015) insisted that this transformation requires the following: “student-centered education, multicultural curriculum, multicultural learning environment, culture proper education material, supportive school and class environment and more fair and constant assessment and evaluation” (p.11). According to him, this is a metaphor for societal transform.

This resonates with Gorski (2010) who believes that achieving equality and social justice at the school level permeates society, “as the transformation of schools necessarily transforms a society that puts so much stock in educational

attainment, degrees, and test scores” (para. 9). He reasons that only when the metaphor of self and school transformation leads to the transformation of society in social justice and equity can we claim to have fully realized the goal of multicultural education. And he insists that this demands the possession of critical thinking and transformation skills by teachers.

Conclusion

Establishing and analysing some of the basic perspectives and conceptualizations of multiculturalism and multicultural education has produced new insights into the conceptualization of multiculturalism. Primarily, it is “a political theory and a public policy” (Gale & Staerke, 2019, p. 1) necessitated by the exigencies of ethnic and cultural identity, and other socio-economic diversity issues in a multicultural society. For my part, I have come to understand Canadian multiculturalism as an official government response to this regard, with policies and practices that promise a harmonious society while managing and promoting equitable participation of ethnic and cultural minorities, and access to common socio-economic resources of society.

However, some scholars (Coulthard, 2007; Kwak, 2017; Kymlicka, 2010) have accused multiculturalism of sustaining the Anglo-white settler identity as the supreme yardstick of society despite the social justice implications in the face of diversity. Its acknowledgement of diversity symbolically recognizes minorities but disregards among other issues, the age-long struggle of Indigenous people for

self-determination, and the impacts of racism. This arguably characterizes Canadian multiculturalism where ‘cultural differences’ is identified as the euphemistic code for race (James, 2009); moreover, the notion of culture within this ideology and society is perceived to be intertwined with racism, racialization, colonialism, and imperialism.

The evolution of multiculturalism has diversified scholarly perspectives and conceptualizations of the concept. The conservative, liberal and neoliberal multiculturalism perspectives agree that the Western Anglo-centric culture is the standard of comparison (Syed, 2010). This explains the assimilationist integration of diverse populations in society into the institutionalized and dominant ‘Western-centric’ culture. According to McLaren (1994), this reinforces the norm of white hegemony that levels other ethnicities as the others.

Culture and cultural diversity also play important roles in Canadian multiculturalism. While conservative multiculturalism has a fixed and absolute notion of culture, liberal multiculturalism limits culture to ethnic, national, and linguistic differences. For the Canadian neoliberalist multiculturalism, all racialized cultures are classified as ‘others’ with utility values placed on them (Kwak, 2018; Kymlicka, 2010). The conservative multiculturalists disagree with liberalists and post-multiculturalists on their politics and policies of recognition which acknowledge cultural differences, but covertly allow invisible social injustices in the political management of diversity (Banks, 1993; Coulthard,

2007; Gorski, 2006; James, 2009; Kwak, 2017). By implication, these multicultural perspectives share limited conceptualizations of culture that are self-defeating in their intended goals.

Cultural diversity is perceived as a deficiency by conservative multiculturalism (Syed, 2010), unlike liberal multiculturalism and post-multiculturalism that are more open to it (Dhamoon, 2006; Loobuyck, 2005). According to Vertovec (2010, p. 91), post-multiculturalist policies and discourse combine “a strong common identity and values [...] with the recognition of cultural differences,” including Indigenous peoples. But James (2009) argued that limiting the notion of culture in multiculturalism to difference, shields and encourages racism in society. Following scholarly opinions (Banks & Banks, 2010; Parekh, 2000), a notion of culture and cultural diversity that captures the diverse conceptualizations of multiculturalism will perhaps, enrich and reform society despite the different perspectives.

Power appears to be the major issue underlying the political notion of multiculturalism, as the dominant class relies on multiculturalism to regulate the minority. Conservative multiculturalism ignores issues of power and structures which favour the privileged and marginalize others in society (Hopkins-Gillespie, 2011). Liberalist multiculturalism has a uni-directional notion of power (Dhamoon, 2004), which Kymlicka (1995) accused of ignoring multiple forms of power and paying deaf ears to racist, patriarchal, and sexist ideologies. Neoliberal

multiculturalism focuses on the structural capitalist power of the dominant class through which state commodifies citizenship (Gozdecka et al., 2014). Within the context of utility, Indigenous peoples, national minorities, and immigrant groups are assessed as marketing assets worth supporting by the neoliberal state (Kymlicka, 2013). But such notions of powers are critiqued for not curbing socio-economic structures that encourage inequalities, unemployment, and issues of labour rights.

Critical multiculturalism interrogates these perspectives and conceptualizations of multiculturalism. It challenges the dominant meaning systems that undemocratically impose ideas and meanings on the ‘other’ as normative (McLaren, 1994), without caring about what they think. Similarly, I am interested in the way multiculturalism and multicultural education are taught as concepts and implemented as policies vis-à-vis international students in a multicultural learning environment. I believe that the notion of democratic education which is the hallmark of multicultural education would recognise the international students’ preconceptions of both concepts. By asking the international students in a class what those concepts mean to them, the professor may understand how the students dialectically arrive at their own conceptualizations of the concepts in question. Some may also argue that this may vary, depending on whether the concepts come up during the lecture as topics or are being applied as principles or policies.

Although multicultural education seeks to transform pedagogy, institutions and the teacher for equality and social justice in education and society, one may wonder how long it will take to provoke critical thinking in students (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Gorski, 2006) if this form of democratic education remains merely symbolic. Furthermore, critical multicultural education addresses the structural imbalances hindering the contradictory goals of multicultural education (Schoorman et al., 2019). It insists that these educational goals should allow openness and plurality of knowledge in teaching the dominant supremacist ideologies, norms, and practices to students.

As critical multiculturalism acknowledges a democracy of diverse voices and perspectives in multiculturalism (Sleeter & McLaren, 1995), such freedom of expression and reasoning are necessary when teaching such a major concept to new students. Both critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970; Shor, 1993; Sleeter & McLaren, 1995), critical race theory (Ciftci & Gurol, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 1998) and critical multiculturalism prioritise openness to the plurality of knowledge, including in multicultural education. Since multiculturalism aims at fostering relations of democratic citizenship concerning racial diversity (Kymlicka, 2010), does it not demand that the teacher maintains democratic relations that acknowledge the students' conceptualizations of dominant ideologies being taught?

One can arguably attribute this imbalance of policy and implementation on the political intents of the policies and state actors. Such public policies according to Kymlicka (2010) could have negative and unintended implications likely to obscure or worsen the situation they are intended to save. According to Gibbins and Youngman (1996, p. 70), “government failure is when state programs designed to resolve one set of social problems create a new set of problems in their wake.” Multiculturalism and multicultural education could, therefore, be victims of such unintended consequences. However, critical multiculturalism calls for openness and plurality of knowledge in teaching the dominant ideologies, norms, and practices to students. As such, I would say that it is important to consider international students’ conceptualizations of multiculturalism within such learning spaces.

Thus far, I have used this review of the literature to address the research questions as I explored the various meanings and scholarly conceptualizations of multiculturalism and multicultural education. In the chapters that follow, data collection help me to determine how international graduate students in education conceptualize multiculturalism and multicultural education, from their preconceptions to their lived social and educational experiences. The critical analysis of the interconnections and disparities among the various conceptualizations of multiculturalism are applied to the preconceptions and the new conceptions of the participants. I also demonstrate the relevance of

McLaren's (1994) framework of Critical Multiculturalism in understanding international graduate education students' conceptualizations of multiculturalism and, and its importance in the teaching of multicultural education.

In conclusion, critical multicultural education ensures that equitable structures are in place to achieve the educational goals of multicultural education. Hence, it seeks to achieve the desired social and institutional reforms in the school system. And the critical thinking and self-transformation skills of teachers will see to this in a democratic classroom. Hopefully, teachers realize the need to acknowledge and accommodate international education students' conceptualizations of multiculturalism arising from their pre-conceptions and lived experiences in Canada, with its possible implications in the teaching of multicultural education. Having oriented the work to enhance the understanding of how the topic is related to existing literature, the next chapter focuses on the methodology that I chose to use to conduct my research.

Chapter Three – Methodology

I have sought to defend my understanding of the topic by trying “to summarize and synthesize prior research [on the] topic” (Denney & Tewksbury, 2013, p. 218). Insights into these scholarly positions on the major concepts capture the reasons for embarking on the study, and with the appropriate research questions. Using qualitative methodology, I am going to discuss in this chapter the “participants or data source(s), technique(s) (e.g., measures) for gathering data, procedures, and, for some studies, one or more interventions” (McMillan, 2016, p. 111). I will establish the conceptual framework of the study, the methods I chose to use, the characteristics and recruitment of participants, the ethical considerations of the study, data collection and analysis, and lastly, data validity and limitations of the study.

Conceptual Framework

In this qualitative study, the conceptual framework proceeds from the review of literature as McMillan (2016) explains. The review of literature in Chapter Two referenced relevant scholarly works and thoughts foreshadowing the research questions and conceptual framework as required in a qualitative study. The ability to identify aspects of previous scholarly works that are relevant to the study played a great role in establishing the thoughts and in building the conceptual framework of this research. Hence, I have logically structured the review of scholarly works into a conceptual framework.

This framework enhanced the significance of the study and demonstrated the various scholarly notions of the dominant concepts: multiculturalism and multicultural education. I employed a qualitative research study approach to understand international education graduate students' perspectives on multiculturalism and multicultural education. In the process, I have hoped to make the case that the teachers of these international students should care about their students' conceptualizations of multiculturalism and multicultural education. This question is motivated by Freire's (1970) work on critical pedagogy and democratic education and McLaren's (1994) work on critical multiculturalism which forms the theoretical framework of the study.

Ordinarily, what international education graduate students think about such a dominant concept as multiculturalism may not matter much in the bigger scheme of things. One might argue that they constitute a minority population within what is arguably an assimilationist educational system. But the need for such democracy of expression and reasoning cannot be over-emphasized while teaching such an important concept to new students, especially when it is very probable that the concept may either be new to them or possesses a different meaning for them depending on their backgrounds. More so, most of them are being prepared to teach others. As such, should the university teachers of international education graduate students not care about how their students

conceptualize a concept they are probably going to apply as policy, or teach to their own students?

This critical quest for openness to the plurality of knowledge in multicultural education is backed by insights from critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970; Shor, 1993; Sleeter & McLaren, 1995) and critical race theory (Ciftci & Gurol, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 1998). This is not a quest for a change in the meaning of the dominant concept based on students' conceptualizations, but a critical student-based teaching approach that proceeds from the known to the unknown. In my opinion, the extent the teacher understands or misunderstands this meaning-making process in the student can arguably impact the teaching of multicultural education.

Qualitative Research Method

I adopted a more general qualitative approach, with semi-structured interviews for data collection. The qualitative method, according to Macmillan (2016), promised to offer rich narrative descriptions in understanding how international graduate students in education at one Western Canadian university conceptualize multiculturalism and multicultural education, and the implications for the teaching of multicultural education, more generally. There are several qualitative study approaches with some common characteristics (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Macmillan, 2016) and I adopted the following:

- i. The *Natural setting*: This is the natural context where data were collected from participants through a semi-structured interview.
- ii. I the *Researcher as key instrument* gathered the data directly from the participants and interpreted the same.
- iii. I used the *inductive data analysis* to synthesize collected data into themes, and the deductive data analysis when additional information and evidence were available to support each theme.
- iv. The *participant meanings and understanding* prevailed over my own perspectives on the issue.
- v. I used *reflexivity* in shaping the direction of the study by critically and continuously reflecting on the possible impacts of my own background as the researcher.
- vi. I endeavoured to develop a *holistic account* of the participants' experiences in conceptualizing multiculturalism and multicultural education, and the implications for the teaching of multicultural education.

I believe that a sociological perspective is appropriate because the participants' prior experiences shape their current experiences in their encounters within societal and institutional social structures. I preferred using semi-structured interviews as my data-collection tool because it enabled me "to understand the interviewee's subjective perspective of a phenomenon rather than generating generalizable understandings of large groups of people" (McGrath et.

al., 2019, p. 1002). And as Galletta (2013) has suggested, I equally expected that it would allow the participants to offer new meanings as they addressed certain aspects of the study's theoretical framework.

The semi-structured interviews connected to my theoretical framework, with a self-reflection that enabled me to follow up on any important points arising from the participants. By interviewing these international education graduate students, I have gained insight into their conceptualizations of multiculturalism and multicultural education. More so, the data from the interview revealed that their conceptualizations of these concepts can impact the teaching of multicultural education for international students who may end up as teachers in Canada after graduation. The chosen instrument of data collection is also significant in its potential to give a voice to minority international students in society where they may not be heard (Reeves et al., 2015). The semi-structured interviews equally minimized my personal assumptions of what participants may have been ready to share. And like a conversation between colleagues, I ensured that they could freely share more information on any given issue of their choice.

Kvale and Brinkmann (2015, pp. 130-131) have provided seven stages of conducting qualitative research which I adopted. They are:

- i. Designing of the study: The participant interviews were done according to my interview protocol in Appendix A, containing detailed interview questions.

- ii. Interviewing: I the interviewer, made adequate preparation, both conceptually and practically (Brinkmann 2014; Brinkmann & Kvale 2005).
- iii. Transcription: In transcribing the oral conversations to text, I paid attention to developing, clarifying, and expanding the information in the text (Brinkman & Kvale, 2005).
- iv. Data analysis: Here, I coded the ideas in the transcripts using the themes of Multiculturalism, Multicultural Education, and other ideas and comments that emerged from the themes of the study's theoretical framework.
- v. Verifying: Checking the transcription and analysis ensured validity and reliability. The carefully designed interview process also enhanced the validity. The interviews were open, honest, with active listening, maintaining interest, questioning, checking and logically interpreting every information from the participants.
- vi. Reporting: Lastly, there was a summary of the research process and results. Thus, I articulated the findings and conclusions from the study.

Study Participants and Recruitment

In this study, I followed a qualitative research design for the collection of data from participants after I recruited participants using a purposeful sampling procedure. The criteria for selection were that participants must have been international education graduate students who were taking courses in the Faculty of Education at a selected Western Canadian University. This includes

international graduate students at the same university who may not have been in the Faculty of Education, but those who had taken or were currently taking foundations-related courses as electives in the Faculty of Education. I was also particularly interested in international graduate students who had completed a minimum of one semester at the selected Western Canadian University, who had taken or were currently taking foundation-related courses, or courses related to multiculturalism and multicultural education in the Faculty of Education. I excluded international graduate students who did not fall within these criteria, domestic students, and immigrant students who did not hold international student status. Their preconceptions of multiculturalism and multicultural education and their new conceptualizations through lived experience offered useful fresh data for the study.

The type of qualitative sampling strategy for recruiting and selecting the participants for the study was snowball or network sampling (McMillan, 2016; Noy, 2008; Sim et. al, 2018). I started with a few participants within my network and extended the sample to others whom the initial participants nominated or recommend and those who fell within the “the profile, attributes, or characteristics desired” (McMillan, 2016, p, 128) were selected. Their participation was voluntary, and informed consent was also be obtained from the participants. A recruitment script was sent through e-mail to the potential participants who met the criteria for selection. Those who volunteered to

participate were selected for the study. The findings from the analysis of the data generated through semi-formal virtual interviews were used to strengthen the study in the subsequent chapters.

Ethical Considerations

As already mentioned, participants for the study were recruited through a snowball sampling method among international education graduate students. Relying on my social networks and prior relationships (Noy, 2008; Sim et. al, 2018) as an international education graduate student, I approached a few people that I knew and asked them to recommend other individuals who fit the selection criteria and who they thought would be interested. Participation was voluntary. Informed consent was also obtained from the participants, and the recruitment script was sent via e-mail to the potential participants. Once the potential participants declared their interest in participating, the information and consent letters were sent electronically.

Data collection occurred through semi-structured interviews that were arranged using audio phone calls. The data collection process did not involve any form of deception. Each participant received a summary of their respective transcripts after the virtual interview to review or edit it if there was a need. Many of the participants will also receive a summary of the findings by e-mail if they indicated that they were interested.

Lastly, I believe that the participants faced minimal risks by participating in the study, given that the virtual interview did not involve anything beyond normal daily tasks, and did not expose anyone to any health risks. Confidentiality was also be maintained by keeping all responses anonymous with the use of pseudonyms for all participants.

Data Collection and Analysis

The Instrument of Data Collection

My instrument of data collection was semi-structured participant interviews. Given the nature of the study and data required, semi-structured interviews helped to capture the actual thoughts and personal perspectives of the participants regarding any of the concepts (McGrath et. al., 2019). They made room for the participants to give their own new meanings while responding to some aspects of the theoretical framework. I believe that observations were not so necessary since I was not studying the behaviors of international education graduate students towards multiculturalism and multicultural education. The foreknowledge of the pros and cons of my methodology and preferred instrument of data collection underscores the relevance of this instrument to my qualitative research study.

Data Analysis

Scholarly arguments on the varieties of approaches to data analysis suggest that the method of data analysis should depend on the research method in use

(Harland, 2014; Tight, 2013). Therefore, I adopted the qualitative data collection and analysis. Data was collected from seven willing participants through semi-structured interviews. I transcribed the recorded interviews to written text. Following McMillan's (2016) three steps of data analysis, I organized the data, used codes to summarize the data, and interpreted the coded data into themes, patterns, and relationships.

I identified how international education graduate students conceptualize multiculturalism following their preconceptions and lived experiences while studying at one Western Canadian university. Furthermore, I looked for the occurrences of the themes, Multiculturalism and Multicultural Education, and offered to define them. I also watched out for other themes, ideas, and comments beyond these themes of my theoretical framework, such as power.

After coded data have been summarized into smaller categories or themes, I employed the *recursive* process of data analysis, applying the category repeatedly to fit codes and data segments (McMillan, 2016). After coding and summarizing the data, I identified links among the categories and patterns that pointed towards generalizations, models, and conclusions, a process that is consistent with what has been suggested by McMillan (2016). This involved inductive interpretation of the findings, synthesizing the information, and drawing inferences.

Data Validity and Limitations of the Study

Validating Data

Like every other research methodology, the primary aim of qualitative research study is to reach verifiable conclusions about the issue. To clarify the ambiguity of validity as the trustworthiness or truthfulness of quantitative research, McMillan (2016) explains that “this much-used term has the same general meaning with qualitative studies” (p. 308). Validity and credibility are used in qualifying qualitative research. The former refers to the extent to which the data and conclusions reflect the reality, while the latter often applies to how far “the results accurately portray the views and meanings of the participants” (*Ibid.*).

There are also types of validity, viz. internal, external, and content validity. The factors that diminish the validity of a research result are called threats to validity. Taking cognizance of these, I have used these threats as a checklist to ensure the validity of my research.

Limitations of the Study

As an international education graduate student at a western Canadian university with some years of teaching experience, I see myself as a “complete insider [with] an established role in the setting in which data are collected, engaging in genuine and natural participation” (McMillan, 2016, p. 338). The nature of my socialization within and outside the discipline indicates the

possibility of biases which according to Baron and McNeal (2019), need to be acknowledged at the onset.

Beyond being at an advantage as one with personal experiences on both sides (Collins, 1991), I am conscious that my positionality can possibly influence the data collection, analysis, and interpretation processes. According to Baron and McNeal (2019), I cannot ignore the impacts of my personal experiences on the study. This implies that complete objectivity in research is unrealistic. McMillan (2016, p. 309) therefore, has challenged me not to allow my “assumptions and predispositions” to render my data collection and analysis doubtful.

There are also limitations to generalizability of the conclusions of the study due to sampling. Since I interviewed only a small sub-sample of international education graduate students and only at one university in Canada, the research results will be limited by a lack of generalizability. Again, I considered only participants who possessed the required characteristics. The impressions I left on the participant may have also affect the quality of subsequent referrals. This can also impact on data collection and challenge the quality of research conclusions.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed the conceptual framework of the study, the qualitative research study design, study participants and recruitment, the ethical considerations of the study, data collection and analysis. All these guided the

work and provided a basis for caution (McMillan, 2016) against unnecessary derailing and bias. Chapter Five addresses other limitations that arose from participants, timeframes and other factors that may affect the generalizations and conclusions I have drawn.

According to Baron and McNeal (2019), there is a need for every researcher to be dynamic and careful in establishing the credibility and truthfulness of a qualitative research study through the necessary rigours. Given the difficulties and challenges of the researcher's socialization as an insider or outsider in the study because of personal experiences, certain biases limit the objectivity of the research result. These have been recognized in this chapter and the aim of describing all the aspects of the research methodology is to outline the various steps that ensured these limitations were avoided or minimized.

In conclusion, the conceptual framework of the study proceeds from the review of relevant literature where the important notions and conceptualizations of multiculturalism and multicultural education were explored and established. The qualitative research study design was established with the characteristics of the study participants defined, and a purposeful or non-random sampling procedure delineated. The ethical considerations of the study, data collection and analysis, data validity and limitations of the study have all been clarified to serve as beacons guiding the research. The next chapter focuses on the actual research findings.

Chapter Four – Findings

This chapter presents the data collected during the one-hour audio interviews with seven international graduate students who willingly agreed to add their voices to the study. As the reader will remember, the study aims to understand how international graduate students conceptualize multiculturalism and multicultural education, and what the implications for the teaching of the concepts are. The focus is on their preconceptions and lived experiences while being enrolled in Faculty of Education graduate classes at one large Western Canadian university. As a colleague to the participants, I ensured that my positionality will not interfere with the data collection by refraining from putting words into the mouths.

Table 1 below presents a summary of the participants' background information, and a presentation of the key findings of the study follows shortly thereafter. To ensure their anonymity, the actual names of the participants have been replaced with pseudonyms. Other specific personal details such as the gender and countries of origin of the participants have also been excluded in the table above, in order not to compromise the identities of the participants. In place of their nationalities, I have used a larger geographical description to depict the diversity of the sources of the data collected. The sample of participants came from a variety of backgrounds including South Asia, Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and one participant of Afro-European descent. Their stay in Canada as

international graduate students ranged between two to eight years. Most were teachers and only a few had K-12 teaching experience (cf. Table 1).

Table 1

Demographic Information of Participants.

Name	Place of origin	Length of stay in Canada	Area of specialization	K-12 teaching experience
Wan	Southeast Asia	5 years	Mathematics and Sciences	No
Rohan	South Asia	3 years	Distance Education	No
Nadia	Afro-Europe	8 years	Psychology	No
Abreshmina	Middle East	2 years	English as a Second Language Education	No
Mahir	South Asia	5 years	English as a Second Language Education	No
Kim	Southeast Asia	4 years	English as a Foreign Language	Yes
Aryan	Middle East	3 years	English as Second Language Education	Yes

The goal of this study was to uncover some personal stories in between the preconceptions and lived experiences of international students to examine any similarities and differences among them. Using the interview protocol, I coded the ideas from the interview following the discussions on the themes of

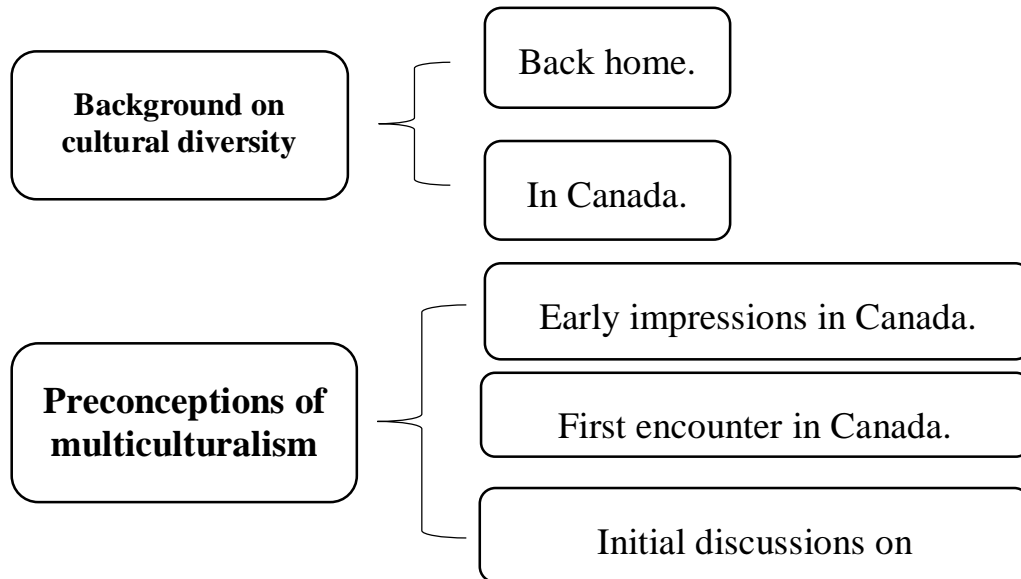
Multiculturalism and Multicultural Education. I also incorporated emerging themes, comments and ideas beyond the study's theoretical framework. I focus on the convergence and divergence of ideas and opinions from those themes.

The interview protocol was originally drafted to align with the writings of McLaren (1994) about Critical Multiculturalism and Critical Multicultural Education and to enable participants to air their thoughts on both their preconceptions and their lived experiences as international graduate students. As the discussions centered primarily on the preconceptions and lived experiences of international graduate students, the participants' encounters with the concepts did not involve Critical Multiculturalism and Critical Multicultural Education. Furthermore, and perhaps not surprisingly, the concepts, Critical Multiculturalism and Critical Multicultural Education did not come up in the discussions as well. Going by the actual interview and data collected, Figure 2 below provides a summary of the themes.

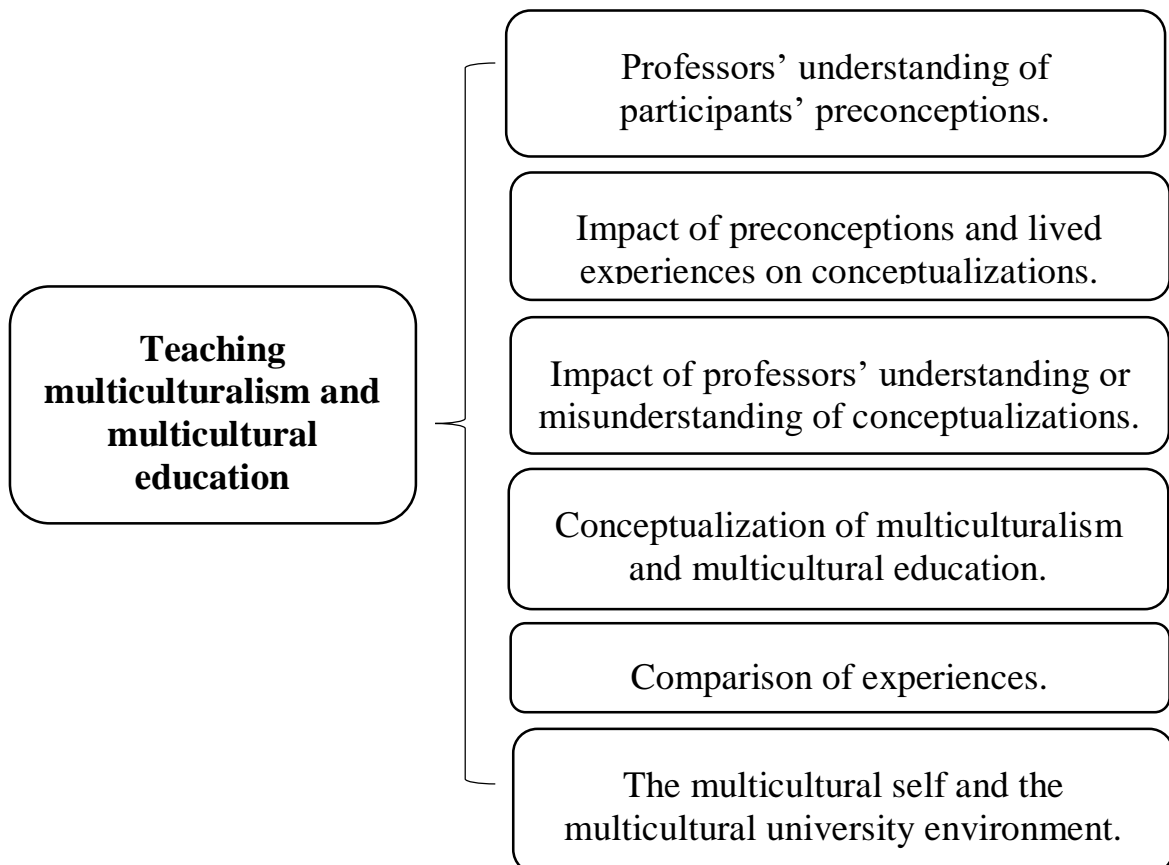
And while presenting the aspects of the data most relevant to the study, the transcription of the audio interviews tried as much as possible to capture the participants' views as expressed in words. Efforts were also made to review the transcripts with the participants through member-checks. In presenting the findings, I am concentrating on the voices of the participants, while the data analysis in the next chapter will be accompanied by a critical review and connections with the literature.

Figure 2

Themes: International students' conceptualizations of multiculturalism and multicultural education



Implications on the educational goals of multicultural education



International students' conceptualizations of multiculturalism and multicultural education

As part of the participants' background information, they provided insights on how cultural diversity was talked about in their home countries, in general, and their experiences of with diversity since arriving in Canada. For some of the participants, cultural diversity was not part of the daily discourse back home, even though the reality of cultural diversity was undeniable in those societies. Some participants came from countries where there exists an unquestionable blanket of cultural homogeneity which stifles every formal recognition of socio-cultural and religious diversity. For others, cultural diversity exists and was acknowledged at varying degrees. I wish to point out that their opinions here are not generalized as representing the entire reality of their countries of origin; rather, each opinion represents just that – one participant's interpretation of reality at that given time.

On their perceptions of cultural diversity in Canada since they arrived, participants gave accounts of their different experiences of how Canadians treat people from different cultures. Based on their encounters and lived experiences, their accounts ranged from positive and mixed feelings to less than positive experiences.

Background on cultural diversity

Perception of cultural diversity back home. Here, participants aired their views on their perceptions of cultural diversity in their home countries, how it

was silenced in political discourse, and their impressions of how Canadians treat people from different cultures.

Cultural diversity. Participants' perceptions of how cultural diversity, in general, was talked about in their home countries showed that cultural diversity is a reality that is treated differently by different societies. Only one participant from a Southeast Asian country, Wan, positively affirmed that her country is multicultural and is comprised of three major ethnic groups plus a group of Indigenous people. Speaking about cultural diversity in her country, Wan said:

I would say it is quite diverse in terms of population. And in our educational system, or even the larger society, cultural diversity is promoted [...] people respect each other's cultures. [They] try to get along with each other in schools and outside of schools. And the government is really promoting that.

Another Southeast Asian participant, Kim, disclosed that her own society has many foreigners living, working, studying, and intermarrying in the country. English is taught at all levels of education with culture, food, and lifestyles as part of the readings. Meanwhile, the accounts of two South Asian participants illustrate how the reality thrives in society that is less accepting of diversity.

Two participants from a South Asian country disclosed that cultural diversity is not much talked about, although it is part of the reality of their society. One noted that as a concept or term, it is not familiar and any reference to cultural

diversity is rather suppressed. Both provided insights on the existence of different minority populations from diverse ethnicities, religions, and cultures. According to them, these are overshadowed by the main Islamic culture and religion which controls the polity. One of them, Rohan, had this to say:

In our country, there is no diversification in cultural perspectives, because most of them are Muslims, about 90% of the total population. And few of them are other religions. So, there are, I would say, no diversification in terms of culture.

He explained that despite the diverse religious and ethnic populations with their different ways of life, cuisines, modes of dressing, and languages, these minorities are repressed by the major tribes. So, cultural diversity according to them is observed only in some contexts in the country, but far from the Canadian situation where the population comprises people from various parts of the globe.

Looking at how the cosmopolitan nature of Canada seems to favour cultural diversity, Nadia who grew up in a European country said that cultural diversity was not part of the discussions, neither in her history classes nor other classes she took. In her own words:

It was just something that was there, but no one really discussed it. And the reason I am saying it was there is because, when I look back at our classrooms, we would consist of at least, eight to ten different nationalities and different religions. And I know that there are also

many refugees that would join us from different countries. But no one really spoke about that.

To learn about another's culture and religion, she revealed that one would have literally had to approach the individual personally, because it was barely discussed as part of the curriculum and in public. According to her, no one ever asked about her traditional "food or mode of dressing." There was a kind of presumed homogeneity, or at best, virtual silence over the glaring diversity in that society.

A silenced concept in political discourse. Although Kim's society is socio-culturally diverse in nature, she maintained that "at the level of government and policy at the level of institutions, cultural diversity is not really an issue,' perhaps due to the population of the foreigners back home." Two participants from a Middle Eastern country equally stated that culturally diverse is real among the people but was not officially recognised by the government. One of the participants, Aryan told me that:

In my home country, cultural diversity is not one of those topics that we discuss on an everyday basis. Especially, because of the despotic regime [...] it is one of the sensitive issues that we cannot talk about. The government [...] considers everyone as homogeneous with the same culture, same Islamic culture that is ruling [...] It is somehow meaningless in my country of origin.

As with the case in the South Asian country, both interviewees agreed that the country is populated with different ethnicities, immigrants, refugees, and religious groups, but they are not as numerous as they are in Canada. Also, that there are only minor differences in cultures, traditions, and languages among some of these diverse groups because they are from neighboring countries. One of the participants argued that this reduces overall diversity but certainly does not erase the differences that exist between people.

Perception of cultural diversity in Canada. Participants were asked about their perceptions of how Canadians treat people from different cultures since their arrival in Canada. There were varied impressions and feelings, but mostly pointing at respect and passive friendliness, language and accent, stereotyping and racism, and so on. Some said that being identified as a student was an advantage in some cases but overall, the issue of respect was a recurring theme.

Respect and passive friendliness. Most participants said that Canadians treat people and their different cultures with respect. Wan, for instance, saw it as “more of a positive experience” as a student, compared to her spouse (a non-student) whom she thinks has had a totally different experience. Another participant, Rohan also noted that in Canada, he “met some broader pictures in cultural diversity [...] as an international student.” He experienced greater openness to cultural diversity in Canada more than his own society back home.

According to him, the population of his own society is equally quite diverse in religion, ethnicity, people's ways of life, food, dress, and language. But in Canada, the accumulation of different cultures is encouraged by the welcoming attitude of society towards people of different nationalities and cultural backgrounds. Abreshmina compared her experiences in the larger society with that of the academic environment and stated: "I am really happy with how my culture is appreciated here," referring to her new Canadian family and friends.

But according to Rohan, beyond that peaceful front where people are respected and treated equally, "behind the scenes," things are not really as they appear. He questioned whether the openness to diversity really addresses, for instance, students' needs, allows them to raise their voices on issues, and helps them to feel free in the classroom.

Expressing mixed feelings, Mahir believed that with a few exceptions, his "overall experience in Canada regarding treating multicultural people by Canadian nationals is not that much bad." He made a case of the identity of the "the real Canadians [as the] Indigenous people of the country, those first nation people." And as such, he did not have much experience in seeing how they treat people generally. But on how "the 'white' Canadians" treat others, he found it "somehow friendly," except for few exceptions.

Kim also had a first impression that Canadians are "kind of friendly. Even the way strangers say hi to one another." She observed that beyond those first

impressions, that the people are still very friendly and kind to newcomers. But on getting more familiar, she noted that beyond the friendliness lie cultural differences, modes of communication, and people's ways of life. For her, these differences make it difficult for people to make close friends with others around them.

Stereotyping and racism. While Abreshmina is pleased that her culture is appreciated in the larger society, she did not feel the same way in the academic environment. She described what she called “a huge stereotyping in my experience as [an international] student.” That was how she felt about it. Abreshmina lamented the lack of trust owing to those experiences of stereotypes against international students from her country. Maybe, she says: “Because of a bad experience they had, for example, with one previous student [from my country] and they are generalizing it to everyone.” Outside this experience from the university, some other participants equally reported similar impressions that they had in society.

Another participant who expressed mixed feelings was Aryan. He said: “Well, it depends [...] Winnipeg is supposed to be, as they say, ‘friendly Manitoba.’ But I did not find it very friendly. I found some racist behaviors as well here that are going on.” He observed that the racism affects all immigrants, whether one is from a racialized or privileged population. He cited an experience with his friend who “was also ‘white’ but from Eastern Europe,” who had to deal

with some racist remarks from a Canadian, in his presence. And so, all the participants aired their impressions and perceptions of cultural diversity in Canada.

Language and accent. Two participants noted that language and accent form part of their own experiences on how Canadians treat others, whether international students or not. One of them, Wan, was of the view that it is also often handled politely. She cited a case where a group of international students were embarrassed in a public transit bus by a Canadian for speaking in their local language among their group. She said: “I would say that there are people that are not kind to others from different cultures. But I also noticed that more people stood up against that behaviour.” But Aryan rather pointed out that there is some form of racism in it. He argued that: “In order to just assimilate in Canada, like in Winnipeg [...] I believe you must be totally ‘white.’ And you need to speak English with a native accent, so that they have nothing to say.” He maintained that it is only his own perception, and not a generalisation.

Preconceptions of multiculturalism

This theme captures participants’ responses on their preconceptions and early impressions of multiculturalism in Canada. It covers their first encounter with multiculturalism in Canada, and how they felt about initial discussions on the concept. So, what comes to the minds of participants when they think about multiculturalism in Canada?

Early impressions of multiculturalism in Canada. Participants' initial impressions of the concepts vary. Most of those early impressions also changed with time as we shall see later.

Familiarity versus the unaccustomed. Wan initially saw multiculturalism in Canada as familiar to her experience in her home country. However, this idea later changed as she “was thinking it is so much different.” On the contrary, Mahir said that he “did not have any proper conception about multiculturalism” before coming to Canada but understood it lexically as “assimilation of different cultures.” Like the above two examples, some other participants had various impressions, depending on their a priori knowledge of the concept before coming to Canada. But most of their preconceptions were based on the literal understanding of the concept.

Co-existence of diverse cultures. For instance, Nadia, thought about the concept as the co-existence of multiple and diverse cultures, interacting with each other within the same space in a country. Mahir had a similar literal understanding of the concept. But he added that it includes the holistic rights to education, religion, and socio-cultural involvement. Kim saw it broadly as the coming together of “people from mostly every corner of the world, the diversity of their origins.” According to her, this includes diversity in languages, cultures, religions, customs, traditions, ways of life, foods, and ethnic groups, “from all

over the world in Canada.” Those were her early impressions of multiculturalism in Canada.

Ordinary nomenclature. Two participants responded somewhat differently. One of them, Abreshmina recalled that most of her conversations about multiculturalism were limited to the university and the academic environment due to the COVID-19 lockdown. In her views: “Multiculturalism in academia in Canada is just a word.” As an international student, she recalled a personal experience where there was an expectation on her to act and speak like a Canadian. She said:

But I was really thinking about that for some days that I am living in a society that it is called a multicultural society [...] So that is why I am saying multiculturalism is just a word. And it is not what you see in action. And words are cheap!

Next was Aryan who saw his earlier impression of Canada “as a utopia, like all the cultures living together in peace. So, there is no conflict among them.” But this impression, he said, later changed on his arrival, seeing that the different cultures have their own communities without much integration across groups. However, the observation did not imply any conflicts among the diverse communities. He rather noted that in public, people often maintain polite silence when they do not wish to interact or become more friendly with another. And others equally reciprocate the silence as a sign of respect for such persons. And

according to him, those common signs of respect which he noticed in public do not necessarily extend to actual friendliness between people.

First encounter with the concept of ‘multiculturalism’ in Canada.

Continuing, the participants talked about their first encounters with multiculturalism in Canada. One participant who was familiar with the concept prior to Canada did not recall any initial remarkable encounter with multiculturalism in Canada. She said she felt like she had heard about it before. The rest of the participants were not so familiar with it and could recall their first encounters. Some of them encountered the concept for the first time outside the university, some in the university but prior to lectures, and others within the classroom or during lectures.

Mahir first learned about multiculturalism outside the university amid his fellow nationals who were sharing their thoughts on their future in Canada. Kim also heard about it for the first time outside the university from a flat mate and fellow student who shared with her the meaning and import of the concept. According to her, the initial emphasis was on diversity and mutual respect among people of different backgrounds in Canadian society.

For Abreshmina, her initial encounter with multiculturalism was within the university, but actually prior to the lectures beginning. Before encountering some discussions on the concept in class, she recalled that “it was in those beginning sessions that the university arranges for students that they repeated that a lot.”

Also, Aryan noted that it was during the orientation workshops of the International Students' Centre that he became aware of multiculturalism and integration in Canada.

The first encounter that Rohan had with the concept 'multiculturalism' was during early interactions with course mates who were discussing the concept in class. Nadia recalled that it was during a course in the Faculty of Education. She said: "That was when I first heard about it in Canada, and someone discussing multiculturalism in-depth in Canada." She said that no one mentioned it during her undergraduate classes. Apart from narratives of those initial encounters with multiculturalism, participants also disclosed how they made sense of it and how they felt about discussions about the concept at that time.

Initial discussions on multiculturalism. Sharing her thoughts and feelings during her initial discussions on multiculturalism, Wan, who was already familiar with the concept from home, said:

I think when I first heard about that, during the orientation, it was like what I felt in [my home country], that it is alright for people from different cultures. And we need to try to respect each other, understand their cultures, and then try to get along with each other. And that, everyone is equal, and then we all can contribute, no matter what cultures we have.

Just like her, Rohan's initial thought about the concept also centered on issues of accommodating and respecting others. But according to him, that understanding later shifted after learning more about it during lectures, and with further interactions with other students from different cultures. His new impressions made him say, that "this term is used just as a banner, that we are very much welcoming, very much respectful to other cultures." But behind that banner, both within and outside the classroom, he argued that things play out differently.

Hearing about multiculturalism for the first time within the classroom context made Nadia happy. But she felt cheated in the sense that she felt it should have been part of her earlier educational experiences. In her words:

My first thought was, where was this when I was in primary school?
[...] I felt like, I am happy that this is a conversation that occurs in
Canada. But I became jealous because I was like, Oh my goodness! I
wish this were brought up in [my country] when I was in school.

And she thought that it would have surely impacted her educational experiences if such a discussion had been part of her experience when she was younger. But she did not specify exactly how during our interview.

For Abreshmina, a multiculturalist attitude that involved mutual respect, allowing everyone to be themselves, to have a voice and share what one has, all sounded fine. But according to her, within the context in which she heard it, "the whole thing was only limited to K-12 education" and that was not a part of her

experience. For his part, Mahir pointed out that he did not see many differences between his own thoughts and the various theoretical meanings of the concept both within and outside the academic environment. Then he said:

But the real difference is about my feelings. When I shared this thought in a peer group, there was a different feeling, experience and understanding. But when I shared the same thought in a group of people in academia, the feeling was equally different. The definition came from different points of view, from different students and professor as well.

He maintained that the different dimensions are because those who work or study within an academic environment understand the concept from their studies in multiculturalism. But the understanding within the peer group outside the school was based on the literal definition. According to him, that was the difference he experienced about multiculturalism – being in school and in a peer group.

When a friend first mentioned multiculturalism to Kim, she said: “I just looked around and observed [that] it is multiculturalism because people here in Canada are from different parts of the world and I am a part of it.” She saw in it, the obligation to respect the diverse cultures and peoples from different parts of the globe. Her knowledge was later deepened when lectures exposed her to the history and origin of multiculturalism in Canada, as she said: “...so this is a big

thing in Canada as it is also the country of immigrants.” As such, she often felt like she was living globally, and not just in Canada.

Aryan shared that he liked the initial discussions on multiculturalism but later noticed a slight difference between the explanations and what was obtainable in society. He observed that while the issues of covert racism were ignored, “they were just trying to make us adapt to multiculturalism [...] But they do not tell us like, if you came across this kind of behavior, it might be a sign of racism [...] covert racism.” He was talking from personal experiences within the academic environment and society as well.

Summary

So far, the first part of the discussion on international students’ conceptualizations of multiculturalism and multicultural education covered the demographic and background knowledge of the participants, and their background on cultural diversity. Their antecedent knowledge and experiences with cultural diversity covered their perceptions of cultural diversity back home and in Canada. Only one participant agreed that she had a good understanding of cultural diversity back home. Some had varying levels of knowledge and awareness of the reality in their own societies where the dominant cultures imposed a sense of cultural homogeneity on all. The rest only learned about it when they arrived in Canada. And much as their views and experiences could

compare and contrast with mine, my positionality was kept in check for the sake of objectivity.

The next theme after that, international students' preconceptions of multiculturalism, addressed the following:

- i. Participants' early impressions of the concept and practice in Canada;
- ii. Participants' first encounters with the concept in Canada; and
- iii. How participants made sense of their initial discussions on multiculturalism.

The participants' narratives about cultural diversity in their home countries sounded so different from what they found in Canada, except for one participant whose country practices cultural diversity. However, while all participants agreed that their home countries are culturally diverse in nature, with major and minority socio-cultural and religious populations, they also agreed that the issue of socio-cultural diversity is not part of the political discourse.

In their varied early impressions of how Canadians treat people from different cultures, their experiences showed that respect for others is key. Student identity was also seen as an asset in society, while stereotyping was alleged as part of the experiences of her co-nationals in school. However, most participants saw Canadians as open, friendly, and respectful towards people from different cultures. But at the same time, making close friends was difficult for participants due to cultural differences and according to one of them, this required personal

motivation and effort on the part of the individual. Also, it was observed that issues of covert racism are ignored, and racial diversity or race relations often silenced, whereas multiculturalism is symbolically and ceremoniously observed.

Participants' initial encounters with multiculturalism spread from off campus to the university environment, and some in the classrooms. The early impressions of the concept were literally centered on respect and tolerance for the socio-cultural and religious differences that characterise the multicultural society of Canada. In the next section, we will look at the implications of the educational goals of multicultural education.

Implications on the educational goals of multicultural education

After the preconceptions, initial encounters, and early impressions of multiculturalism, participants were asked their views and experiences on the teaching and learning of multiculturalism and multicultural education. They spoke extensively on their lived experiences in relation to multiculturalism and multicultural education, both with the professors, fellow students, and society in general. They also tried to conceptualize their 'multicultural selves' and the multicultural environment at the university.

Teaching multiculturalism and multicultural education

Proceeding "from the known into the unknown," (Heisenberg, 2000, n.p), this section starts by unveiling the extent to which professors sought to

understand and then discuss participants' preconceptions of multiculturalism and multicultural education while teaching the concepts.

Professors' understanding of participants' preconceptions of multiculturalism and multicultural education. Some of the responses were conditional, in that it depended on the individual professors and the courses they taught. Another factor was that some of the professors, according to other participants, have varying levels of interactions with international students due to the courses they teach. Some participants argued that it affects how the professors handle multiculturalism and multicultural education. Two participants believed that some professors who interact more with international students understand, respect, and honour those international students' preconceptions of multiculturalism and multicultural education. Sharing this view, Wan thought that such professors allow students to understand and respect that difference.

Similarly, Kim shared her thoughts in relation to the lectures, workshops, and intercultural awareness workshops at the university. She agreed that some professors work with more international and immigrant students because of their courses. She observed that the professors approach students and understand their conceptions in such a natural manner that students even notice it. Perhaps, they have become so used to such interactions that it has become habitual. She explained her thoughts in this way:

It is like, they ask about our cultures. And then they ask about other students' cultures and talk about themselves. And it is like, everyone was given opportunities to talk about themselves, their cultures, and the countries of origin. And then they are always kind of happy to do so and talk about it extensively and openly.

On the contrary, Wan equally observed that some professors with a limited understanding of international students' preconceptions of multiculturalism may not have been working and interacting enough with such students. As such, they may not understand that the students have some experiences already which they can draw on as they contribute to discussions in class.

Still on the conditional responses, Aryan argued that "it depends on the professor and her/his own benefits rather than others' benefits." He noted that in his own case, the discussions on multiculturalism were limited to Canadian multiculturalism, issues of peace and reconciliation with the Indigenous population, and the dominant 'white' cultures in Manitoba.

Abreshmina believed that it is generally expected that professors should have "a broader definition or understanding of multiculturalism and bring it into the class." She equally believed that a diverse student population in a course increases the professor's challenges in understanding the culture or tradition of every single student in the class and then applying that knowledge when teaching. She added:

But I believe they need to give more space to everyone, to at least share something about her/himself [...] give the opportunity to the international students to discuss that topic or theme from their own cultural perspectives, which is not happening.

For her, the fact that this is not a guaranteed means that the environment is not as multicultural as one might think. And while she saw the need for professors to bring to class a more profound understanding of the concepts, another participant was concerned about confusing the two concepts.

It was Rohan who raised concern over some professors whom he alleged to be conflating or mixing up multiculturalism and multicultural education or explaining the concepts from their own perspective. The emphasis here was on the need to be specific on issues related to multiculturalism and multicultural education. They should not be confounded or taken for granted by professors whom he says, try to impose what they believe as multiculturalism.

It was also important to acknowledge that the extent professors will seek to understand and discuss international students' preconceptions of multiculturalism and multicultural education while teaching the concepts may vary. According to Mahir: "I would say that it really varies from professor to professor." His own experiences with his professors showed that they are "immigrant friendly, participatory, understanding, compromising about international students' needs, beliefs, experiences, backgrounds, cultures,

teaching styles and strategies.” Apart from sharing their personal thoughts on multiculturalism, he believed that they also sought to understand multiculturalism from the students’ perspectives.

Nadia, however, recalled that at the beginning of classes, most of her professors wanted to know more about her background, and particularly, her cultural background. She said: “And I was surprised because I was not used to people inquiring about that.” Secondly, the nature of the graduate program provided opportunities for her and her fellow international students to share their experiences on how the study materials applied to real life. She added: “So, not much was asked about it, concerning my idea of multiculturalism before the class.” She said that they read the texts to understand what multiculturalism was and were then asked to discuss their views and how it applied to them.

Impact of participants’ preconceptions and lived experiences on their conceptualizations of multiculturalism and multicultural education. The next theme was the level of impact the international students’ preconceptions and lived experiences here in Canada had on their conceptualizations of multiculturalism and multicultural education.

Expectations versus reality. Before coming to Canada, Abreshmina thought that multiculturalism and multicultural education would enable her to share and learn from people of different nationalities. But according to her: “Since that is not happening, I cannot really call it multiculturalism.” Thus, she imagined

a multicultural education that would lead to “really open-minded academics [and] create open-minded students.” However, she did not go as far as to link her thoughts to racism like Aryan.

Multicultural awareness beyond international students. Part of Aryan’s lived experiences was an encounter with his own student, a Canadian in her 50s or 60s. According to him, he became a language teacher upon arrival in Winnipeg as an international student. And one day in class, the student asked him: “So after your study what are you going to do [...] are you returning, or are you going to stay here?” He said he responded without any qualms, but he later found out from friends that it was a sign of racism, a very unwelcoming disposition and discomfort on seeing immigrants. And he recalled that this experience impacted his conceptualizations of multiculturalism and multicultural education. As an educator himself, his new belief was that multiculturalism needed to be addressed in different ways. This he said, includes creating the awareness in all students, international and domestic alike, by adding more themes on different cultures and ethnic groups in their lessons to have an inclusive classroom.

Gaps between words and actions. Wan observed that Canadians are more vocal than active about multiculturalism and in her words, “there is a big gap there.” In her experiences, she thinks that it is basically about everyone trying to be helpful and respectful to people from different backgrounds and cultures, and not necessarily about being open and welcoming to diversity. Rohan also

identified respect as the hallmark of Canadian multiculturalism. In the classroom, he noted that this respect sometimes manifests itself as superficial friendliness, leaving a gap between international students and domestic students. On this note, he said:

For the Canadian students, they are showing, saying, and trying to make us understand that we are family, but to some extent, I discovered that there is an abstract gap in the relationships among us [...] And this is the total scenario in multicultural education inside the classroom and outside the classroom.

His preconceptions changed with new experiences at different levels during his time in Canada. This, in turn, has impacted his conceptualizations of multiculturalism and multicultural experience, as one that among other things, leaves a gap between international students and their domestic counterparts. I hope to discuss how to transcend this superficial or passive friendliness when addressing implications for practice in Chapter Five.

Just like Rohan, Nadia did not have prior conceptions of multiculturalism and multicultural education before encountering these concepts in Canada. Having learned them in the classrooms in Canada, she observed that: “Now, what you learn and what you observe, or experience are, of course, two different things.” The idea of multicultural education sounded amazing to her initially. But given her lived experiences, she said: “I guess, the sound of it, and the application

are probably two different issues [...] The application is the place that I am not very sure about. Sometimes, the thought is not enough.” And this she said, surely has an impact.

Otherness. This section also addresses the notion of otherness as participants grapple with new identities in society controlled by a dominant culture with greater political powers (Zevallos, 2011). For instance, since one participant became aware of diversity, multiculturalism, and multicultural education in Canada, she said that they have really impacted her perspectives and changed her conceptions, attitudes and experiences day-by-day. This was as she gained new knowledge and lived experiences and began implementing them in her social interactions with others. According to her, it increased her level of respect and curiosity towards other cultures. Following (Zevallos, 2011), I believe that the participant internalised established multicultural categories alongside her real identity, how she want to be perceived, and the new multicultural groups. This points to identity construction and an impact of the participant’s internalisation and conceptualization of multiculturalism and multicultural education.

Impact of professors’ understanding or misunderstanding of participants’ conceptualizations of the two concepts on their teaching of multicultural education. This next theme addressed the extent to which professors’ understanding or misunderstanding of their international students’

conceptualizations of the two concepts impacts their teaching of multicultural education. On this question, Kim gave quite a direct response when she stated:

Yes, it does impact, I guess. For sure, if they understand they will know how the students understand what they want to teach them. That is the first thing. And if they understand how far the students understand those two concepts [...] they can teach better and even help the students to study and to explore deeper into the subject matter.

On the contrary, if they do not understand according to her, it may amount to wasted pedagogical efforts. Nadia added: “It does! Their misunderstanding of international students’ conceptualization of that concept has some impacts.” Ideally, she would want the professors to have a greater understanding of the concepts, to avoid the negative impacts. She imagined for instance, that some students may refrain from talking about it or abandon the topic if they feel misunderstood. Others may also become vocal about being misunderstood, due to individual differences.

Mahir also responded: “Absolutely!” From his own experiences, the professors tried to understand, and the impacts on teaching and learning were quite clear. He reasoned that if they fail to understand, to be respectful or inclusive of international students, the impact would be different than when they understand and try to ask questions. According to him:

In my opinion and my experience [...] they really understood and that really impacted a lot. And that is quite a positive impact in a sense. They should understand [...] We would expect that they will understand. They should understand our perspectives, our cultures, education, and that should have a positive impact...

He made a case that international students are charged and treated like customers in the international education “industry.” As such, he believed that they should be understood by professors and should be allowed to offer their own perspectives.

For Wan, professors have varying levels of understanding of multicultural education. She said that even if they try to deny the impacts, that “they have an impact.” She suspects a common experience among teachers at all levels, where their personal beliefs impact how they teach in the classrooms, “shape how the classroom is going to be [and] shape what kind of information that their students get.” But beyond this perceived possibility, she still thinks that although the impact is inevitable, it ought not be the case.

Beside the perceived differences in how professors understand multiculturalism and multicultural education, Rohan highlighted the issue of individual differences and circumstances related to professors. For him, it was different for different professors. According to him, some of the professors try to understand the students’ conceptualization of multiculturalism, while others

might misinterpret the students' preconceptions or "try to impose the way they think multiculturalism should be conceptualized." He maintained that it impacts the students "when a professor mis-conceptualizes what the students bring into the classroom, or what the students think about the multiculturalism." In his opinion, it impacts the students academically and generally as well.

From the point of view of responsibility, Aryan believed that the professors need to demonstrate greater understanding of their students' preconceptions. But he felt that, "they do not understand. Sure, if they do not understand our preconceptions, in that case, they will be unable to address it properly in a way that is understandable for everyone." According to him, this results in both the professors and students speaking from different perspectives, with the need for the professor to harmonise the diverse viewpoints.

In a similar vein, Abreshmina reiterated saying: "I believe they do not teach multiculturalism. They try really hard, but they are not teaching multicultural education." She said she could hardly recall if any professor asked about her preconception of multicultural education or multiculturalism as part of a class discussion. Furthermore, she believed that voices like hers on issues such as this one, need to be heard through studies of this kind. Having explored the participants' preconceptions and lived experiences, it was time to hear the participants' conceptualization of multiculturalism and multicultural education over time.

Participants' conceptualizations of multiculturalism and multicultural education. Over time, Nadia had come to understand multiculturalism simply as “inclusivity, where multiple cultures, everyone’s cultural background is included in any process in education and in any other field.” This same notion of inclusivity includes multicultural education in the design of the curriculum and educational experiences to accommodate different cultures, histories, and religions.

Abreshmina captured her own broad understanding of multiculturalism as: “Respect the cultures, accept the cultures, recognize the cultures, and appreciate them. And this is like appreciating people and recognizing people.” She also shared a vision of multicultural education with a classroom that accommodates people from different countries and identities.

Mahir argued that his understanding of multiculturalism had remained similar, while the experiences might be different. He was of the view that, “there is no difference in meaning, but differences in the experiences. The meaning is similar.” His view on multicultural education also proceeded from his experiences of multiculturalism, as “a combination of people from different ethnicities, cultural backgrounds, and nationalities.” This understanding of multicultural education as he said, has not changed over time.

For Aryan, he came to understand the full meaning of the two concepts through practice and his lived experiences here in Canada. The new understanding came from his studies about multiculturalism and his interactions

with people of diverse cultures, both within and outside the university. Rohan pointed out that his conceptualization of multiculturalism had changed over time due to his experiences. In his present conceptualization, he said:

...it is like a banner, a project, a name. Under this name a lot of things are happening [...] So, this multiculturalism term is only used to show up that we are very much open to all the people who are from outside Canada. But there is something different in the inside.

On the topic of multicultural education, he argued that it is not enough to limit multicultural education to curriculum transformation, changes in teaching and learning, and other pedagogical methodology. He believed that a lot of other issues should be included, including the issue of race.

Wan's understanding of multiculturalism currently had changed from respecting the socio-cultural diversity in society, to seeing the need for closer relations as friends or acquaintances. She said:

In my own definition of multiculturalism, it would be different people in the society that have different cultures can respect each other. And then also, put in effort to be each others' friends. I think that is my understanding of multiculturalism. Not only respect but put more effort to be each others' friends and really get to know each other more in a different level.

This she said, should not jeopardize the respect for cultural differences, as well as people's way of understanding and their interpretation of reality due to differences in culture. Multiculturalism should encourage people to ask questions rather than continue to rely on assumptions and stereotypes of people's cultures. Coming to multicultural education, she conceptualized it basically as "allowing, not only the students, but the teachers that have different backgrounds to feel that the school is a safe space for them to demonstrate their cultures, share and be proud of them." And this should be a common understanding.

Comparison of experiences with multiculturalism – class professors, fellow students, and society in general. Shifting from the meaning of multiculturalism and multicultural education, the next theme compared the experiences of participants with multiculturalism between class professors, fellow students, and society, in general. Wan did not see any difference between the experiences of interacting with professors, fellow students, and society, except for the issue of "power dynamics" between the student and the professor. On the issue of power, she stated:

I do not think it is fair to say that the professors were exerting their power and I could not express what I wanted to say. I do not think I ever felt that. But I think it will also be ignorant to deny there are these power dynamics.

The issue of power dynamics was the only difference she noted in her experiences interacting with her professors, fellow students, and the general society on issues related to multiculturalism. But some participants shared different experiences between the different groups.

Aryan saw some differences between professors and graduate students on one hand, and society in general, on the other hand. He articulated this difference in the level of knowledge and understanding that people have about the concept. He said:

[W]e came to Canada and started studying. Before integration, before entering to the society before getting a job, we started studying and raising our knowledge. However, there are people already in society without this broad knowledge of the multiculturalism, that is the difference.

Like Wan above, he also observed that “professors are in a position of power” and can exert their powers on students, to the extent of molding the latter’s perceptions. Hence, students are often left without much freedom of choice, as they are often at the professors’ mercies to attain their educational goals.

Rohan believed that the experience varies with the different groups because of their different roles. Professors and students think differently and change their roles between the classroom and society; in other words, “it is the same picture, but the context is different.” With respect to the issue of power, he saw it as

compelling the ‘other’ to do things while suppressing the other’s voice at the same time. In Rohan’s words:

They are always trying to impose on us and at the same time, they try to reign over us. The power factor is a very much important issue in that relationship, the professors from their own perspectives, the students, and society. This power relation is very much influential in terms of suppressing and oppressing the people who are from outside of Canada.

Comparing her experiences with fellow students and Canadians, Kim described it as follows:

I feel closer to fellow students, especially international students because we have many things in common. It is easier to share and talk and to help one another. Then we can be honest, because we know the struggles, the obstacles newcomers experience in studies and in life. So, because we are students, I can say it is easier even compared to the native Canadians who were born and raised here.

As for the professors, she was influenced by her culture which recognises some sort of power-gap between students and teachers. And while she was treating people that way, she observed that most professors tried to make students feel welcome and relaxed. However, according to her: “Still deep inside I cannot say

I do not feel any power.” She noted that it is evident even in the kind of language they use while trying to show respect and not to cross the limits.

Abreshmina, in her own comparison, saw a huge difference between her experiences with her Canadian friends, the academy, and classmates. She had higher expectations from professors “because they carry, and they always talk about these issues.” She is not certain whether those high expectations were met in practice. But she said with some certainty that: “I feel much more comfortable in the society, and in the circles of friends and classmates about sharing my culture. But with the professors I feel lots of barriers still. I believe it involves power issues.” She opined that this power, in whatever aspect it manifests itself, places students under them.

Sounding differently, Mahir testified that he did most of his courses with the same professors, and so, “did not see any power issues. All of them are logical and fine.” On the other hand, he initially found some of his fellow students “who I should consider as ‘white’ Canadians” to be reserved and not wanting to open-up and mingle with us much. But the other students with multicultural backgrounds were perceived as more friendly. He was not expecting anything exceptional, except for the people to be friendly. He said:

It is not like some sort of huge expectation. But I also feel a little bit weird when these ‘white’ people did not want to share a group with me anyway. So that was a little bit weird to me. But the expectation

that I got from my fellow students with multicultural backgrounds was positive and civilized. They will be helpful. They were supportive.

So, one may wonder about the chances of meeting at least some ‘White,’ domestic students who are as open, inclusive, and accepting as they probably think they are. He also perceived the experiences in society more generally, as one with fewer interactions, except for instance, formal interactions at work. He expressed neutral feelings about society in general.

From another perspective also, Nadia pointed out some difficulty in the comparison. This was because she chose whom to interact with in society, unlike what happens at the university. According to her:

The difference is that sense of comfort. It is like, in society, I get to choose who I will interact with, and who will be my friend. And I intentionally go for the people that make me feel comfortable and make me feel like I am accepted with all my cultural backgrounds and everything.

She said that an open-minded professor in the classroom is “an amazing experience [...] if they are curious to hear more about your idea of that concept.” And if they do not, she sees it as part of the differences between the professors and the educational system where she cannot control most things, and in society where she is at liberty to choose with whom she will interact.

She also affirmed that her experiences of multiculturalism with class professors involved power issues or power play. She observed the absence of platforms “for international students to voice out their opinions.” They rather feel free to discuss their problems *outside* of school, and then learn to manage it at school, she concluded.

Conceptualizing the multicultural self and the multicultural environment at the university. Having understood multiculturalism as such, the next theme articulates how participants conceptualized their multicultural selves and the multicultural environment at the university.

Active steps and inclusiveness. Nadia conceived multiculturalism as inclusivity. She saw it as something that should exist actively and that required some steps to be taken towards achieving its goals. In her opinion, it must start with questions to know about the other, the other’s ideas, culture, or religion. She said:

When you ask me those questions, that is my idea of multiculturalism.

It cannot arise when questions are not being asked. My understanding is, when those questions are asked and information is shared, you can then take that information as inclusivity.

She made a very important point here, that it involves taking active steps that require people to ask questions and apply the information they get about the other in all lived experiences, whether in society or when creating curriculum in the

university for international students. That, she said, is her idea of multiculturalism and multicultural self. Thus, the conceptualization of her multicultural self proceeds from that of multiculturalism.

Nadia also had a similar conceptualization of the multicultural environment at the university. She re-emphasised the need for active and holistic inclusiveness that asks about international students' conceptualization of multiculturalism and does not pick and choose among the responses when implementing them within curriculum, policies, and procedures.

Active efforts beyond the comfort zones. Wan conceptualized her multicultural self as oriented more towards her own community where she can interact with people who share similar cultural backgrounds with her. In her observations, she said: "I think there are different societies and organizations in the university that allow people to interact with others. I still feel sometimes people are more comfortable with people that they know, that speak the same language." But she was realistic that people sometimes need to make efforts to interact with others outside their comfort zones. This is an interesting point in that it acknowledges that enacting one's multicultural self requires some agency or action on the part of the individual; in other words, it is not only the responsibility of the institution.

Active multicultural practice. In a similar vein, Abreshmina conceptualized her multicultural self as an offshoot of a personal observation about the

university. She said: “I think multicultural education and the academia is as high as the goals. They set the bar so high, or the goal so big, that they cannot reach it. Or if they reach it, it is not practical. It is theoretical all the time.” So, she conceives her multicultural self as one that will pursue important multicultural services for international students; in other words, there was a strong practical undertone to what she shared with me.

First, she identified the need for offering “consulting sessions for the students of each country in their own languages [...] giving this kind of mental health services with us in the language of the students [...] could be seen as a multicultural service.” Secondly, she conceptualized a multicultural self that places more of an emphasis on each student’s culture, country of origin, and who they really are when introducing themselves in class. According to Abreshmina, “I see my multicultural self upholding these principles.” She contended that encouraging such little practices at such basic levels will lead to it becoming normative, for people to be recognized beyond just their names and countries of origin. So, this would lead to acknowledging each student as a unique individual through a multicultural lens.

About the multicultural environment at the university, Abreshmina expected representatives of the university to be more aware of and acknowledge some special cultural celebrations from her country. In her own words:

I am saying even the New Year, which is a big deal for us, they do not. If they have the claim for multiculturalism, they will go and search about our special events [...] And they will send out a kind of congratulations on different events like Chinese New Year [etc.] They should send out emails to [the] students and say congratulations for the new year. But have you ever seen that?

She felt that given the number of international students and professors belonging to these various diverse communities, the multicultural environment at the university should be there for them when they celebrate, and not only when they mourn. And I believe that she has a good point.

Intrinsic and extrinsic multicultural selves. Mahir saw the concept of the multicultural self as something we have got in ourselves. He said:

My multicultural self will conceptualize multiculturalism as a situation where people from different cultures, ethnicities, nationalities, and religions will have in society, equal rights and opportunities, and nobody will be ignored. And they will be regarded as important as others in society.

His multicultural self believed in equal opportunities, advantages, and rights for everyone in society. It is expected to create a condition that guarantees people's safety and ease of doing things like everyone else.

From his own perspective, Aryan argued that he could not conceptualize himself in defence of a notion that sat outside of his own world. Multiculturalism was a foreign concept to him, and he believed that arriving at one's multicultural self requires a continuous and collective struggle. It involves a dialogue between oneself and the concept and in some contexts, he said, the struggle is between one's own world and the world beyond the individual, such as the university environment.

Looking at the university context, he pictured the international students as always in a struggle with the multicultural world of the university and its broad culture. He noted that there could be "some common points that are easy for us to conceptualize, just to negotiate." But he maintained that it might initially be difficult to conceptualize one's own multicultural self, given that it is a learned reality outside his own world.

Dominant cultures at the university. Some participants alleged the existence and impacts of dominant cultures in their conceptualizations of the multicultural self and multicultural environment at the university. Aryan pointed out that there exist some dominant cultures that determine the multicultural environment at the university. The minorities, he said, lack the power to express themselves, and may often be marginalised or oppressed, even in service delivery. He said: "[W]hen we go to consulting services for instance, they might say, well, this is like that for people who come from [...] But I am not sure. I do not have

knowledge about your culture.” He added that the same thing extends to the university’s rules and regulations as well.

Kim also spoke about the dominant culture in the university which determines how people and students are treated, “the way they process things, talk, interact, and even handle everything.” She observed that: “They try to celebrate diversity and multiculturalism, but the way of doing things is from the dominant culture, not from the cultures of international students or immigrant cultures.” Following her experiences, she noted that the policies and the processes of handling affairs are pre-set to follow the dominant cultures. The best they can do is to respect the ‘other.’

One might rightly ask, is it realistic to think that any one institution could be knowledgeable about and responsive to all cultures represented by its members? However, international students seem to have their expectations, as they are very conscious of how much they have invested to be able to pursue graduate studies in Canada.

Equal respect. Kim conceptualized a multicultural self that expects to be treated with respect alongside the rest, both fellow immigrants and Canadians. She believed that there should be greater emphasis on multicultural education earlier, from the orientation programs, and more multicultural events by various units of the university. She hoped that such an approach would drive home the

message of multiculturalism and multicultural education beyond international students and touch people from the dominant cultures as well.

As for the multicultural environment at the university, Mahir also underscored the importance of respect, saying that “The university itself is also expected to create a multicultural environment which is respectful, rewarding, safe, and inclusive.” The university for him should be the ideal ground for a smooth convergence and coexistence of multicultural people. And given the numerous educational, intellectual, and financial contributions of international students to the university, he believes that they should enjoy equal rights. In other words, his multicultural self believes in the importance of equality in the university and society at large.

Covert and systemic racism. In his conceptualization, Rohan noted that “the conflict between the outsider and insider in the Canadian context” is invisible and masked in “what the people in Canada call systemic racism.” This, he said, is his conceptualization. And he linked it to a global “project of power practice and politics.” Canada needs to demonstrate through claims of multiculturalism that they are so open to immigration. But in his opinion, they try so hard to ensure that this project must not jeopardise their grips on the ‘white’ powers and privileges.

And within the multicultural environment at the university, Rohan described the unfriendly circumstances faced by international students when they

try to communicate or seek information. He pointed out that international students are mostly in need of information and directives from the university for different reasons, including for research purposes. But based on his own experiences, he was worried that some professors, faculty members and administrative staff were not so friendly and cordial when responding to such demands. In fact, he believed that sometimes, international students were taken for granted. And by systemic or institutional racism, I think Rohan refers to wider, structural, institutional and pedagogical practices, not individual biases and attitudes.

Further, Rohan described the multicultural environment at the university as a system developed for immigrant students to go through and emerge as Canadian “products.” He said: “It is a like a factory [...] We are the raw materials.” He said that they try to infuse and impose beliefs, thoughts, and ways of cognition already built into the educational system on the international students to become what they want them to be. “And that is the multicultural environment at the university,” he concluded. This presents a rather pessimistic view of the role of international students in Canadian universities so this notion of the university as a “factory” churning out “products” will also be addressed in more detail in Chapter Five.

Centered around international students. Describing the multicultural environment at the university, Wan said it is centered around international students. This, she said, makes the Indigenous community almost nominal, as

“we do not really get to know people from the Indigenous background in the university.” I think she makes a good point when she suggests that the university could organise more intercultural events that would bring together Indigenous students and students from different cultures so that they could have deeper and more frequent interactions with one another.

Summary

This chapter has attempted to capture the range of voices of the participants and from their perspectives, the implications of international students’ conceptualizations of multiculturalism and multicultural education on the educational goals of multicultural education. Most responses about professors acknowledged that certain factors could affect professors’ abilities to understand or misunderstand, and their ability to discuss international students’ preconceptions of multiculturalism and multicultural education in class.

Most participants agreed that their preconceptions and lived experiences in Canada had an impact on their new conceptualizations of multiculturalism and multicultural education. For others, it is not about changes in meaning, but the gap between the meaning and the realities within the university and society at large. They also offered varied responses on how they conceptualize their multicultural selves and the multicultural environment at the university. The discourse was guided by the interview protocol without personal questions that could make my positionality to interfere with the participants’ voices.

Conclusion

Going further, some participants had some final words to add. Nadia, who was from a cosmopolitan but non-multicultural society, considered her encounters with, and knowledge of multiculturalism in Canada as a huge step for her personally. Also, although she said that learning about the various cultures and their inclusion in the different affairs at the university was nice, she added: “I would love for the idea of it and the application of it to be in alignment. I know you must start somewhere, so that is great. But I trust that more can be done,” looking at the entire experiences at the university.

Also, in his final observations, Rohan called for more action to ensure that the knowledge and conceptualizations of multiculturalism and multicultural education go beyond international students, to include the professors. He observed that not every student may know about multiculturalism or have their own conceptualizations or equal knowledge of the concept. He countered that “multicultural education is not celebrating different kinds of food.” It rather concerns the students’ needs and should reflect the professors’ pedagogical activities. He concluded by saying that “multicultural issues should be treated as what they are if we must talk about the holistic picture of Canadian rules and regulations, and as they believe in multiculturalism.” In other words, multiculturalism should not end up as empty rhetoric or selective implementation.

From her experiences as an international graduate student, Kim called for multicultural education or multiculturalism to be extended to students who intend to travel overseas to study and live. She believed that it would prepare them well before arrival, or right after arrival. She added:

So, if the students or people have a little information or knowledge about this, they will know what they will face in the coming times when they come to another country to live and study, especially with a country like Canada or the USA.

Within their time of arrival, she suggested that they be educated about multiculturalism in the country. And as they celebrate their own cultures, they should make those values part of their integration in the community. Finally, Aryan concluded by reiterating that covert racism is hidden in the concept of culture and tries to oppress multiculturalism. A critical analysis of the voices and opinions of the study participants will be provided in the next chapter. I will also relate these findings to the theoretical framework in the review of literature to see how these voices connect with scholarly thoughts on the issue.

Chapter Five – Discussion and Conclusions

Looking through the lens of an international student, in this study, I have sought to understand how fellow international graduate students in education conceptualize multiculturalism and multicultural education, given their a priori and a posterior knowledge of the concept (McGinn, 2003). I tried to demonstrate the extent to which the critical multiculturalism framework of McLaren (1994) is relevant in discussing democratic education, students' voices and the meaning systems that have powers to either allow or drown out such voices. The raw data have been organized, coded into themes (cf. Figure 2), and structurally presented in the previous chapter. To avoid leaning toward certain themes in search of evidence to support my position and experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), I have tried to focus on a holistic account of participants' voices and meanings. This chapter therefore provides a critical and analytical overview and discussion of the findings as well as the implications for practice, and implications for further research.

Overview of the findings

International students' conceptualizations of multiculturalism and multicultural education

This was split into two sub-themes, viz: Participants' background on cultural diversity, and preconceptions of multiculturalism.

Participants' background on cultural diversity. Participants agreed that cultural diversity was a reality in their home countries. They had diverse populations comprising locals and foreigners, different cultural realities like languages, food, dress, religion, and so on. Some said that back home, both the major and minority groups co-existed. It also formed part of their education and other social interactions, either freely or by design. However, unlike their Canadian experiences where it is federal policy and socio-political practice, only one participant agreed that she came from a truly multicultural society. The rest of the participants were from societies where the governments were either passive about multiculturalism or ignored it totally. Those were their backgrounds on cultural diversity which logically, were foundational to their preconceptions of multiculturalism.

With respect to their backgrounds on cultural diversity in Canada, I sought participant's experiences on how Canadians treated people from different cultures since their arrival in Canada. Most participants found Canadians to be respectful, kind, and polite to others. At the same time, however, they were also perceived to be passive or superficial in their friendliness to other people and their cultures. It was observed that Canadian society also supports immigrants when they are confronted by those opposed to people from different cultures. It was also suggested that an international student's identity afforded some degree of

privilege in the amount of support received compared to someone who did not come to Canada as a student.

On the other hand, one participant believed that students from a Middle East country experienced racism and stereotypes in the university. This was perhaps due to an incident between the university and an international student from the country in the past. Language and accent also stood out as big issues in the way Canadians treat others, whether international students or not. After their backgrounds on cultural diversity participants were also asked about their preconceptions of multiculturalism.

Participants' preconceptions of multiculturalism. Here, the participants spoke about the following:

- i. Preconceptions of multiculturalism in Canada;
- ii. First encounters with the concept in Canada, and
- iii. Understanding of the concept at that time.

One participant initially perceived multiculturalism in Canada like that of her own society back home. The rest had varying levels of lexical and literal understanding of the concept based on their backgrounds on cultural diversity prior to arriving in Canada. Some participants thought of the concept as just a word, a kind of utopia, banner, or an umbrella term, and these will be analysed in due course.

Participants' initial encounters with multiculturalism in Canada occurred both within and outside the university and the classrooms, respectively. Apart from one participant who was already familiar with the concept, the initial discussions on the concept gave the rest early impressions that informed how they made sense of it back then. As for their understanding of the concept back then, discussions about multiculturalism at that time centred on mutual respect in society among people and their diversities.

Implications on the educational goals of multicultural education

Teaching multiculturalism and multicultural education

Discussions under this sub-theme were broken into five topical issues in line with the interview protocol. The first critical concern was the extent to which the professors sought to understand and then discuss international students' preconceptions of multiculturalism and multicultural education while teaching the concepts. Most participants reasoned that the professors' understanding or misunderstanding of participants' preconceptions probably varied depending on certain factors. According to them, some of those factors were:

- i. The professor's familiarity with international students due to the professor's areas of specialization;
- ii. The perception that some professors' research interests and the benefits that accrue from readings and discussions on those interests which may influence how discussions about multiculturalism are taken up in class;

- iii. The conflation of multiculturalism with multicultural education by some professors; and
- iv. The degree of diversity among the students in a class, which can affect the professors' efforts or abilities to really understand the students' cultures or traditions.

Most of the participants agreed that greater interactions between professors and international students enable such professors to be more newcomer friendly, and to understand and treat international students with care and respect.

The impact of participants' preconceptions and lived experiences on their conceptualizations was evident in their new meanings and conclusions on the concepts. The new knowledge and experiences mostly counteracted their initial expectations and literal understanding of the concepts. Some of these experiences included covert racism, the gap between words and actions, passive friendliness between international and domestic students, and the disparity between learning, observations, and experiences.

However, a question remained – do professors' understanding or misunderstanding of their international students' conceptualizations of the two concepts have an impact on their teaching of multicultural education? While some believed that it does have a positive impact, others opined that as a matter of responsibility, professors are expected to try to understand students' perspectives to instill a better teaching and learning experience. There were also individual

differences and other circumstances that varied among different professors who either tried to understand or alternatively, misunderstood or misinterpreted students' preconceptions.

The next discussion focused on how the participants understood multiculturalism and multicultural education thus far. Different participants conceptualized multiculturalism as: inclusivity of multiple cultures in the education process, appreciation, respect, acceptance, or as a recognition of people with diverse socio-cultural backgrounds and nationalities. Often, it was conceived as a 'banner' to demonstrate a false openness toward others. Their opinions differed on what had changed and what remained between their preconceptions and experiences. The meaning remained the same for most participants while their experiences changed. Others agreed that their conception, meaning and understanding of multiculturalism had changed overtime due to their lived experiences. Some of the changes were due to having attained a greater understanding of the concept overall.

Also, the conceptualization of multicultural education for most of the participants proceeded from their understanding of multiculturalism. The former was mostly understood from the point of view of curriculum design and other pedagogical experiences that were inclusive, respectful, and appreciative of the diverse nature of the student population. There was also the issue of race, as well

as the need to extend the notion of cultural inclusivity to professors from diverse cultural backgrounds as well.

Next was participants' comparison of their experiences with multiculturalism among their professors, fellow students, and society in general. 'Power dynamics' stood out as the major difference in the experiences of participants with some professors. The rest had different experiences with the different groups, based on varying factors. According to them, some of these factors include:

- i. Different levels of knowledge and understanding of the concept among the three groups;
- ii. Distinct roles played by each group on the issue;
- iii. Closer, more friendly, and comfortable dispositions among fellow students and in society;
- iv. Culturally motivated power-gap observed with professors;
- v. Exaggerated perception of barriers between professors and students due to experiences from one's background;
- vi. Higher expectations of professors;
- vii. Perception of 'White' Canadian students as reserved and unwilling to open-up and mingle with international students;
- viii. Limited interactions with the general society;

- ix. Freedom to choose with whom to interact outside the academic space, unlike the professors and the educational system; and
- x. Power dynamics, power issues and power-gaps between professors and students.

These issues will be examined and analysed as well after this overview but suffice it to say that the participants had different views on the power issues that they believe exist between them and their professors.

Lastly, participants were asked to conceptualize the multicultural self and the multicultural environment at the university. Their conceptualizations of the multicultural self mostly reflected their opinions on the concept, such as respect, inclusiveness, and a sense of belonging for others. It was also conceived both as an extrinsic and extrinsic reality to the individual, as well as the attraction toward one's own community for comfort. However, it was suggested that people also need to make some extra efforts to actualize an authentic multicultural self. Some study participants also extended these thoughts to their conceptualizations of the multicultural environment of the university.

The multicultural environment of the university was variously conceptualized as follows: somewhat unfriendly to international students; a factory for transforming international students as raw materials into Canadian models; revolving around the international students; making the Indigenous community nominal, celebrating diversity and multiculturalism mainly from the

dominant cultures' perspectives, and so on. But the hallmark remained the respect for the 'other.'

Discussion of the Findings

International students' conceptualizations of multiculturalism and multicultural education

This discussion of findings applies the review of the relevant literature on multiculturalism and multicultural education from Chapter Two and the conceptual framework from Chapter Three to the second research question. So, how do international graduate students in education conceptualize multiculturalism and multicultural education, from their preconceptions to lived social and educational experiences? In other words, what are the similarities and differences between their preconceptions and their new conceptions, and what might the implications for teaching be?

Participants' background on cultural diversity. In the review of literature, multiculturalism was correlated with socio-cultural diversity and other diversities in culture and cultural coexistence. This enriches and reforms Canadian society (Banks & Banks, 2010; Parekh, 2000), whether as a policy, principle, concept, or phenomenon. But Murphy (2019, n.p) has noted that while multiculturalism may sometimes be used interchangeably with diversity, it focuses more on "how different groups can express and value their own cultural beliefs and practices without impacting or undermining those of another group."

He adds that it includes a combination of greater socio-cultural harmony, relationships, opportunities, and emotional skills. I see international graduate students as micro groups of individuals from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds who make up a macro group at the university. I equally believe that understanding their backgrounds on cultural diversity is key to learning how they form their conceptions of multiculturalism. And this idea is driven by McLaren's (1994) critical multiculturalism framework.

Back home. From the findings, only one participant came from a background of cultural diversity because her own society observed socio-cultural and other forms of diversity. The rest had experienced diversity across majority and minority groups, diverse populations, languages, food, dress, religion, and so on, in their respective societies. But unlike the Canadian government, their own governments had much different dispositions towards diversity. Barrett (2013, p. 4) confirms this when he wrote: "Multiculturalism does not only vary across countries – it also varies significantly within countries over time." So, the difference between Canadian multiculturalism and the backgrounds of the various participants may not sound so strange.

According to the participants, cultural diversity in their backgrounds was either not an issue, or it was made unpopular, ignored, or even suppressed by their various governments. For some participants, homogeneity was presumed by their country's governments in some cases and imposed in favour of the majority group

over others. On the contrary, the literature review showed that Canada has an official government policy (Canadian Multiculturalism Policy, 1971; Coulthard, 2007) which promises to support and preserve the cultural freedom of everyone and all diverse ethnic groups in the country. This implies that participants came from backgrounds of various levels of cultural homogenization (Conversi, 2017) to a society of cultural diversity. Therefore, I would argue that this fact should not escape the attention of their professors.

As it relates to the aim of this study, the critical multiculturalism framework described earlier (Freire, 1970; McLaren, 1994; Nylund, 2006) advocates for a democratic education that is open to students' backgrounds while introducing dominant and ambiguous concepts. And I suggest that effort is needed to recognize that the meanings and experiences of these dominant concepts in Canada may most times vary from the international students' backgrounds.

In Canada. The students' experiences on cultural diversity in Canada centered on how Canadians treat people from different cultures, both within the academic environment and the larger society. Most of the students in the study perceived Canadians' attitudes towards cultural diversity as peaceful and respectful. Multiculturalism was also seen as a friendly and welcoming 'banner.' But beyond that peaceful front of mutual respect and equality, the openness to

diversity did not address issues like students' needs to make their voices heard and for them to feel free to express themselves in the lecture hall.

The issues of language and accent were problematized as participants observed that it influenced how Canadians treated others, whether international students or not. Shizha (2019) saw that as a perennial problem faced by immigrants across the world, including visible minorities who are already competent and proficient in English or French. He decried efforts to shed foreign accents as part of the process of assimilation. As well, some participants questioned the rationale behind the expectations on them to speak with the 'right' accent in a supposedly multicultural, educational environment.

These experiences supported earlier findings in the review of literature that international students navigating new learning environments in new countries have specific needs and challenges. According to Chen (1996), these include cultural, linguistic, and academic challenges, culture shock, and struggles in finding the right services and information in their new environments. This, according to Arshad-Ayaz (2011), has made education one of the social problems and greatest challenges faced by racialized immigrant communities in Canada.

Preconceptions of multiculturalism. Participants' first encounters with the concept of 'multiculturalism' in Canada and their initial discussions on the concept were also considered as part of their preconceptions of multiculturalism.

Early impressions in Canada. Apart from the participant who was already familiar with the concept in her multicultural society, others articulated their preconceptions in Canada based on their literal and lexical understanding. Some of them understood it as the assimilation of different cultures, and the coming together, coexistence, and interaction of people from diverse origins and cultures. This includes people's different linguistic, cultural, religious, ethnic diversities, food, clothing and so on. These literal understandings of the concept were not far from the popular notions of multiculturalism in Canada.

Multiculturalism in Canada was seen as a 'utopia' – a peaceful coexistence among cultures, and as merely as a 'word,' based on the lived experiences of some participants. The notion of utopia is consistent with some scholarly notions of Canada as a multicultural utopia without issues of diversity and acceptance (Laughlin, 2014). Also, Shizha (2019) rates Canada among countries that often receive praise for their multiculturalism policy which favor cultural pluralism. And according to Nel et al., (2009), the experiences of this participant can snowball into other issues including uncertainty, personal doubt, and distress if one is not well prepared to make the transition to the reality of the new society. In the same vein, the idea of Canadian multiculturalism as a mere nomenclature is reminiscent of Li (1999) who noted that multiculturalism is merely a symbolic recognition of diversity in the name of government policy.

It was equally suggested that there is a big ‘gap’ existing between the words and actions of Canadians on multiculturalism. This depicts the liberalist notion of multiculturalism in Canada, according to scholars such as Coulthard (2007), Kwak (2017), and Kymlicka (2010). By sustaining the supremacy of the Anglo-white settler identity, it symbolically recognizes minorities while disregarding the racism and discrepancies that fall short of the expectations of some international students. Perhaps this is what prompted one participant to critique the celebration of cultural diversity which, in his opinion, does not address students’ social, academic, and other personal needs.

First encounters in Canada. Canadian multiculturalism initially showed some resemblance with that of the background of the only participant from a multicultural society. However, other participants recounted their initial encounters with the concept and how they made sense of it then, both outside the university, across the university and within the classrooms.

Initial discussions. Some of the initial encounters with multiculturalism at the university were during the orientation workshops for international students. Their initial impressions were that it was a new concept, and this proceeded from their backgrounds on cultural diversity, their early impressions in Canada, and their often-literal understanding of the concept. Just as one participant initially thought that the concept was familiar, another thought that there was only a little difference between his preconceptions and the meaning in the school and society.

As it is commonly understood, Canadian multiculturalism is an official government policy that addresses the recognition of ‘non-white,’ Indigenous and immigrant cultural groups. But the successes and failures in its promises of support, preservation, and cultural freedom in support of cultural diversity in the country (Canadian Multiculturalism Policy, 1971; Coulthard, 2007) remains a big issue. And this leaves a lot of gaps between the rhetoric and the lived experiences of international students in conceptualizing what it means and seeing it enacted at the university and in society, more generally.

Implications on the educational goals of multicultural education

Teaching multiculturalism and multicultural education. The second theme and its subtitle covered the last five interview questions (cf. Figure 2). The first one focused on the extent to which the participants’ professors sought to understand and then discuss international students’ preconceptions of multiculturalism and multicultural education while teaching the concepts.

Professors’ understanding of participants’ preconceptions. For most participants, it varied according to individual professors and seemed to depend on a number of factors cited earlier on this chapter. Most participants agreed that the more professors and international students interacted, the more likely professors were to be ‘immigrant friendly’ and able to understand international students’ conceptions of multiculturalism. Professors’ approach and understanding of students’ conceptions of multiculturalism appeared very natural

for one participant. Being ‘natural’ here would imply that it has become a good habit or virtue to them due to constant repetition (Vendemiati, 2004). They repeatedly carry out their professional duties as it is ethically required of them (Misselbrook, 2013; Sockett, 2009). But a few participants still felt that it depended on the situation and that it really varied from professor to professor.

This calls for “the multicultural teaching competencies of teachers” which revolve around the professors’ “awareness, knowledge, attitude, skills” (Ciftci & Gurol, 2015, p. 5) in interacting with international students, despite all odds. The authors argue that teachers are the vehicle through which education reaches students. For that, the competencies of teachers within a critical multicultural education practice may vary if, as teachers, they are not active in the critical transformation. They emphasized the need for teachers involved in working within the multicultural education paradigm to reconcile any gaps between their perceptions and their life experiences to avoid personal biases that might negatively impact on the educational experience of students. This would counteract the effect of professors’ personal interests and benefits which according to participants, sometimes unnecessarily limit discussions in class.

The participants in the study believed that the professors have the responsibility to understand and discuss international students’ preconceptions, no matter the professors’ individual conditions. It was expected that during lectures, professors would demonstrate a broader understanding of

multiculturalism. This responsibility according to Gorski (2010), demands critical thinking and transformation skills from the teachers. In line with Ciftci and Gurol (2015), it is believed that this would boost their multicultural teaching competencies and would resolve some of the issues discussed earlier which have an impact on teaching and learning.

Also, issues like the diversity of the student population in a course must not be seen merely as a challenge to the professor's ability to understand every student's culture but as an opportunity for cultural exchange among professors, international students, and their domestic counterparts. This kind of exchange increases the wealth of ideas and diverse views and is beneficial for all involved. And as some scholars (Lillyman & Bennett, 2014; Madgett & Belanger, 2008) have noted, this could be a major factor in strengthening the quality of internationalization in Canada's post-secondary education sector.

McLaren's (1994) critical multiculturalism paradigm opposes multicultural education for its overly simplistic and naive perspective, in this case, of the privileges, and responsibilities of the professor as an authority. Reacting to McLaren's (1994) critique, Nylund (2006) believes that there is need to avoid so much reliance on subjective conditions, such as the above factors. They may serve as excuses in fostering an undemocratic meaning system that pays little or no attention to international students' preconceptions and backgrounds while teaching dominant concepts.

Impact of preconceptions and lived experiences on conceptualizations.

The more recent understanding and experiences of some participant of the two concepts mostly counteracted their initial expectations, deconstructed their preconceptions, and impacted their new conceptualizations of the two concepts. International students have needs and expectations (Chen, 1996). There is often an unclear vision of the extent of these needs and challenges once they arrive in Canada. And for most of the participants, the likelihood that these needs and expectations will match their lived experiences has had an impact on their own conceptualizations.

Only one participant who came from a multicultural society, had preconceptions of the concepts prior to Canada. But with her lived experiences, she noted that there was a ‘big gap’ between what Canadians like to think and promote in words, and their actual actions. This has had an impact on her conception of Canadian multiculturalism as mutual help and respect among people from different cultures who do not sacrifice their own cultures while trying to interact with people from other cultures.

The rest of the participants formed their preconceptions of multiculturalism and multicultural education in Canada when they first learned about the concepts. A balance of preconceptions and lived experiences about multiculturalism and multicultural education impacted the perspective, attitudes and experiences of one participant. But learning about multicultural education only sounded amazing

to another at the beginning. However, were those preconceptions sustained by their lived experiences? Their experiences of some participants went contrary to their expectations, despite the positive impacts on the perspectives, attitudes, and perceptions of at least one of them. More specifically for another participant, his lived experiences involved racism in society and a gap in the relationships between international and domestic students which had an impact on his conceptualization.

Rose-Redwood and Rose-Redwood (2013) have argued that such experiences can cause distress for international students. They believe that, in some cases, experiences with racism may result in students withdrawing and instead, gravitating towards peers from their own countries. And according to Russell et al. (2010), such segregation may well lead to marginalization, and the risk of verbal or physical abuse within and outside the university. But the participants did not report any such experiences. Also, other participants who experienced racism felt that multicultural awareness was equally needed among domestic students. This was due to the impact of the experiences and preconceptions on the conceptualizations of these concepts. More light will be shed on this later in this chapter. Next, the study participants looked at professors' understanding or misunderstanding of their international students' conceptualizations of the two concepts.

Impact of professors' understanding or misunderstanding of those conceptualizations. Does it have an impact on their teaching of multicultural education? Three of the participants in the study agreed that it really has an impact. Others saw it as the professors' responsibility to understand students' different perspectives, and that they are expected to do so to make a positive impact on the teaching of multicultural education.

Depending on individual cases, some participants believed that a given professor may either understand, misunderstand, or misinterpret the students' preconceptions. And each instance was believed to have an impact on their teaching of multicultural education. On the contrary, some sounded sceptical as to whether their professors really understood international students' conceptualizations of the two concepts or not, even though it is their responsibility to do so. One of impacts in the argument was that, while the professors dwell on their own perspectives, students will maintain theirs. Similarly, there was an argument as to whether some of the professors were really teaching multicultural education or not.

Subjectively, one can conclude that many students are already familiar with the above-mentioned factors and circumstances as the predispositions of certain professors toward diversity in the classroom. It is equally arguable that dwelling on such personal perspectives could risk reinforcing the scholarly critique (Banks, 2004; Ciftci & Gurol, 2015; Leonardo, 2002), that education

impacts dominant ideologies, norms, and applications undemocratically on students. In other words, I argue along with most of the study participants, that professors who teach international students need some level of multicultural awareness and intercultural competencies.

It is obvious that in many cases, professors are not expected to teach multiculturalism depending on what they were hired to teach. But, beyond having those concepts in their courses, participants in this study understood them as principles and policies governing most of the students' interactions within the university and society in general. Whether a particular lecture is on those concepts or not, the study participants, including myself, believe that professors ought to practice multiculturalism as part of what the country and university espouse. Unless one is mistaken, part of the understanding was that multiculturalism and multicultural education are part of the policies and educational system at the university and society. So, either way, the study participants agreed that whether the professors understood or not, the impacts were obvious.

Professors have the responsibility to converge the diverse voices, both his/her own and those of the students. The critical multiculturalism framework fosters this openness to a plurality of conceptualizations (McLaren, 1994) and demands that the critical educator must not impose personal intellectual perspectives on students. And this does not depend on whether the students' preconceptions were misunderstood and misinterpreted, or not.

Participants' conceptualization of multiculturalism and multicultural education. So, how did the participants conceptualize these two concepts from their preconceptions and lived experiences? As earlier noted, Barrett (2013) observed that the term 'multiculturalism' is used equivocally by different speakers. As such, some of the participants understood the concept over time as inclusivity and mutual respect for socio-cultural differences among people. One participant summed up her thoughts succinctly when she said: "Respect the cultures, accept the cultures, recognize the cultures, and appreciate them." These notions recalled Kymlicka's (1995, 2003) usage of the term 'multiculturalism.' As Barrett (2013, p. 2) put it: "...the cultures of non-dominant minority groups are accorded the same recognition and accommodation that are accorded to the culture of the dominant group." But the lived experiences of some participants did not always reflect this view.

Some participants shared that their preconceptions about multiculturalism had changed. In most instances, either that the intent of the concept was contrary to the international student's lived experiences, or that the earlier notion as simply a respect for coexistence in cultural diversity gave way to a new understanding. This includes more efforts in making friends or acquaintances and asking questions rather than making assumptions that lead to stereotypes. This shift was common among most participants whose academic and other learning activities changed their views and understanding of the concept.

Negative lived experiences did not deconstruct but reinforced the preconceptions of others. Some of them witnessed a racial incident as earlier noted while discussing the impact of participants' preconceptions and lived experiences on conceptualizations. Such experiences reinforced their utopian notion of Canada. The experiences were believed to have confirmed the preconception that multiculturalism in Canada is akin to a banner, project, name or an umbrella term which gave immigrants *the impression* that Canadians were open to non-Canadians. This view is consistent with the arguments of some scholars (Coulthard, 2007; Kymlicka, 2010; Kwak, 2019) who have critiqued Canadian multiculturalism as merely the symbolic recognition of minorities while remaining rather silent on social justice issues. This systemic racism is not about individual attitudes but refers to how society works (Gao, 2020). It is rooted in institutional biases in the culture, policies, directives, practices, and procedures of organisations which may appear to be neutral; however, they accord privileges to some groups while marginalizing others.

Some of the participants retained their preconceptions about multiculturalism which revolved around inclusivity and respect for other people and their cultures. The meaning remained the same, both within and outside the classroom. However, it mostly differs from their lived experiences, interactions with the professors, course mates and peers outside lectures. Thus, the impact of the participants' lived experiences on their conceptualizations of multiculturalism

were very evident in their accounts. And in some cases, it revealed a gap between the meaning of the concept and what happened in practice. This recurring gap in the various accounts of the participants will be duly addressed.

The participants' conceptualizations of multiculturalism also had an impact on their understanding of multicultural education; more specifically, most of them extended their positions on the former to the latter. Hence, they conceptualized multicultural education as the application of inclusivity, respect, and appreciation of students' diversity to curriculum design, and other teaching and learning experiences. For some, it meant the inclusion of multiple cultures, backgrounds, and identities in designing the curriculum, educational experiences, and processes across all fields.

The diversity of such cultures and identities was believed to help people know more about one another and enrich their souls. Emphasising the need for inclusivity, another called for active steps toward including information about international students' cultural backgrounds in the curriculum and daily planning. Although this may not sound realistic, I believe that international students willingly volunteer such information about their expectations, hoping that their voices will be reflected in decisions concerning them on campus. And another participant's conceptualization of multicultural education according to her experiences, also focused on combining people's diverse ethnicities, cultural backgrounds, and nationalities.

So, in the end, most of the participants viewed multicultural education and practice to include curriculum reform. Their conceptualizations omitted the self-transformation of the professors, the schools and schooling (Gorski, 2000). Neither did they mention any experiences of democratic education (Freire, 1970) in their experiences of teaching and learning. But two participants went beyond curriculum reform and drew attention to race, and the extension of cultural inclusivity to the professors from diverse cultural backgrounds.

On one hand, some of the participants' conceptualizations of multicultural education was influenced by their understanding of multiculturalism that was often marred by racism, both in society and in the educational system. Here, it was argued that the reformation of curriculum and pedagogical practices would not automatically produce multicultural education. One of them called for the decolonization of minds to institutionalize and actualize the multicultural education that would respect cultural diversity in a sincere and authentic way.

On the other hand, other participants' understanding of multicultural education was that both the students and professors from different backgrounds should feel safe to talk about their cultures, share and be proud of them at school. They underscored the importance of educating all Canadians on diversity and multiculturalism for all to live together harmoniously. These latter conceptions were closer to the position of Gorski (2000; 2010) who sees multicultural education as using the school to transform society for social change and harmony.

And such may be the solution to most of the gaps experienced between the theory as expressed by the participants.

Comparison of experiences. Another point was the comparison of participants' experiences with multiculturalism among class professors, fellow students, and society in general. Some participants believed that their experiences with the three groups were similar, while others recounted different experiences with each group. Issues of power or power dynamics were also observed in the experiences of most participants with professors as authorities. Others gave various reasons for saying that their experiences with multiculturalism among class professors, fellow students, and society in general varied to some extent. Glass et. al. (2015, p. 363) have noted how useful "social ties with other internationals, co-nationals, and host students [are] in predicting persistence and a stronger sense of connection." But some participants only enjoyed such ties with fellow international students, while host students were perceived to be cold and passive like their fellow Canadians in society.

Based on their experiences involving multiculturalism with professors, fellow students, and society, some participants believed that they were almost similar, except for the power dynamic between professors and students. Some participants who did not experience any overt exertion of power or suppression of their voices by any professor, still maintained that the issue of the power

dynamic was undeniable. Conversely, some others affirmed that their experiences with some professors involved lots of barriers and power issues.

Earlier on, I established that the critical multiculturalism framework (McLaren, 1994) was highly concerned about the meaning systems whose powers can allow or drowning others' voices. Shizha (2019) noted that while multiculturalism has focused on the assimilation policy of ethnic visible minorities, it has ignored "the power behind 'white' supremacy, racism, and discrimination that affect minorities" (p. 121). There is no gainsaying that this overflowed into multicultural education where international students represent the minority in this argument. At the university, professors may complement one another in their pedagogical roles, including the authority relationships they have with their students. But they are not so dependent on one another in practicing multiculturalism (Davies & Guppy, 2010; Kiesling, 2018). As a result, it would not be an exception if participants experienced differences among some professors in their words, beliefs, and practices which affected teaching and learning which would be like multicultural practices in society.

Given that power is central to the political and policy conceptualizations of multiculturalism, McLaren (1994) problematized dominant meaning frameworks that exploit power privileges while teaching dominant and normative concepts and attributes to others. From Nylund's (2006) perspective, having failed to address the power gap and privilege structures of society,

multiculturalism was also intended to “marginalize and dismiss the different experiences of students/clients of colour and avoid a power analysis of institutional forms of racism” (p. 29). As such, participants with different experiences of issues of power said they lacked the legitimate spaces to voice their concerns, except among their peers.

I believe that students need more openness toward their views, conceptualizations, and more active epistemological participation within a democratic educational environment. I also feel that professors, as the majority with authority and power, need to be conscious of the power they hold and the control they have over policies and practices regarding students. This also extends to the consciousness of their responsibilities towards such powers within the critical multicultural education paradigm. I agree with one of the participants that professors occupy a position of power which they could exert on students in molding the students’ perceptions, marking and grading, supervising theses, and so on. Some participants also noted that professors have the upper hand as they know how to circumvent the rules, policies, and punishments if they err in handling students, unlike when the students err while relating with them.

Aside from issues related to power, some participants also reported varied experiences with professors, fellow students, and society. Most participants were more comfortable interacting with friends and society in general than they were with class professors. This was not surprising because, it is expected that people

would always gravitate to those who are of the same age, ethnicity, social status, and so on. Meanwhile, the encounters that some participants had with ‘white’ Canadians students were often a bit reserved. Murphy (2019) discovered in a study of graduate students that “interactions with international students helped them develop new skills, such as learning a second language, which in turn enabled them to broaden their cognitive abilities” (n.p). But according to some, domestic students refused to open-up to others from abroad. They refused to sit with international students, but also preferred sitting with their own peers. On one occasion, one of the professors observed this happening and intervened by asking both domestic and international students to mix themselves up in the class’s seating arrangement. So, it was no surprise that this was the case, that both participants and domestic students preferred interacting with their own.

I agree with Hermans et al. (2017) that for those participants whose experiences with some professors were devoid of any power issues, an instrumental relationship can actually exist between most students and their teachers. But while the students trust them, the participants acknowledged that they also did not take personal problems to them. One participant’s cultural background made her observe and respect the hierarchical gap and issues of power between professors and students naturally as a habit. Although she noticed a greater sense of closeness between students and their professors here in Canada, she said she was still highly aware of the power positions occupied by

professors. I agree with her on this, to the extent that our manners and choice of language as international students mostly depict respect, distance, and politeness while interacting with professors. Shizha (2019) also identified this pressure between the standards of the inner self and the demands of the host environment as it brings a real tension among most immigrants.

Two participants who had less contact with people except in school described their experiences with society in general as one with fewer interactions. They were mostly neutral, formal, or involved professional exchanges at work and other places. For yet another, it depended on how one mingled and interacted within the community. She explained that as a married Asian woman, she lacked most of the opportunities that younger fellow students have. Hence, her own experiences with society were different.

Lastly, there were the issues of different levels of knowledge and understanding of multiculturalism among professors, fellow students, and society. These accounted for the differences in the experiences with these groups as well. It was observed that learning the real meaning of the concept in school differentiated students and professors from society where it was either the literal understanding or just public opinions that reigned.

Multicultural self and multicultural environment at the university.

These last two concepts were not discussed in the review of literature, but they added a psychological tone that balanced the philosophical and sociological

dimensions of the study. According to Hicks (1998), the multicultural self is ‘a compound self’ operative in all aspects of human life, intrinsically and extrinsically. He saw it as unique, driven “by conscious reflection on the constructions of knowledge as well as the experiences of life” (p. 17). By implication, the multicultural self is rooted in the culture and social life of the individual. And for the participants, this implied the assumption of a new or additional self in an environment that is multicultural, and often different from their backgrounds.

None of the participants mentioned any encounter with the concept of multicultural self during their lectures. But two of them suggested that the multicultural self demanded active steps in multiculturalism in the presence of diversity. One of these active steps was that that people must make efforts to understand and motivate themselves to relate to others *outside* their cultural comfort zones. This follows the participant’s conceptualization of a multicultural self that was centered on comfort in interacting with people of her own cultural community. The other one opined that the first step toward an authentic form of multiculturalism should be to ask questions about people’s ideas, culture, or religion, aimed at sharing information. It is naturally convenient for people to gravitate more toward their own cultural communities (Shizha, 2019), where friendly and informal interactions with familiar faces are common. This brings in the idea of cultural communities.

Cultural communities have been identified by Shizha (2019) as physical and sociocultural spaces where people such as some ethnic immigrants to Canada retain their cultural distinctiveness while navigating the larger dominant society. This apparent contradiction made Hicks (1998) reason that “multicultural people are called upon to make choices which are paradoxical and conflict with the complex ways in which they live and make meaning of the world” (p. 1). Hence, many international students end up facing these contradictory commitments of their ethnic enclaves, and new multicultural memberships that require a lot of effort on their part within the dominant group.

Contrary to these active steps, the professor, fellow student or anyone in society can conveniently pretend or presume to know the culture of the international student. Hence, one may either be tempted to speak for the other or may feel that there not is not much need to know about the other’s culture, and still claim to be multicultural. But the other participant also shared the quest for a multicultural self that demanded active steps. This includes that the first step toward an authentic form of multiculturalism should be to ask questions about people’s ideas, culture, or religion, aimed at sharing information. Both the multicultural self that was naturally drawn to the cultural groups for comfort, and the need for extra efforts beyond the comfort seemed to agree with the view of Hicks (1998). They all made a case for personal efforts to mingle with the

dominant group, as well as the need for recognizing and enhancing their relations with other diverse cultures.

There was also the conceptualization of a multicultural that was oriented toward the provision of multicultural services to international students in their first languages. Similarly, there was the view of a multicultural self centred on respect and equal treatment which needed to be enjoyed by all, the way members of the dominant culture here in Canada does, and in their first languages, too. Perhaps, these kinds of provisions would go a long way in deconstructing stereotypes and dissatisfaction among many international students. It will arguably bring to reality the ideals of multiculturalism and multicultural education that seem to exist only on paper in scholarly arguments. Thus, the gaps between what is said and what is really done will be bridged.

Also, there is the conceptualisation of a multicultural self involved from the outset with the idea of establishing international students' holistic cultural backgrounds from the onset in class. This participant was opposed to the casual introduction of names and countries of origin. She believed that adding this extra effort at such basic levels would make it become normal for everyone to be recognized for their cultures and countries of origin. So, to achieve a better multicultural self therefore, these participants advocated for greater personal efforts coupled with more active institutional steps toward a true sense of multiculturalism.

Re-echoing Hicks (1998) for whom the multicultural self operates both in the internal and external aspects of human life, two participants conceptualized the concept as both an intrinsic and extrinsic reality, respectively. On the one hand, the multicultural self is perceived as an intrinsic reality that involved the possession of rights to social equality and safety. Possessing those rights in the individual appeared to make the multicultural self an intrinsic reality. This idea agreed with Hermans et al.'s (2017) notion of the 'traditional' concept of self as an 'internal' reality within the individual mind.

On the other hand, another argued that one could not conceptualize the multicultural self because it is an extrinsic reality that was cognitively acquired. Contrary to the opinion that the intrinsic reality incorporates social equality and safety in the individual, another envisioned the university and its extensive cultures as part of the universe beyond the individual. And it is believed to possess instead, common ground that can be conceptualized for the sake of negotiation. Yet, the participant believed that it would be a difficult task that would require some initial struggles, just as others believed that personal efforts are needed to achieve multicultural harmony.

But rather than further exploring the above intrinsic and extrinsic positions, I chose to focus more on the stories of the lived experiences of the study participants in their efforts to conceptualize a new and dominant concept. Following the work of Sleeter and McLaren (1995), I reiterate that professors of

international students need to seek, and then pay attention to their students' voices in their silent struggles of meaning-making with dominant concepts such as multiculturalism and multicultural education. The perceived challenges of international students with concepts such as these reflect the opinion that, "oppressed identity/social groups also face the challenge of negotiating multiple worlds at the same time" (Hicks, 1998, p. 1). Their efforts and experiences towards conceptualizing these important concepts must not be ignored because they do not have the powers to alter the dominant meanings. Rather, it is part of the democratic education which according to critical multicultural education, impacts positively on students' learning experiences.

In his conceptualization of the multicultural self, one of the participants needed to reach beyond the self to dialogue or negotiate with another external reality – the university environment and its extensive cultures. And that takes us to the multicultural environment and how the participants conceptualized it. The university environment is a diverse environment comprising teachers and students of different backgrounds, origins, sex, age, and socioeconomic backgrounds (Ross, 2015; Sanchez et al., 2018). And for Murphy (2019, n.p), "a diverse student body and faculty inevitably engender broader and more rigorous discussions" that yield greater and more robust ideas. Hence, the multicultural classroom is expected to help nurture students' notions of self epistemologically and to understand and adapt to the multicultural environment at the university.

In their conceptualizations of the multicultural environment at the university, many of the study participants highlighted certain dominant cultures which controlled the education activities, students' services, rules, and regulations. The multicultural environment at the university was conceptualized as one dominated by the Chinese and Indian cultures, the Canadian 'white' culture, and the Christian culture. This contradicted Murphy's (2019, n.p) view of multiculturalism as "a mixed ethnic community where multiple cultures live side by side," with none trying to dominate others. But the position of this participant re-echoed Murphy (2019) that minority cultures within the multicultural environment, this time at the university, on one hand "do not have the power to express themselves [and] are oppressed sometimes" (*Ibid*). And on the other hand, members of the dominant cultures are more favoured by educational possibilities and student services.

Like the issue of dominant cultures, the multicultural environment at the university was conceptualized as one that ignored 'special events' of minority cultures. This differed slightly from another view of the university environment and Canadian society as more broadly characterised by "covert and systemic racism, power, and politics of accommodation for immigrants." Part of the international student's expectation was the university needed to know about the special cultural celebrations of some cultural communities of international students and staff. And during such special cultural celebrations, it was expected

that the university would send congratulatory messages to them. Such messages should not come only when tragedy has befallen the communities, such as when the Ukrainian jet was shot down last year with so many Iranian students, and more locally when there was a car crash that killed some Bangladeshi students who had been studying at the university.

The participant who spoke about racism, power, and politics of accommodation for immigrants visualised a system that fostered the power of ‘white’ Canadians to control immigrants and suppress their voices as a means of control at the university level and in our society. Like stereotypes and other dissatisfactory experiences with student services, this conceptualization hinged on similar difficult and unfriendly encounters of another participant. And it was while trying to communicate and access information from some university academic and non-academic staff.

There was also the image of the multicultural environment at the university, of being of a ‘factory.’ A participant observed that in the name of multiculturalism and multicultural education, the system transformed international students like factory raw materials into Canadian finished products. This view is reminiscent of the case made by Shizha (2019, p. 120) who argued that “forcing immigrants to assimilate into the host country is a form of cultural and political hegemony.” Other scholars have also contested and opposed assimilation as an essential aspect of Canadian multiculturalism (King, 2005;

Nylund, 2006; Syed, 2010; Vertovec, 2010). They have argued that it perpetuates the Western Anglo-centric cultural standards. Moreover, from a critical multiculturalism perspective (McLaren, 1994), the university becomes a vehicle that reinforces the statutes of white hegemony where other ethnicities are seen as ‘others.’

But from another perspective, Hopkins-Gillespie (2011) have argued that this same system has served to integrate diverse populations into society. And in societies where education is monocultural and assimilationist, Ghosh (1995, p. 232) has made the case that “multicultural education is a recognition of ethnocultural diversity, and a response to the equality issue in modern democracies.” So, whether directly or indirectly, it could be surmised from Shizha (2019, p. 120) that most host countries insist on such policies to integrate immigrants, including international students into society. Thus, the multicultural environment at the university according to these views, revolves mainly around the integration and support of international students.

Two different conceptualizations of the multicultural environment at the university advocated for equal inclusivity for all students and cultures in the university. One conceptualized a multicultural environment that made the domestic students quite visible, with a perceived silence over students of the Indigenous community that made them nominal. To resolve this notion, the participant suggested that there be more opportunities like intercultural events for

increased interactions among students to know more about others from different backgrounds. The other participant believed that everyone and everything ought to be carried along in the university's multicultural environment and agenda. However, she argued for a radical shift from the selective celebration of diversity and multiculturalism from the dominant cultures' perspectives, and the apparent dichotomy among students from different cultural communities.

Finally, respect for diversity in society was identified as the hallmark of multiculturalism which according to most participants permeated all strata and understanding of the concept in Canada, was the mutual. Hence, the university was expected to create a multicultural environment that is respectful, rewarding, safe, and inclusive. The multicultural environment at the university was also conceptualized as one that needed to embrace more multicultural education, programs and events that would instill respect and equal treatment. This is because, "encouraging diversity on campus has real-world advantages that stretch way beyond the lecture hall" (Murphy, 2019, n.p). For this participant, efforts at fostering diversity through a multicultural environment at the university would be incomplete without respect and equal treatment; furthermore, it must involve both the dominant culture and the diverse cultures of international students or immigrant cultures. Thus, according to one participant, the multicultural environment at the university should be an ideal place of co-existence for all

multicultural people and groups who equally needed multicultural education to co-exist.

Summary

The focus of this study was on the personal experiences of international graduate students with multiculturalism and multicultural education in relation to how Canadians in general, their university professors, and domestic students treat immigrants and international students. This resulted in a synthesis of their conceptualizations of multiculturalism and multicultural education, of their multicultural selves, and of the multicultural environment at the university. The study found that most participants had previous experiences with diversity and preconceptions of multiculturalism and multicultural education that differed from their experiences in Canada. Only one out of seven participants came from a country that actively acknowledged socio-cultural diversity and openly practiced some form of multiculturalism. For some participants, their conceptualizations of multiculturalism and multicultural education were almost consistent with their preconceptions. And according to McLeod (2008), it is natural that all participants did not follow the same pattern of reasoning from their backgrounds, preconceptions, lived experiences, and conceptualizations.

Through logical analysis and cross-referencing of data with scholarly opinions, and conscious of the possible impacts of my position as an insider, the creative synthesis suggests that some international graduate students may

experience a disconnect between what they are taught, and how they end up conceptualizing these concepts. This is based partly on the conclusion that international students' conceptualizations of multiculturalism and multicultural education in this study constitute a meaning-making process. By this I mean that the study participants' experiences with diversity evolved when they encountered multiculturalism in Canada. From their initial preconceptions of the concept, they gained further enlightenment through lectures and lived experiences. And this meaning-making process ultimately resulted in the synthesis of their own conceptualizations.

Many of the participants came from departments where the professors had a sophisticated understanding of the concepts and an invitational approach to their teaching. This may have been natural given that their areas of scholarship were so aligned with notions of multiculturalism and multiculturalism education. Logically, one would expect that this level of familiarity with such concepts would be a perfect environment for nurturing empathy, understanding, and responsiveness to students. That is, to be asked about their home countries, and when they are doing assignments, for them to make sense of what they are asked to do from their own cultural perspectives.

This logical conclusion is open to further research. But I believe that the experiences of the participants are noteworthy, whether the lectures were on multiculturalism and multicultural education, or professors engaged in

multicultural practices and observance of its policies during lectures. Therefore, I believe that such fundamental concepts and practices in education and society should not be taught or observed without considering how international students themselves make sense of them. The participants suggested several factors that they perceived were responsible for some professors misunderstanding their international students. But I think that the individual differences of such professors who handle international students need not be overlooked. It is arguable that such practices may entrench the discrepancies they bring in students' learning experiences and make them seem normal. It leaves the students to the discretion of individual professors. It also underscores how loose coupling can occur between multicultural policies and practices in society and the learning experiences of students and the teaching of individual professors. Hence, some participants may have wondered from time to time whether they were "factory goods" in the hands of a multicultural system that churns them out as finished Canadian products of a multicultural education system. And these findings are of great concern for their practical and research implications.

Limitations

This piece of qualitative research like all other forms of research has its limitations that can make the researcher speculate whether or not different researchers would achieve similar results. One of them is the sample size. Eight to ten participants were initially proposed for data collection. But among those

who showed initial interest, only seven fell within the criteria for inclusion and exclusion. Most of the participants fell within similar groups, including areas of discipline, geographical origin, and socio-cultural and religious backgrounds. And due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Government of Canada, 2021) which led to the cancellation of in-person lectures, the chances of meeting students and networking to recruit more participants was limited to virtual communication.

The pandemic not only had an impact the recruitment of participants, but it also impacted some participants' conceptualisations of multiculturalism. One participant reportedly experienced a verbal attack by a Canadian who accused him of being among the immigrants that imported the pandemic into the country. He took that as a sign of racism against the utopia of open arms for immigrants. For another participant, the pandemic affected her socialization by limiting her chances of further experiencing how Canadians treat others. This might also be the experiences of others, although they did not mention it. As these experiences impacted their conceptualisations of the concepts, this by implication means that the pandemic has impacted the findings as well.

Another factor was the reliability of the information provided by the participants. Every participant is taken by his or words, and the information is taken with a benefit of doubt that it is factual. Lastly, although I have tried to keep in check my personal motivations and biases on multiculturalism and multicultural education, they may have had an influence on how I ultimately

interpreted the data. However, it is hoped that these limitations may not only affect the generalisation of the results and can also motivate further research in this area.

Furthermore, the findings of this study may not be easily generalized to the population of international graduate students at large. Hence, it would be interesting to explore the conceptualizations of more international graduate students to see if they reflect those identified in this study; therefore, I recommend conducting a similar study with a larger sample of international students. Further studies could also focus on disciplines and departments where multiculturalism and multicultural education may not be central to the teaching and learning enterprise, except at the discretion of the professors. Lastly, the researcher's positionality also limits the objectivity of the study. As such, a similar study by another researcher who does not share my identity as an international student may equally produce similar or contrasting conclusions.

Implications for practice

The participants suggested several factors that may account for some professors' misunderstanding and misinformation about international students' conceptualizations. As I argued earlier, do such opinions not run the risk of perpetuating those subjective practices that caused discrepancies in students' learning experiences? Does it not imply that students are then left to the discretion of individual professors? International students possess different competencies

and experiences (Acquah & Commins, 2018), especially a knowledge of their own backgrounds and cultures. And I suggest that these are valuable for professors who may wish to learn about the students' cultures to develop their own cultural understanding.

My findings also suggest that some professors may need to make more of an effort to develop closer relationships with international students under their supervision. According to Ladson-Billings (2006), doing so and learning about the students' lives, families, and cultures will better prepare such professors to teach in a culturally relevant way and hopefully, that would improve students' lives. The gains of such interactions with international students and knowledge about their cultures and backgrounds can also reduce the discrepancies experienced between one professor and another.

But how can professors of international students develop this understanding, including cross-cultural variations, the social and personal positioning of international students without provoking unwanted othering? *Ab initio*, I believe that othering is implied in cultural diversity, multiculturalism and even racism. It is implied in the lived experiences of international students and other circumstances where the 'us versus them' mentality controls human relationships (Cherry, 2020). For instance, multicultural education presupposes othering in the assimilation and curriculum reformation projects. In the light of Cherry (2020), these projects target a microcosm of students as the other who

need to be assimilated, and whose cultures and educational needs are perceived to be at variance with the standards or norms. But the different groups logically constitute the 'other' to one another because othering is not unilateral. By implication, students are supposed to be guided by the professor to coexist democratically and multiculturally without allowing the domination of one group over the other.

Another implication is that it expects professors not to deny or shy away from critically addressing othering. While positive othering is a means to social capital within the students' networks, negative othering can cause prejudice, conflict and tension between domestic and international students. And within the critical multiculturalism framework of this study, I suggest that a greater openness to diversity and plurality is imperative in managing othering. This is not the same as denying it as a way of trying to avoid what may be termed 'unwanted othering.'

The review of literature on critical multiculturalism and critical multicultural education, alongside my research findings have affirmed that the teaching and learning experiences of some participants were less than ideal. Critical multiculturalism regards multicultural discourse as pluralistic and is therefore opposed to any undemocratic and univocal pedagogy. Such pedagogy is believed to impose a dominant notion of multiculturalism on international students without paying attention to the underlying issues of power between

professors and their students. Therefore, professors need to be aware of international students' notions of the concept of power based on their own backgrounds and worldviews. Under such democratic learning environments, professors are also more likely to be reminded of how international students perceive and often exaggerate the power relationship that exists between the two parties; in other words, international students, will to a large degree, use their past experiences in their home contexts as a benchmark for their perceptions about power in their new university contexts.

Based on participants' experiences, it appears that some international students may be reluctant to speak up unless it feels safe for them to do so; otherwise, they may accept silence as their fate because of how they perceive the power issue. But in line with Glass et al. (2015, p. 365), I suggest that "positive interactions with professors, characterized by affective concern" will create and foster an inclusive multicultural environment for international students. However, it is important to note that some may need encouragement, as Canada's liberal society may differ from many of the more authoritative and less inclusive societies from which they come.

As such, international students have so much confidence in their professors' knowledge, competence, and discretion as it currently stands. I trust that the academic freedom that professors value does not distract them from their obligations toward their students. This is very pertinent since, according to Davies

and Guppy (2010), any close monitoring of professor's pedagogical technicalities to ensure uniformity seems like a violation of their professional autonomy. As such, the "logic of confidence" (p. 175) that professors typically work within may require re-examination in the future. Hopefully, these practical implications and suggestions will encourage professors to strengthen their resolve to seek, acknowledge, and accommodate international education students' conceptualizations of multiculturalism and multicultural education in the future. This is particularly true given that their personal understanding of these dominant concepts is influenced by their backgrounds, pre-conceptions, and lived experiences in Canada.

Lastly, the implication for international students concerns the roles that they themselves can play in developing their "multicultural selves" through intentionality and agency. Participants' understanding of the multicultural self positioned them as *recipients* of multiculturalism without the obligation of actually becoming multicultural *agents* in turn. Hence, their conceptualizations of their multicultural selves were full of expectations and projections. Part of the practical implications of this study for international students is that they need to understand that Canadian multiculturalism is a political policy which officially recognizes them as the 'other.' This understanding of multiculturalism needs to include that they are expected to become not only recipients of multiculturalism, but also multicultural beings and agents in the process. The main responsibility

of multiculturalism is ‘a welcoming of difference’ (Molnar, 2012). Otherwise, while they are not culpable for their experiences with multiculturalism, they may be causally responsible for the multicultural experiences they provide others.

Implications for further research

This study has raised many critical issues that could not be fully addressed here because of its limited scope. Having said that, I hope that the findings and conclusions will contribute to the relative dearth of scholarly work on international students’ voices with respect to multiculturalism and multicultural education. Secondly, I hope that this study will inspire further research studies on the issue as every critical synthesis of a dialectical argument is a potential thesis for new discourse. One of the areas worth exploring further is the role of international students’ diverse backgrounds, preconceptions, and lived experience in their meaning-making efforts to conceptualize other concepts like culture, respect, power, and so on, which may have different meanings in the Canadian context or usage.

In this study, I have argued for the need for professors to take note of the factors that likely influence international students’ understanding and conceptualization of the concepts of interest in this research. For practical implications, this will ensure better teaching and learning experiences. It also promises some implications for research as other factors may be discovered using different or larger samples.

Subsequent research may also expand some of the critical issues that were given cursory attention, like issues of power, racism, and loose coupling. These issues were perceived in the study as interfering with the objectives of critical multiculturalism and critical multicultural education. The concepts of multicultural self and multicultural environment could also be given more attention in further research as they relate to the teaching of international education students.

Conclusion

I have argued in this study that a good understanding of international education graduate students' conceptualizations of multiculturalism and multicultural education will inform the teaching that they experience during their programs and impact their learning along the way. A synthesis of their conceptualizations of the concepts in question showed that most participants had experiences with diversity and preconceptions of multiculturalism and multicultural education that differed from their experiences in Canada.

Therefore, I reiterate that professors of international students need to seek, and then pay attention to their students' voices in their silent struggles of meaning-making with dominant concepts such as multiculturalism and multicultural education. The perceived challenges of the study participants with these dominant concepts partly reflect the challenges of immigrants and minority groups trying to navigate multiple worlds simultaneously. Their efforts and

experiences towards the conceptualization of these dominant concepts must not be ignored because they do not have the powers to alter the dominant meanings. Rather, it is part of a democratic education which they are entitled to, and according to critical multicultural education, impacts positively on students' learning experiences.

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Appendix A

Interview Protocol for Participants

Introduction to the study/opening comments

Demographic questions

1. What is your country of origin?
2. How long have you been in Canada?
3. Can you tell me your area of specialization, and your K-12 teaching experience, if any?

Background questions

4. Please tell me a bit about your background and how you came to study as an international graduate student in the Faculty of Education at this university.
5. Can you tell me about how cultural diversity, in general, was talked about, in your home country?
6. Since you arrived in Canada, what have you noticed about how Canadians treat people from different cultures? Can you elaborate a bit?

Preconceptions

7. What comes to your mind when you think of multiculturalism in Canada?

8. When you first arrived in Canada, in what context did you first hear about multiculturalism?

9. How did you make sense of it back then? How did you feel about discussions on multiculturalism at the time?

Teaching multiculturalism and multicultural education

10. To what degree would you say that your professors have sought to understand and then discuss international students' preconceptions of multiculturalism and multicultural education while teaching the concepts? Please elaborate.

11. To what extent have your preconceptions and lived experiences here in Canada had an impact on your conceptualizations of multiculturalism and multicultural education? Please elaborate.

12. Do you think that the extent to which your professors understand or misunderstand their international students' conceptualizations of the two concepts have an impact on their teaching of multicultural education? In your opinion, should they have an impact? Why or why not?

13. Over time, how have you come to understand multiculturalism? How have you also come to understand multicultural education?

14. Can you draw some comparisons between your experiences with multiculturalism with your class professors, fellow students, and society in general? How have they been the same? How have they been different?
15. Having understood multiculturalism as such, how do you conceptualize your multicultural self and the multicultural environment at the university?
16. As we close, is there anything else you think we should talk about in our exploration of international education graduate students' conceptualizations of multiculturalism and multicultural education?

Appendix B

E-mail Recruitment Letter for Potential Participant



UNIVERSITY
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Dear

My name is Uchenna C. Nwokeukwu, a graduate student of Educational Administration, Foundations & Psychology at the University of Manitoba, in Winnipeg. I am conducting a research study on international education graduate students' conceptualizations of Multiculturalism and Multicultural Education, and the implications for the teaching of Multicultural Education at a Western Canadian University. This is in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Master of Education degree, under Dr. David Mandzuk, Professor, Educational Foundations and Acting Dean, Extended Education (Academic Advisor), Dr. Nathalie Piquemal and Dr. Grace Ukasoanya (thesis committee members). I would like to hear your thoughts on these topics, hoping that you will participate in the study. It will only take one hour of your time.

Given my background in Philosophy, I am interested in Critical Multiculturalism as an aspect of the Philosophy of Education; hence, my motivation for the Educational Foundations in my Master of Education program. Through this research, I wish to explore how international education graduate

students arrive at their conceptions of multiculturalism because of both their preconceptions and their lived experiences while studying in a country that likes to pride itself on being multicultural. I have attached further detailed information and a consent letter, which you will need to sign, for me to proceed. Kindly notify me if you need any further clarification on the scope of the study.

Sincerely,

Uchenna C. Nwokeukwu.

Appendix C

Letter of Information and Consent Form for Participant



UNIVERSITY
OF MANITOBA | Faculty of Education

Research Project Title: International Education Graduate Students' Conceptualizations of Multiculturalism and Multicultural Education: Implications for the Teaching of Multicultural Education at a Western Canadian University.

Researcher: Uchenna C. Nwokeukwu

Academic Advisor: Dr. David Mandzuk, Professor, Educational Foundations and Acting Dean, Extended Education, David.Mandzuk@umanitoba.ca

Thesis Committee: Dr. Nathalie Piquemal, Professor, Educational Administration, Foundations & Psychology, Nathalie.Piquemal@umanitoba.ca, and

Dr. Grace Ukasoanya, Assistant Professor, Educational Administration, Foundations & Psychology, Grace.Ukasoanya@umanitoba.ca.

Dear

You are being invited to take part in a research project titled: International Education Graduate Students' Conceptualizations of Multiculturalism and Multicultural Education: Implications for the Teaching of Multicultural Education at a Western Canadian University. The significance of this qualitative research study is that it will contribute to the existing knowledge and understanding on this topic. Also, it will help fill the gaps in knowledge and research on the voices of international students on *their* conceptualizations of multiculturalism and multicultural education, compared to their preconceptions before coming to Canada, and their lived experiences as they relate to these dominant concepts.

From the perspective of an international student and motivated by my personal experiences, the scope of my discourse is the philosophical and sociological dimensions of multiculturalism, without arguing for any new definitions or critique of multiculturalism. Drawing from the critical multiculturalism framework of McLaren (1994), I wish to call attention to the meaning systems which impose attributes and dominant ideologies like multiculturalism on international graduate students. I argue for an openness to the plurality of notions of multiculturalism among international students beyond univocal and singular notions of multiculturalism.

I am motivated by my experiences as an international student, the background of my studies in Philosophy, my interest in Critical Multiculturalism,

and the implications of international education graduate students' conceptualization of the dominant concept for the teaching of multicultural education.

The research seeks to answer the following questions:

- i. What are the various meanings and scholarly conceptualizations of multiculturalism and multicultural education as found in the literature?
- ii. How do international graduate students in education conceptualize multiculturalism and multicultural education, from their preconceptions to their lived social and educational experiences? In other words, are there similarities and differences between their preconceptions and their new conceptions, and what might the implications for their teaching and the teaching of others be?
- iii. To what extent is McLaren's (1994) framework of Critical Multiculturalism relevant for understanding the perceptions of international graduate education students' conceptualizations of these concepts and for the teaching of multicultural education overall?

The proposed study will be qualitative in nature. To answer the research questions, the data will come from semi-structured audio telephone interviews with international education graduate students of the Faculty of Education at a Western Canadian university. While the principal investigator will be the only one to collect identifiable data, the academic advisor will have access only to the

coded data. All data will be destroyed through file shredding by December 2026, five years upon completion of the project.

I will send the recruitment materials in Appendix B and the consent letter (Appendix C) when contacting my classmates/initial prospective participants (whose email addresses I already have). Finally, I will ask them to feel free to send the recruitment and consent letters to others whom they think might be interested in this study. This process is often referred to as snowball sampling where word of mouth is used to recruit more participants. Interested parties can then contact me directly. After the audio telephone interviews, I will send the transcribed interviews to respective participants by e-mail for what is called member checking, and for reviewing and editing as needed.

According to the Faculty of Graduate Studies' Student Advisor Agreement, my advisor will have access to all the data in this study, even if he may choose to not view these data. And I may use direct quotes from the coded data.

The result of the research will be submitted as a thesis to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of the University of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Education, Department of Educational Administration, Foundations and Psychology.

Please note that your participation in this research study is not obligatory. You will also be able to withdraw from the study at any time without any

consequences, by simply informing me orally or via e-mail. To that effect, your data will be erased and will not appear in the final reports of the study.

There are no direct benefits for the participant in taking part in this study. Regardless, all participants will receive a fifteen-dollar Walmart gift card for participating in the study, by Canada Post.

To demonstrate your free decision to participate, kindly sign the consent form that follows. Should you wish, you will receive from me a summary of the research findings within 2 months of completing the study either by e-mail or by Canada Post.

This research has the approval of the Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board. For any further enquiries or complaints regarding this project, kindly contact Uchenna C. Nwokeukwu via nwokeuku@myumanitoba.ca or the Human Ethics Coordinator (HEC) at humanethics@umanitoba.ca

Sincerely.

Uchenna C. Nwokeukwu.

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something

mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

I agree to take part in the study, international education students' conceptualizations of Multiculturalism and Multicultural Education: Implications for the teaching of Multicultural Education at a Western Canadian University.

By participating, I understand the following:

- That I will take part in an approximate 60-minutes (1 hour) audio telephone interview about international education graduate students' conceptualizations of Multiculturalism and Multicultural Education: Implications for the teaching of Multicultural Education at a Western Canadian University
- That the transcript will be sent to me for my review and any needed revisions two weeks after the audio telephone interview if I desire.
- That reviewing the transcript will take about 30 minutes.
- That if I do not send feedback two weeks after receiving the transcript, it will be assumed that I have approved the transcript, unless I indicate otherwise.
- That my identity as a participant will not be revealed and I will not be identified in the final thesis or any presentation that may arise from the study.

- That the final thesis may use direct quotes from the coded data.
- That according to the FGS Student Advisor Agreement, my advisor will have access to the raw data from the study. While he may choose to not view these data, he will have access to them.
- That I will receive a \$15 gift card to thank me for participating in the study by Canada Post.
- That the findings of this study will be published as a thesis and may be presented to academic audiences (including poster presentations, Graduate Student Symposia, workshop and conference presentations, reports, and refereed/non-refereed journal articles).
- That there are no repercussions for (non-) participation or for withdrawing from the study at some point.
- That the University of Manitoba may review the research records to check that the research is being done safely and properly.
- That the interview transcripts will be available only to the researcher and his academic advisor. Pseudonyms will be used for participants in all written records generated by the researcher, and consent forms will be housed in a separate location from the data, from which all identifiers will be removed as soon as the audio telephone interviews are transcribed.
- That data collected as part of this study will be stored in a password-

protected computer, in a personal study room, secured and accessible only to the principal investigator. All data will be destroyed through file shredding by December 2026, five years upon completion of the project.

- That a summary of the findings of the study will be sent to me via e-mail or by Canada Post within 2 months (whichever I prefer) of the conclusion of the project.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and/or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

Participant's Signature: _____

Researcher's Signature: _____

Date: _____

This research has the approval of the Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board. For any further enquiries or complaints regarding this project, kindly

contact Uchenna C. Nwokeukwu via nwokeuku@myumanitoba.ca, the Academic Advisor Dr. David Mandzuk, Professor, Educational Foundations and Acting Dean, Extended Education David.Mandzuk@umanitoba.ca, thesis committee members Dr. Nathalie Piquemal, Professor, Educational Administration, Foundations & Psychology, Nathalie.Piquemal@umanitoba.ca, and Dr. Grace Ukasoanya, Assistant Professor, Educational Administration, Foundations & Psychology, Grace.Ukasoanya@umanitoba.ca or the Human Ethics Coordinator (HEC) at humanethics@umanitoba.ca

For any further enquiries or complaints regarding this project, kindly contact the principal investigator at:

Uchenna C. Nwokeukwu

E-mail: nwokeuku@myumanitoba.ca

NOTE: Please, indicate below how you wish to receive the summary of the results from the study (electronically or Canada Post).

E-mail: _____

Postal Address: _____
