

ADVANCES IN GLOBAL EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

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Editors:

Dr. Wayne B. James

Dr. Cihan Cobanoglu

Dr. Muhittin Cavusoglu



Co-Editors

Dr. Wayne James, University of South Florida, USA

Dr. Cihan Cobanoglu, University of South Florida, USA

Dr. Muhittin Cavusoglu, Northern Arizona University, USA

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Intercultural Competence in Teacher Preparation Programs in the United States and Canada: A Meta-Synthesis Study

Sandra Silva-Enos

Department of Education, Curriculum and Instruction
University of Connecticut, USA

Abstract

With a growing linguistically and culturally diverse population among our student demographics, it has become a necessity for teachers to create culturally responsive and sustaining classroom environments that can value and leverage students funds of knowledge. Teacher preparation programs are tasked with helping pre-service teachers develop intercultural understanding and competence as a means to aid in preparing them for culturally responsive and sustaining teaching. This meta-synthesis systematic review explores how pre-service teachers enrolled in teacher preparation programs in the United States and Canada progressively develop their intercultural competence skills. The findings highlight a progression of seven stages, across eight studies, that pre-service teachers experience when interacting and working with those that are linguistically and culturally different from themselves. Although many of the pre-service teachers progressed through these stages in study abroad programs, others were able to follow similar progression stages in their local communities, thus pointing to the need of teacher education programs reevaluating a dependency on study abroad programs as mechanisms for intercultural competence development.

Keywords: intercultural competence, meta-synthesis, teacher preparation programs, qualitative studies, United States, Canada

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Introduction

The United States is the home of the American Dream; therefore, it comes as no surprise that it draws people from many different countries and cultures who believe that in the U.S. success is possible through hard work. This has led to a notable increase in ethnic minority groups and immigrants in many communities (Candelo, Croson & Li, 2016). Due to an increase in the linguistically and culturally diverse student demographics in schools, it is essential that pre-service teachers are equipped with the tools needed to benefit and meet the sociopolitical, socioemotional, academic, and linguistic needs, among others, of all students in their future classrooms (Cervantes-Soon et al., 2017; Flores; 2016; Palmer 2008).

Currently, the U.S. has an overwhelmingly White teaching force compared to a growing population of minoritized students; teachers are predominantly White with only 9.3% being Hispanic, 6.7% being Black, and 4.6% identify as Asian, two or more race, American Indian/Alaska Native, or Pacific Islander (Riser-Kositsky, 2019). In comparison Riser- Kositsky (2019)

notes that as of 2018 the public-school student demographic is 47% White, 27.2% Hispanic, 15.1% Black, and 10.8% identify as Asian, two or more race, American Indian/ Alaska Native, or Pacific Islander. With a growing linguistically and culturally diverse population among our student demographics, it has become increasingly important for teachers to create culturally responsive and sustaining classroom environments that can value and leverage students funds of knowledge (Alim & Paris, 2017; Gay, 2010, Ladson-Billings, 1995). Thus, teacher preparation programs are tasked to prepare pre-service teachers through programs that help them develop intercultural understanding and competence to challenge ethnocentric world views and prepare them for culturally responsive and sustaining teaching (Marx and Moss, 2011; Senyshyn, 2018).

Byram and Wagner (2018) describe intercultural competence as a combination of knowledge, attitudes, understanding, and skills that are applied that allows the user to understand and respect those that that may seem to have a different cultural association than their own. Intercultural competence helps the user respond respectfully, effectively and appropriately when communicating and interacting with those of a different culture than their own; it also helps build positive constructive relationship with those of different cultures and in turn reflect on their own cultural affiliation and gain insight into their own culture through the encounter with others. The question then becomes how a program can help pre-service teachers develop intercultural competence. Deardorff (2011) argues that intercultural competence development is a fluid process that does not end and requires frequent reflection on the continued development of intercultural competence. Many programs turn to structured international study abroad components, that focus heavily on critical reflection, to help pre-service teachers' growth of intercultural skills that could help them in their future classrooms (He, Lundgren, & Pynes, 2017; Sharma, Phillion, & Malewski 2011). However, study abroad experience come with a financial tag that unfortunately not all can afford; thus, programs are tasked with helping students develop intercultural competence skills through other avenues. This study explores how pre-service teachers enrolled in teacher preparation programs in the United States and Canada progressively develop their intercultural competence skills.

Methods

To explore the development of intercultural competence skills for pre-service teachers in the United States and Canada this researcher conducted a meta-synthesis systematic review, “an interpretive integration of qualitative findings that are themselves interpretive syntheses of data, including the phenomenologies, ethnographies, grounded theories, and other coherent descriptions or explanations of phenomena; events, or cases that are the hallmark findings of qualitative research” (Sandelowski & Baroso, 2007, p.18). The goal in using this approach is not to identify similarities across the studies but rather to use the studies as mechanism to continue to dig under the surface level and increase understanding on the topic at hand (Beck, 2011).

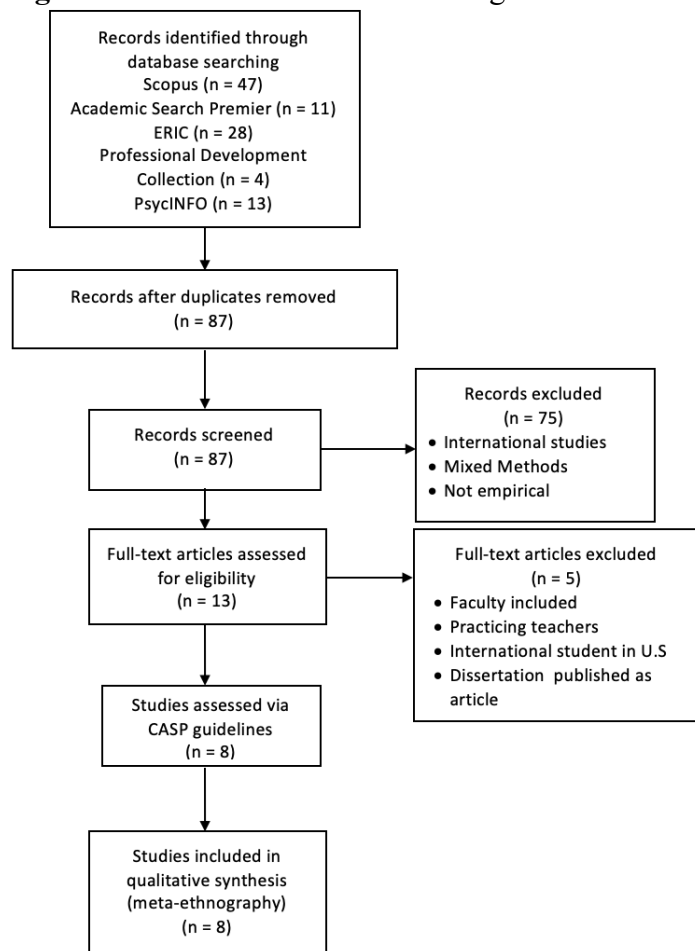
Prior to starting the study in 2019, a review of the literature was conducted and did not reveal any meta-synthesis on intercultural competence in teacher preparation programs. Due to the lack of a meta-synthesis, one was conducted on eight qualitative research studies done in the United States and Canada.

Procedure

The search included using the following online databases: Scopus, Academic Search Premier, The Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), Professional Development Collection, and PsycINFO for resources from 2010-2019. Key words including *intercultural competence*, *qualitative*, *teacher preparation*, *teacher education*, *qualitative study*, *pre-service teaching*, *qualitative research*, *phenomenology*, and *case study* were used to narrow the search. To ensure that there was no publication bias in the meta-synthesis, there was also a search to locate dissertations. One dissertation study was retrieved (Ilosvay, 2012).

There were three criteria for inclusion into the meta-synthesis. First, the study had to focus on the development of intercultural competence or understanding of intercultural competence. For the purposes of this study, intercultural competence was defined as a combination of knowledge, attitudes, understanding, and skills that are applied that allows the user to understand and respect those that that may seem to have a different cultural association than their own (Byram & Wagner, 2018). Second, the study had to be focused on pre-service teachers enrolled in teacher education programs in the United States or Canada. Third, because the driving question concerns how teachers are being prepared, only research that was qualitative was reviewed. There was no limitation regarding which specific type of qualitative design was used.

Figure 1. Data Collection Prisma Diagram



Sample

This study included a sample size of eight qualitative studies that were published between 2012 and 2018. Three studies were published in an international journal, two in a journal of higher education, one in an education journal, and one in an interdisciplinary journal. The final study was a doctoral dissertation. Five of the studies included study abroad experiences and the other three included experiences done in the country to help students develop intercultural competence. Tables 1 and 2, are descriptive and methodological characteristics of the sample.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Participants of the Individual Studies Included in the Meta-Synthesis

Study	Sample Size	sex of sample	Age Range	Type of Student
Addleman, Nava, Cevallos, Brazo, & Dixon (2014)	24 Participants	17 Female 7 Male	Early 20s- Early 40s	Pre-service Graduate Teacher Candidates
Bartzis & Mulvihill (2015)	2 Participants	2 Female	—	Pre-service Teachers
Dimitrov, Dawson, Olsen, & Meadows (2014)	24 Participants	12 Female 12 Male	Mean age 26	TA's in the school 12 master's students 12 doctoral students 4 Canadian 20 international
Ilosvay (2012)	23 Participants total: 13 participants Follow-up interviews	13 Female 9 Male	23-38	Pre-service Teachers
Kasmer & Billings (2017)	8 Participants	—	—	Pre-service teachers before student teaching
Marx & Moss (2015)	1 Participant	1 Female	—	Pre-service Teacher- final year of 5-year program
Nganga (2016)	92 Participants	74 Female 18 Male	—	Pre-service Teachers
Smolcic & Arends (2017)	16 Participants	14 Female 2 Male	19-22	Pre-service teachers- undergraduates

Table 2. Methodological Characteristics of the Qualitative Studies Included in the Meta-synthesis

Author	Discipline	Country	Data Analysis	Qualitative Research Design	Methods used for data collection
Addleman, Nava, Cevallos, Brazo, & Dixon	Education	USA, Austria, and Ecuador	Mezirow 1990	Phenomenology	Weekly Written Student Reflection, Focus Groups, Response to Prompts
Bartzis & Mulvihill	Education	USA and Ireland	Saldana, 2013	Phenomenology	Interviews
Dimitrov, Dawson, Olsen, & Meadows	Education	Canada	Strauss & Corbin, 1990	Qualitative Descriptive	Focus Groups 4-7 Months After Each Workshop
Ilosvay	Education	USA	Strauss & Corbin, 1990	Qualitative Descriptive	Demographic Questionnaires, Belief Surveys, Linguistic Assessments, Interviews
Kasmer & Billings	Education	USA and Tanzania	Spradley, 1980	Qualitative Descriptive	Conferences and Whole Group Discussions, Written Artifacts, Documentation of Teaching and Observation
Marx & Moss	Education	USA and United Kingdom	Merriam, 1998	Case Study	Participant Observations, Intensive Interviews, Chain Source Sampling Methodology, Five In-depth Interviews, Student Coursework, Journals
Nganga	Education	USA and Kenya	Strauss & Corbin, 1998	Qualitative descriptive	Online Thread Discussions, Open-Ended Questions, Reflections
Smolcic & Arends	Education	USA	B. G. Glaser & Strauss, 1967	Qualitative Descriptive	Blog Entries, Autobiography, Class Discussions

The students (n=190 across the studies) were all enrolled in U.S. or (in one case) a Canadian institution. Participants included 133 female pre-service teachers and 48 male pre-service teachers. Eight pre-service teachers were not identified as male or female and only referenced as “PSTs” (Kasmer & Billings, 2017). Five studies included a study abroad experience in which students traveled to one of the following destinations: Austria, Ecuador, Ireland, Kenya, Tanzania, and United Kingdom. Only two studies included in the sample provided years in which the studies

took place. One took place in 2012 and the other took place from 2011 through 2015 (Bartzis & Mulvihill, 2015; Nganga, 2016). The most common research design in the sample was referred to by the authors as a qualitative research design (n=5), followed by phenomenology (n=2), and one used a single person case study.

Data Analysis

This study used the lens of Noblit and Hare (1988) for synthesizing qualitative studies to conduct this meta-synthesis. Their approach involves a series of seven phases that repeat as the meta-synthesis progresses. The first phase involves getting started and finding an area of interest or phenomenon to study. Phase two entails identifying relevant qualitative studies to review. The third phase requires reading the studies and having the researcher identify key metaphors within the studies. Phase four involves determining how the studies are related. A list of key themes, concepts, or metaphors for each study can help in the decision of how the studies are related. Noblit and Hare (1988) explain three types of relatedness: a) Reciprocal- in which the studies are directly comparable b) Refutational- in which the studies can stand in opposition of each other c) In line of agreement- in which the studies are grounded together and represent a line of argument instead of being comparable or oppositional. In phase five, the researcher translates the studies into one another. This process entails a comparison of metaphors or themes across studies. However, it is essential that through that comparison the central metaphors of each study stay true to the original metaphor intended for each study and that they are not a blending or blurring of understanding. Phase six requires synthesizing translations; this entails going beyond the findings of each individual study and using the translations from phase five to identify common overarching concepts and develop new interpretation from that comparison. Phase seven entails expressing the synthesis and documenting or reporting the results of the meta-synthesis.

Findings

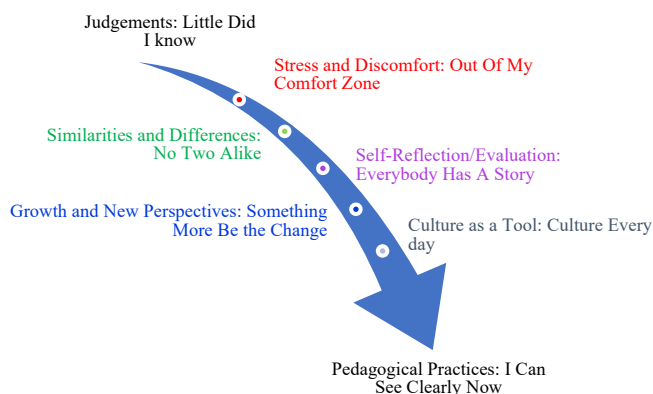
In keeping with Noblit and Hare's (1988) lens, a reading was done of the eight studies in order to identify key metaphors. In order to conduct the reciprocal translations for this meta-synthesis, I constructed a table of the metaphors and concepts identified in each study. In total, I identified 234 metaphors. In the next step, all initial metaphors were categorized into themes based on similarity and meaning. Seven themes were identified (see Table 3). When synthesizing the translations, a hypothesis developed of a progression of stages to intercultural competence development for a pre-service teacher : (a) judgements: little did I know, (b) stress and discomfort: out of my comfort zone, (c) similarities and differences: no two alike, (d) self-reflection/ evaluation: everybody has a story, (e) growth and new perspectives: something more be the change, (f) culture as a tool: culture every day, (g) pedagogical practices: I can see clearly now (see Figure 2).

As illustrated in Figure 2, the final analysis yielded six progressing themes leading to one essential themes. Pre-service teachers often begin towards the back end of the themes and move through the themes as stages of development. While some may skip some stages, for the most part, the data shows a linear progression, one leading to the other. In continuation is a description of the seven stages of progression that emerged from the meta-synthesis of the eight qualitative studies.

Table 3. Individual Study Metaphors as Related to Four Overarching Themes

Study	Judgements: Little Did I know	Stress and Discomfort: Out of My Comfort Zone	Similarities and Differences: No Two Alike	Self-Reflection/Evaluation: Everybody Has A Story	Growth and New Perspectives: Something More Be the Change	Culture as a Tool: Culture Every day	Pedagogical Practices: I Can See Clearly Now
Addleman, Nava, Cevallos, Brazo, & Dixon (2014)	Judging the new cultural experiences or norms as right or wrong	Critical incidents as triggering events; experienced disequilibrium; a need to relieve stress and anxiety	Comparing differences; evaluation of the differences between expectations and experiences	Identifying and questioning unconscious assumptions; Self-discovery with a resolve to reorient	Expanding understanding beyond home culture prior knowledge; A willingness to question assumption	The cultural other	Taking action based on revised perspectives; resolve to reorient future actions
Bartzis & Mulvihill (2015)		Challenged them as students; grappling with multiple cultural identities and affiliations; Bemusement	Differences that were made Prominent; comparing differences	Meaningful reflection; incorporating structured intercultural reflection	Growing intercultural awareness; new ways of thinking; enthusiastic involvement	Cultural identities; cultural connections; cultural self-identification	Sensitive to their pupils background and needs
Dimitrov, Dawson, Olsen, & Meadows (2014)	Withheld judgement	Cautious in order to not be misunderstood	Cultural differences in power distance or levels of informality; cultural difference in fairness and noted; expecting difference	Encouraging reflection; ability to reflect on intercultural interactions; reflective about the potential impact of communication styles	Attitudinal change; adapt to the diversity; less afraid of making mistakes	Awareness of their cultural identity and the cultural assumptions	Choose culturally appropriate communication Strategies; body language to communicate; use non-threatening, gender-sensitive, collaborative, and lower power distance language
Ilosvay (2012)	Experience influences their abilities to negotiate language; language and culture of power	Difficulties of learning and using a new language; needing more strategies to bridge the gaps		Beliefs come from their own learning experiences; reflected on their personal experiences	Positive belief system about negotiating differences; need to understand the differences in language systems		
Kasmer & Billings (2017)	Often judgmental	Needed time to trust; not very welcoming			Demonstrates willingness to share Information; consider various perspectives about teaching and teachers; appreciate the difficulties	Culturally relevant contexts; culturally relatable idea	Negotiating meaning; adjustment to their delivery; Pace of speech
Marx & Moss (2015)		Feeling let down to be back	Everyone's differences, personal and cultural, were openly discussed; compare and consider	Share my cultural background and my experiences; thinking about her future career	Learn from cultural difference; different ideas about teaching and schools	Cultural learning	Creating a space for open dialogue; getting to know their cultures and their backgrounds; an American way of teaching
Nganga (2016)		Aware of acts of unfairness	Consider cultural differences; provoke interest in learning cultural similarities and differences	Engage in self-reflection	Willingness to take action; become aware of different cultures; receptive to other ways of seeing, thinking, and teaching	Understanding other cultures; sensitivity to cultural injustice; contextualize cultural interactions	Support for critical thinking; planned cultural immersion experiences; content and activities with intercultural/global education focus
Smolcic & Arends (2017)		Tendency to avoid sensitive issues		Shifting nature of their own cultural identifications; values that underlie cultural traditions or familial norms	Making cross-cultural comparisons; openness to listen and understand multiple sides to a culture	Critical cultural awareness; cultural practices and beliefs are not static or fixed; cultural hybridity	

Figure 2. Evolution of Intercultural Competence Pedagogy



Judgements: Little Did I Know

Four studies address the initial judgments pre-service teachers made during their experiences. Across these studies, researchers describe the reactions of pre-service teachers to new cultural experiences and norms as being right or wrong, largely based on their own norms and expectations (Addleman et al., 2014). For example, in Addleman, et al. (2014), a pre-service teacher straightforwardly shares her thoughts on the school she was placed in during her three week practicum abroad:

As I looked at the equipment, I was sad for the children. The disparity between the beautiful parks I had taken my son to and this one was disturbing. I realized I would never let my own son attend this school. I would have been outraged and removed him the first day (pp. 195).

In this example the participant enters her teaching practicum with expectations that are the norm of her home country and judges her host community without considering the different circumstances and contexts for each school.

Furthermore, pre-service teachers’ beliefs about the language development and language needs of their future multilingual students were also based their own personal beliefs about the standardization of languages. For example, a participant in Ilosvay (2012) shares their belief through the following comment: “ We disadvantage our students if we don’t teach them proper English. They already know how to speak their native language” (pp. 141). This example conveys a judgement of hierarchal priorities when it comes to language needs. In this case the participant conveys a priority for “proper English” over the continued development of the students’ native languages.

Across the studies, researchers also noted that prospective teachers believed that experiences influenced a student’s ability to negotiate language (Ilosvay, 2012). These preconceived beliefs led pre-service teachers to judge both their future multilingual students, but also mentor teachers and their practices when teaching abroad (Kasmer & Billings, 2017). For example, Kasmer and Billings (2017) documented the experiences of 8 prospective teachers who were in a study abroad trip in Tanzania . The participants were initially frustrated by what they saw in classrooms: “[the teachers] don’t teach like we do”, “they are too strict with the students”, “the schools seem very disorganized”, and “having students copy from the board seems like a waste of time” (pp. 9). The

pre-service teachers made frequent comparisons to common teacher and student experiences in the U.S., and they found themselves struggling to initially connect with the Tanzanian teachers. This presented an initial dilemma for the student teachers because they depended on their mentor teacher to help them develop lessons and teach the Tanzanian students, yet they were initially offput by the teachers' behaviors.

Ilosvay (2012) investigated language beliefs and linguistic knowledge of pre-service teachers that were to enter linguistically and culturally diverse classrooms. This study had 23 participants total and 13 of which had followed up interviews. Approximately 5 out of 13 interviewed expressed a belief that it would benefit students if only a single Standard dialect of English was spoken in the classroom (p. 139). When asked, the prospective teachers asserted that if teachers allow other dialects of English such as "Black English" to be spoken at schools, academic success would fall in those classrooms or overall (p. 145). One pre-service teacher expressed that "using the most commonly used language would be advantageous for students because it helps them become more proficient in the language. People who have better command of the language are more in demand and in this country; more respected" (p. 140). Many of these pre-service teachers had minimal to no exposure to culturally diverse communities. They passed initial judgments thinking that they were in the best interest of their future students.

Stress and Discomfort: Out of My Comfort Zone

While some pre-service teachers may not have expressed initial judgements at the start of their programs, study abroad activities, or experiences, all participants expressed said that they began feeling discomfort and stress with the unfamiliarity of their cultural experience. All eight studies address aspects of this discomfort. Emotions ranged from an overly cautious approach for fear of being misunderstood, to feelings of disequilibrium. In the five cases where prospective teachers went abroad, participants found reported that they often felt challenged along with discomfort and anxiety.

For example, Bartzis and Mulvihill (2015) describe the experience of two student teachers and their placement at schools in Northern Ireland in an effort to gain insight into the perception of participants intercultural learning and its application to their professional classrooms. In this study, the pre-service teachers often found themselves struggling to become accustomed to the norms of their host university. Their struggles could be a discomfort felt from something as small as the flexibility of the campus library hours to perceived pressure and judgement from their peers due to their inability to participate in club activities. Kasmer and Billings (2017) also reported that participants felt unwelcome and anxious when they perceived they were being judged by the mentor teachers they were assigned to during their study abroad experiences in Tanzania. The pre-service teachers in this study claimed the "teachers were not very welcoming" and felt as if the teachers were "bothered by [their] presence in the schools" (p. 9). While eventually the relationship between the pre-service teachers and mentor teachers changed it did cause initial feelings of discomfort and hesitation for the pre-service teachers.

Participants in these programs also reported quickly learning that even tasks that normally are seen as simple -- such as finding clothes or food -- could trigger emotional frustrations, struggles, and a sense of being overwhelmed. In Addleman et al.'s (2014) phenomenological

study, one pre-service teacher vividly expresses their discomfort about communicating on a regular basis:

What frustrates me the most is my limited ability to be able to communicate with people. I speak several languages, so often when I've traveled in the past, I have been able to communicate effortlessly with people. This is not the case this time around. I wish I could understand and speak, but I can't, so this makes me feel helpless, and I do not like or enjoy this feeling of helplessness one bit. (p. 194)

In the studies where the students did not go abroad but worked with diverse groups or planned to work with diverse groups, participants still experienced discomfort. In both Dimitrov et al. (2014) and Smolcic and Arends (2017), pre-service teachers show a cautious approach to communication. In the international studies, participants report anxiety and stress caused by language barriers, but the studies of pre-service teachers still reported being cautious communicators, for fear that their intended message could be misunderstood. In some instances, participants avoided sensitive issues all together out of concern that anything may be misinterpreted.

Similarities and Differences: No Two Alike

As the pre-service teachers experienced discomfort, stress, and anxiety, many of them began to reflect, through structured components of their programs, on their culture and the culture of those surrounding them in response to prompts from the teacher educators who were facilitating the programs. Whether preparing to teach abroad or staying local with diverse students, professors would integrate course content with an intercultural and global focus in an attempt to help the participating prospective teachers develop intercultural competence skills. This approach would often allow the pre-service teachers to consider the cultural differences in the perspective from the reading to their own while also allowing them to recognize the similarities that could exist (Nganga, 2016). They started seeking and noting similarities and differences in an attempt to make sense of and relieve the stress and anxiety they felt. This focus on similarities and differences was noted in five of the eight studies. For many this recognition of similarities and differences in perspective present in one reading or project was enough to spark an interest in learning about more cultural similarities and differences.

For those participants that were international but came to study and teach in diverse communities, in the U.S and Canada, the expectation of difference was something new to become accustomed to. In Dimitrov et al.'s (2014) study, international students attend the host university in Canada and work alongside Canadian national students as Graduate teaching assistant. This study sought to explore how training impacted cultural and disciplinary differences in communication. In this study international students had very similar experiences to U.S. students who went abroad in other studies. When prospective teachers who were international students were student teachers in Canadian classrooms, they started noting and looking for the cultural differences in non-verbal and verbal forms of communication or the cultural differences and similarities in fairness and grading. Many of the international students had not been exposed to classrooms with as much diversity as they saw in the Canadian university classrooms; they had to reflect on these similarities and differences to best serve their students.

In some cases, the appeal to work with and learn from the cultural similarities and differences of diverse classrooms led to the pre-service teachers seeking out cultural differences upon their return home. One participant stated, “It, for me, it’s, it’s a break from where I grew up and it’s different. And that’s part of what I want. I like the differences that come out of it, and the conversations that you can have” (Marx & Moss, 2015). Observing similarities and differences led to some changes in the outlooks of some participants. One participant noted, noted “I am questioning my own thinking and attempting to sort out what is really needful. Do children in Ecuador need different type of education and children in America?” (Addleman et al. (2014), p. 195). Reflection on cultural comparisons was enough for many to trigger transformative experiences and seek answers for questions they would not have previously considered.

Self-Reflection/Evaluation: Everybody Has a Story

As participants began to reflect on similarities and differences, faculty in their programs would also prompt them to use those observations to reflect on themselves and their own cultural norms and beliefs. Seven out of eight studies used in the meta-synthesis note the pre-service teachers experiencing self- reflection or evaluating their own thoughts and beliefs. In many cases they found themselves unpacking their own experiences either independently or through structured reflection required by their program.

Journaling and discussion were a common approach used by programs in the studies, but even when the program did not require journaling, participants found it helpful and to some extent a coping mechanism to make sense of their experience in search of clarity and understanding (Bartzis and Mulvihill 2015). One participant noted that her reflections allowed her to feel fortunate about her home and her background while traveling around Belfast, especially around communities that were more socioeconomically challenged. She also noted that a university course she was taking abroad called for her to make comparisons of the host education systems and the U.S education system. These comparisons often inspired journal entries in which meaningful reflection would occur inspired by coursework or experiences around the community (Bartzis and Mulvihill 2015).

Structured discussions that encouraged self-reflection were often recognized and applauded by the pre-service teachers, both abroad and local. It was noted that for those who struggle to express or define their feelings the structured self-reflection opportunities gave them an outlet to be able to wrestle with wording and phrases that helped them unpack or come to terms with their experiences (Addleman et al., 2014). Addleman et al. (2014) noted that the pre-service teachers reflections numerously began with the following sentence stems: “ ‘ I now know what it feels like to—,’ and ‘I a better/deeper / more concrete understanding of —’” (p. 197). It was noted that as the awareness and self-discovery grew new perspectives began developing, especially including a newly developed empathy.

Growth and New Perspectives: Something More Be the Change

In progressing through the comparison stage and self-reflection stage transformative experiences can be seen in the pre-service teacher and their perspectives and mindsets. All eight studies in the meta-synthesis noted a growth in curiosity and appreciation and newly developed perspectives. Smolcic and Arends (2017) noted that the pre-service teachers began to clearly recognize the role that culture has on producing particular opinions of the world as they themselves began describing

their cultural traditions, attitudes and values through self-reflection and comparisons. Their grappling with their own values and comparing them to those of their multicultural peers or host country communities helped the pre-service teacher acknowledge the different perspectives and perceptions of and about the world based on familiar culture.

To some extent these new perspectives allowed them to see a societal privilege of English-speaking individuals that they were not receptive to initially. One participant in Smolcic and Arends' (2017) study reflected on the fact that they had never needed to learn another language, but they now want to be able to best serve their students in a different way while also having a new desire to seek experiences in different cultures; the participant noticed that while there were ample opportunities for them to learn languages other than English, it was never prioritized because they had English to communicate. This initial belief led to those that did not know English to be the "other" in their life. The experience of working with international ELL students in the U.S made this participant really notice the "other" and recognize the need to explore the world around them and learn about other cultures and perspectives (p. 65). Planned cultural immersion experiences both locally and international were pivotal to the pre-service teachers in helping them cultivate an appreciation of foreign cultures (Nganga, 2016).

Nganga's (2016) study highlights how structured activities within the U.S. can help cultivate new perspectives and how it doesn't have to solely depend on international experiences. In the study pre-service teachers were asked to analyze children's books from different countries; the pre-service teachers express the impact this activity had in helping them be receptive to other's perspectives, thoughts, and teachings.

As future teachers of possibly diverse classrooms, Addleman et al. (2014) had a participant express the impact of the growth and new mindset best:

This trip has completely changed how I feel about language minorities. It has definitely taught me to feel compassion and empathy for all minorities in my classroom. I may not feel the same as my minority students, but I think the first step towards bridging a gap between the two is understanding where they have come from and caring. Not all students will fit into a teacher's mold, so how will the teacher mold for the student (p. 197)

Culture as a Tool: Culture Every Day

The realization that culture could and should be used as a resource on a daily basis was the final stage in the progression that led to the concluding key theme. The benefits of culture's evolution, awareness, connection and identities were something that all eight studies in this meta-synthesis addressed. In some cases, the practices and pedagogies used with local pre-service teachers were just as eye opening as those that experienced international semesters. The participants in Smolcic and Arends (2017) worked with newcomer international students at their universities and teamed up to work on structured projects and activities as a way to help the international students practice the language; in reality this experience helped the pre-service teachers reach new depth to their intercultural competence and appreciation for culture as a tool and resource. The pre-service teachers assert that the work with their partners helped them comprehend the fluidity of cultural practices and beliefs; it helped them recognize that it is not as static as they once believed and that to some extent everyone has some agency in how they connect with or choose to move away from the primary cultural norms of their home cultures. This recognition of the fluidity of culture added

to the new perspectives and appreciation of culture helped the pre-service teacher truly feel impacted by their experiences and reflect on how they could help future students. These experiences helped them cultivate a greater cultural empathy that could and would serve the pre-service teachers in their U.S. classrooms (Bartzis & Mulvihill, 2015). This empathy and awareness are developed through their progression of their experiences and reflection on their own cultural identity and the cultural assumptions they initially brought with them (Dimitrov et al, 2014).

Pedagogical Practices: I Can See Clearly Now

As the pre-service teachers progress through the different stages of their experiences, they ultimately reached the culminating piece, which if organized in a structured way by preparation programs, was the desire to implement pedagogical practices that help both the pre-service teacher, and their future students continue to develop their intercultural competence skills. Seven of the eight studies highlight pre-service teachers' appreciation for the pedagogical practices used in their own teacher preparation programs to help them develop their intercultural skills. This lead, in turn, to participants' desire to implement those practices or others similar in their own lessons.

The pre-service teachers reached the realization that each decision a teacher makes regarding language use affects what students potentially learn. They realized that language use needs to guide the pedagogy selected for the instruction of the lesson "which influences how students understand" (Ilosvay, 2012, p. 135) Addleman et al. (2014) stress that the pre-service teachers voiced a determination to be sensitive to the learning needs of their students in their future K-12 classrooms. Some pre-service teachers even used their last few days abroad to prepare for their future classrooms and purchased children's books in their host countries with the intent of using them in their future classrooms to emphasize differences of perspectives and voice (Bartzis & Mulvihill, 2015). The pre-service teachers claimed a readiness to integrate content in their lessons that promoted intercultural and global competency by exposing students to other cultures and using activities that would engage their future students with the goal to leave a positive impact on the students (Nganga, 2016).

Discussion

The six progressing themes that lead to the final essential theme that emerged from the synthesis of eight qualitative studies, can be used to conceptually understand the progression of a pre-service teacher in a preparation program that strives to help them develop their intercultural competence skills. One benefit of this is to deduce hypotheses, which can then be tested in teacher preparation programs that strive to develop intercultural competence for their pre-service teachers both in the U.S. and Canada as well as abroad. When analyzing the synthesis of the translation of the studies and looking at them as a unit rather than individuals, the studies as a whole support and align closely with Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) (2017) which also notes that people progress through a continuum of increasing cultural awareness. While independently the studies do not demonstrate the progression through the DMIS continuum, as a whole, the findings from the meta-synthesis support Bennett's model.

Not only do these results of this meta-synthesis of the development of intercultural competence have implications for future hypotheses and theory developments, but they also provide implications for teacher preparation programs. In many programs intercultural competence is left

to be highlighted with study and teach abroad experiences, which in those instances makes it only feasible for those with the financial ability to do so. However, the data found in this meta-synthesis demonstrates that similar themes and progressions can be seen for pre-service teachers whose programs created structured cultural immersion experiences locally for their students. This has implications for teacher preparation programs with larger population who are financially unable to do a semester abroad.

This issue and need have been recently amplified by the impacts of Covid-19 on study abroad programs. The pandemic caused many institutions to immediately call for the return of their students that were in study abroad programs spring semester of 2020 and to date many institutions are still approach the subject of study abroad with tremendous caution and hesitation (Padilla, 2020). This has highlighted the need for alternative strategies in institutions that can help students develop their intercultural competence knowledge, attitudes, and skills locally.

It also challenges these programs to look at their plan of studies and their institutional resources in other departments to see what experiences can be crafted or generated to exposure pre-service teachers to many different cultures. The pre-service teachers in these studies that remained local were not simply sent to urban communities to student teach; they were given structured activities with international and national students within their universities. It sheds light on resources within institutions that may not be used to their true potential. Teacher preparation programs have a responsibility to prepare pre-service teachers for the multicultural classrooms that they will encounter in their future careers; that requires creating ways for our future teachers to develop the intercultural competence skills to truly reap the benefits of the diversity in their future classrooms.

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