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International student teaching in non-Western cultures: Impact on first year teachers

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International student teaching in non-Western cultures: Impact on first year teachers

by

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A dissertation submitted to the graduate faculty

in partial fulfillment for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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ABSTRACT

This research illuminated how five first-year teachers described the intercultural development that occurred while student teaching in a non-Western culture, and the value that those experiences abroad brought to their classrooms during their first year of teaching. The focus was to capture the essence of the experiences abroad as perceived and described by participants and how those experiences influenced both the tacit and explicit practices in their first year of teaching.

This qualitative study focused on four research questions: (a) How do first year teachers describe the intercultural development that occurs while student teaching in a non-Western culture?, (b) How does student teaching in a non-Western culture bring value to the first year teacher's classroom?, (c) What role does student teaching in a non-Western culture have on the tacit and explicit practices used in a first year teacher's classroom? and (d) How do personal influences in a non-Western culture impact student teaching and, ultimately, the first year teacher's students?

Analysis of the participants' student teaching reflections and interview transcripts indicated: (a) they were welcomed into the non-Western cultures; (b) professional dedication was displayed by the teachers. Final reflections revealed the student teachers were influenced personally and professionally through: (a) professional relations and collaboration; (b) enthusiasm for teaching; (c) exposure to multiple nationalities and unique perspectives; (d) second language speakers and differentiated instruction; and (e) increased self-awareness.

Bennett's (1993) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) provided a framework of understanding the intercultural development that occurred when the participants left their home culture and were authentically immersed in a non-Western culture. Analysis of the data indicated that the participants demonstrated an advanced level of cultural sensitivity by falling in the Adaptation stage of Bennett's model. Participants were transformed both personally and professionally in their intercultural sensitivity and abilities to empathize with diverse student, while differentiating instruction through culturally relevant practices.

Research findings suggest implications and recommendations for practice and policy, as well as for future research. Increased support for university faculty and pre-service teachers to experience non-Western cultures has the potential to transform pre-service teachers in achieving improved practices for teaching all students.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

I can vividly remember the moment that one teacher expanded my horizons and introduced me to the world that existed beyond my “culturally encapsulated community” (Marx, 2011). I was in 11th grade Eastern Civilization class and despising every bit of the apparently meaningless information that was being relayed for me to memorize and later forget. As a teenager, China (or any other eastern civilization) was not and would not ever be important to me. I would never go there nor did I know anyone from there; I just had to get through the class. Then, one day my teacher mentioned to us that she had recently been to visit her all-American daughter who was living and working in China. She shared artifacts from her travels with our class, including a rock that she picked up at the base of the Great Wall in China. Instantly my heavy eyes widened as I perked up, and I began wondering why on earth her daughter chose to live there. I started to imagine that someday I might go there, or somewhere similar. I could hardly wait for my hands to touch the plain gray rock that was circulating around our classroom, the rock that had traveled all the way from the Great Wall in China. From that moment I had an increased respect for my teacher, as well as a new-found interest in Eastern civilizations as a place that may someday be meaningful to me. In my opinion, countless students sit in U.S. classrooms daily, listening to information that is seemingly irrelevant to the life of the student, in part because the teacher lacks life experiences to make the content relevant. This personal experience is just one example of how a lived experience of one teacher made learning meaningful and engaged one student—me.

That moment in 11th grade sparked my interest to see the world and experience other cultures. As a result, I found opportunities in college to travel and was able to spend one summer in Okinawa, another in Tokyo, as well as a full semester in Cairo, Egypt as I completed student teaching. My own experiences have led me to believe, that as teachers are increasingly exposed to diversity through authentic life experiences, they are increasingly able to connect with their students, make learning meaningful and build upon the student's prior knowledge. Because this one teacher was able to use her own life experience and put content into context, my life was truly changed.

Background of the Study

The tragedy of September 11, 2001 was a somber, yet actual depiction of what can occur when understanding and sensitivity toward basic human differences ceases to exist. While this could be perceived as a challenging and dangerous time in our history, classroom teachers have a tremendous opportunity facing them. Bridging the gap that exists within our society can start in our schools as the opportunity is presented to replicate society and prepare our youth for life outside of the school's walls. When a safe haven of tolerance and understanding exists within those walls, it can then begin to exist in our communities as well.

Despite increased attempts by university programs to produce multicultural educators, novice teachers commonly lack these necessary skills and are failing to meet the needs of the increasingly diverse student population which exist in U.S. schools today. Immigration has heightened the level of cultural, racial, linguistic and religious diversity within the United States. According to the 2007 U.S. Census Bureau, nearly 74% of all the U.S. population is white. It is projected that the nation's white population will continue to decrease, while

diverse populations continue to increase. A disconnect stemming from the mono-cultural backgrounds of those who traditionally enter the teaching field contrasts with the increasingly heterogeneous student body. Thus, 21st Century teachers will rely on skills and attitudes that are far different than those of previous generations, while embracing each other's unique qualities.

Preparing 21st century teachers is an ongoing challenge as teacher education programs across the U.S. attempt to meet the ever-changing dynamics of our schools. Schools are no longer preparing students to function solely in their home communities or states. As described by Friedman (2005) in *The world is flat: A brief history of the twenty first century*, and "...the bewildering global scene happening before our eyes" (book jacket insert). The theme reoccurring throughout Friedman's book is that our schools face the new challenge of preparing our students to effectively understand, compete and collaborate within the local market, as well as on the national and global scene. According to Marsh, Hollingsworth, Hale, and Gillon (2011), population shifts are occurring, even in Midwestern states with reputations of being predominantly rural. Iowa, for example, has seen a dramatic shift in racial composition, particularly in the student population where the number of non-white students has more than doubled in the past decade. This changing face of U.S. schools has created an urgent need to prepare teachers with culturally responsive teaching practices.

The current study was predicated on the belief that student teaching in an international location can serve as a catalyst for pre-service teachers to simultaneously gain cultural sensitivity while deepening their understanding of teaching and learning. This study investigated how first year teachers who student taught in non-Western cultures apply their experiences abroad to their current teaching practices.

Statement of the Problem

Nationwide, teacher education faculty are repeating such phrases as “connect with students”, “make learning meaningful”, and “build upon the student’s prior knowledge.” With a gaping disconnect between the cultural backgrounds and life experiences of the teacher and the students, it is difficult to fathom how these expectations might be achievable. Research has clearly indicated that those who enter the teaching profession are predominantly white, middle-class American women possessing little understanding of their own culture, let alone that of others and the role that culture plays in teaching and learning (Gay, 2000; Marsh et al., 2011; Marx, 2008; Sleeter, 2001). An ethnocentric worldview of a teacher who lacks intercultural experiences, having never experienced being the “other”, raises valid concern for the ability to make learning meaningful for the diversity in today’s schools, and the global scene that they should be preparing students for.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore and gain understanding of how first year teachers describe the intercultural development that occurred while student teaching in a non-Western culture was, and the value that those experiences abroad bring to their classrooms during their first year of teaching. The focus was to capture the essence of the experiences abroad as perceived and described by participants and how those experiences influence both the tacit and explicit practices in their first year of teaching.

Research Questions

This study attempted to add to existing literature. Specifically, this study intended to bridge the gap between current research focusing on student teaching experiences in Western

cultures, by adding the voice of those who student teach in non-Western cultures. The following research questions guided this study.

1. How do first year teachers describe the intercultural development that occurs while student teaching in a non-Western culture?
2. How does student teaching in a non-Western culture bring value to the first year teacher's classroom?
3. What role does student teaching in a non-Western culture have on the tacit and explicit practices used in a first year teacher's classroom?
4. How do personal influences in a non-Western culture impact student teaching and, ultimately, the first year teacher's students?

Theoretical Framework

Theories on intercultural development explain the reactions that people have toward cultural differences. International and intercultural experiences provide opportunities for people to step outside of their own culture and confront underlying cognitive orientation toward cultural differences. This study applied Bennett's (1993) Developmental Model for Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) as a theoretical framework for capturing the meaning that five first-year teachers made regarding their intercultural development during a student teaching experience in a non-Western culture, and how intercultural sensitivity informed culturally relevant practices in their first year of teaching. DMIS is rooted in the theoretical underpinnings of personal construct theory formulated by George Kelly (1963), who held that experience is a function of our categorization, or construing of events (Bennett, 2001).

Bennett's (1993) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) provides a framework of understanding the intercultural development that occurs when a person leaves their home culture and is authentically immersed in another culture. According to Bennett (2001), the underlying assumption in this model is that, as one's experience of cultural differences becomes more sophisticated, one's competence in intercultural relations increases. This model outlines six stages of intercultural sensitivity that range from ethnocentric to ethnorelative thinking. The first three stages are on a continuum of ethnocentricity, which is described as viewing one's own culture as central to reality. These three ethnocentric stages include denial, defense, and minimization. Individuals in these stages tend to avoid people of other cultures and believe that their own culture is the dominant or superior culture. They are often critical of other cultures and can become insistent about correcting others' behavior to match their expectations.

When applying the theories of DMIS to the intercultural sensitivity of future educators, the goal is that international experiences provide an opportunity for teacher's to move toward ethnorelative thinking. This stage includes acceptance, adaptation and integration. Bennett (2001) described these as a state in which one view's their own culture as one of many equally complex worldviews. As a person moves toward integration, one's worldview is expanded and intentional changes in behaviors occur.

The second three DMIS stages are on a continuum of *ethnorelativity*, meaning that one's own culture is experienced in the context of other cultures (Bennett, 2001). Acceptance, adaptation and integration comprise the second three stages of the DMIS model. In general, the ethnorelative stages are ways of seeking cultural differences rather than avoiding them. In these stages one might accept cultural differences as important, adapt a

perspective to take cultural differences into account, or integrate a whole concept into a personal identity.

This study examined five first-year teachers as they implemented practices learned in their international student teaching experience. Close examination was made of the intercultural competencies that these teachers exhibited in their first year of teaching based on the Developmental Model for Intercultural Sensitivity.

Significance of the Study

This qualitative study is significant and relevant in adding to the knowledge base of student teaching in a non-Western culture and its impact on a first year teachers' cultural sensitivity. Multicultural education continues to be a vital component of the coursework required for pre-service teachers, as university programs strive to ensure that content is meeting the needs of 21st Century learners in the context of globalization and immigration.

Many universities are now offering their pre-service teachers the opportunity to student teach abroad; however, the options are often limited to Western-based cultures that do not differ vastly from that of the U.S., nor do they resemble the cultural differences that many immigrant students encounter as they arrive in U.S. classrooms. These Western-based cultures, such as England, Ireland and Australia simplify the placement process as university faculty are able to communicate in English with school personnel to arrange housing and academic placements. Providing this ease of communication for university faculty gives a similar comfort for the student teacher upon arrival and for the duration of the time spent in the location. Often a desired outcome of both the student teacher and the university faculty is to improve empathy, cultural sensitivity and increase understanding of differences as these

student teachers become novice teachers. While this can still be accomplished in a Western-based culture, these traits are magnified when the student teacher truly reaches beyond Western cultures and is immersed in foreign surroundings, as many immigrants experience in the U.S.

Non-Western immigrants comprise a majority of the foreign born population in the U.S. today. For this reason, this study focused specifically on student teaching experiences in non-Western cultures as it more closely resembles the immigrant population in U.S. schools. Several publications and dissertations have focused on the impact of international student teaching experiences; however, they have been situated predominantly in Western cultures (Cushner & Mahon, 2003; Marx 2008; Stachowski, Richardson & Henderson, 2003).

In a time of educational budget cuts and fiscal crises, universities are forced to closely examine their program offerings. When the lens falls on international student teaching, this study may serve to inform educational policy makers and faculty of the impact of an international student teaching experience. The results of this study may also impact the hiring practices of school administrators as they contemplate which teachers are best suited to meet the needs of their student bodies.

Definition of Terms

The following terms were defined for use in this study:

Ethnocentric: Viewing one's own culture as central to reality (Bennett, 2001).

Ethnorelevant: Experiencing one's own culture in the context of other cultures (Bennett, 2001).

Expatriate: A person living or residing in a country or culture other than that of the person's upbringing.

Intercultural competence: The ability to communicate effectively in cross cultural situations and relate appropriately in a variety of cultural contexts (Bennett & Bennett, 2001).

Culturally Responsive: Using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and performance style of diverse students to make learning more appropriate and effective for them (Gay 2000). Ladson-Billings (1992) purported that culturally responsive teachers develop intellectual, social, emotional, and political learning by "using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (p. 382).

Non-Western: cultures that have adopted cultural values, beliefs and traditions not commonly associated with Western Europe

Novice teacher: A teacher who is new to the teaching profession.

Pre-Service Teacher: A university student who is majoring in education but has not yet completed all necessary coursework.

Student Teacher: A semester long, university-supervised, field experience serving as the final field experience for a potential teaching professional. Student teaching is an unpaid internship that offers an opportunity for prospective teaching professionals to be mentored by master teachers.

Western cultures: Cultures that have adopted cultural values, beliefs and traditions commonly associated with Western Europe

Summary

Recent decades have produced an abundance of initiatives and literature describing various approaches to accomplishing diversity goals in educational environments. As the diversity in U.S. schools continues to increase, it is of the utmost importance that our educators exhibit the intercultural skills necessary to make learning meaningful for all students. Although the ethnic backgrounds of teachers in the U.S. is not as culturally diverse as the students that they teach, intercultural development is attainable when one reaches beyond the comforts of their home communities and experiences life as the “other”. While practicing teaching in an international environment, the student teacher typically lives in the local community amongst the local community members. In doing so, the student teacher often experiences an existence as a minority in relation to language, race, ethnicity and religion. There is also an element of situational poverty due to the nature of an un-paid internship; however, there is also awareness gained that their financial situation is only a temporary one. Research has suggested that student teaching in multicultural classrooms while living as an outsider in a foreign community can cause pre-service teachers to critically examine their own cultural identities and beliefs as well as those of their students, making intercultural sensitivity possible in ways not achievable in domestic placements.

Bennett’s Developmental Model for Intercultural Sensitivity describes six stages of intercultural sensitivity ranging from ethnocentric to ethnorelative. The study intended to utilize this theoretical framework in effort to explore the cross cultural effectiveness of novice teachers based on their student teaching experience in non-Western cultures. The study was predicated on the belief that cultural understanding cannot be taught; rather, it needs to be experienced to be truly understood. As expressed in Phi Delta Kappan

International (2008), “You can’t play a piano by asking simply to have a look at it. You’ve actually got to lift the lid and play the keys. How can you get somebody to be a global citizen if they don’t actually interact with somebody in another place” (p. 2)? Cultural experiences such international student teaching offer pre-service teachers the opportunity to begin their careers equipped to be a multicultural educator while creating meaningful learning experiences for generations of students.

Chapter 2 provides a review of research and literature informing this study. The review of literature was conducted to provide a foundation to contextualize both the past and present events related to this study. Chapter 3 describes the rationale for employing the methodology, design and methods selected for this qualitative study. The results are presented in Chapter 4 in the words of the participants. Chapter 5 presents the findings based on the literature, and offers recommendations for practice and future research.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

“The question is no longer whether education will be influenced by globalization, but rather how education has the potential to serve the public by cultivating critical questioning about the kind of society we wish to be building, and the kinds of needs social systems should serve.”

Christine Sleeter, 2003

The purpose of this study was to examine how first year teachers describe the intercultural development that occurs while student teaching in a non-western culture, and to explore, within a multicultural framework, how those experiences impact first year teachers’ abilities in the classroom. The review of the literature in this chapter has been organized into distinct themes that are relevant to topics that provided a foundation for this study and broadly contextualize both the past and present events impacting the focus of this study: (a) the history and foundations of multicultural education in U.S. schools and universities; (b) the increasingly disproportionate diverse student population in relation to the mono-cultural teacher population; and (c) the impact of an international student teaching experience with respect to multicultural perspectives and approaches regarding teaching and learning.

Historic Overview of Multicultural Education in the United States

Colonial Era

Settlers along the Eastern coast of the U.S. came from a variety of European countries, yet shared some common assumptions about education. “The first assumption was that only a few people needed much formal education” (Marsh & Willis, 2007, p. 30). Education typically came from the home and through daily activities. During this time period, education was generally reserved for clergy men or nobility as these people were

among the few who needed to possess reading skills. Spring (2008) posited that the goal of these new settlers “was to create a good society, which meant a well ordered religious society that would win God’s approval and be used as a model by the rest of the world” (p. 13). Initially formal schools existed for males who needed to be literate in Latin for religious and moral training; however, by 1749, Benjamin Franklin proposed forming an academy that would introduce practical subjects to the existing Latin curriculum. The audience widened to include the growing number of merchants and middle-class males, and consensus existed on what an educated person must know (Marsh & Willis, 2007). As a proponent of English language schools, Benjamin Franklin designed schools that were used for Anglicization. According to Spring (2008), this practice “illustrates a theme in American educational history: The use of the school as a means of spreading a particular culture...” (p. 23).

19th Century

During the 19th century, American views swayed away from religious education and turned to a society-centered curriculum. It was believed the creation of a good society would rely heavily upon the education of its citizens, thus the common school movement came into being. Educational thought shifted from the belief that only leaders needed to be well educated to the perception that “democracy required broad political participation and thus everyone needed some formal education, not necessarily to be leaders themselves, but to be able to choose leaders wisely” (Marsh & Willis, 2007, p. 33). Spring (2008) elaborated on the beliefs of the common schools reformers and described the reform as one that could “be used to assure the dominance of the Protestant Anglo-American culture, reduce tensions

between social classes, eliminate crime and poverty, stabilize a political system, and form patriotic citizens” (p. 78).

As the United States became increasingly urban, immigration swelled and school curriculum included more practical subjects as school became compulsory. The Naturalization Act was passed in 1790, restricting citizenship to “free white persons” to the exclusion of the African and Asian immigrants, and Native Americans. Schools for these minority groups were segregated, if at all (Applebaum, 2002).

20th Century/Progressive Era

At the beginning of the 20th century, Cremin (1975) described the situation in the United States as “...teaching an astonishing variety of subjects to an immensely heterogeneous clientele” (p. 19-20). He noted that progressive education meant improving the lives of students in several ways, including “tailoring instruction more and more to the different kinds of classes of children who were being brought within the purview of the school” (Marsh & Willis, p. 43).

Progressive educators of this century, such as John Dewey, also encouraged social reform through schooling, and developed philosophies which placed emphasis on *how* to think rather than *what* to think. Horace Mann (as cited in Ornstein & Hunkins, 1993) led the growth of the normal school movement and sought to provide a free public education for students from a variety of backgrounds. Mann (as cited in Sergiovanni, 1982) also believed that social mobility was possible through equalization of schools. Through the normal school’s use of public funding, a common curriculum was created to encourage shared understanding amongst diverse classes and ethnic groups, thus forming a framework similar

to those present in schools today. Strongly rooted in the work of Horace Mann and John Dewey, the Progressive era emphasized that children learn best when following procedures and engaging in activities that emulate real-world experiences. This pedagogical movement persists in present day schools in various forms.

The Industrial Revolution increased the number of immigrants, and schools adopted theories of immigrant assimilation evolved as well. Schools upheld a hidden curriculum to purposefully lose others' cultural identities, often referred to as "Americanization" (Guttek, 1993). Through Americanization, immigrants were expected to assimilate the English language and Protestant values while enter the melting pot of children who were losing their ethnic heritage. Pluralistic ideologies were not encouraged or desired in schools. Minimizing cultural diversity and opportunities for cultural exchanges and expanding views that normally develop from multiculturalism were purposefully lost (Guttek, 1993).

Great Depression/World War II

An increase in diverse populations brought about new concerns for intercultural programs to address racism and discrimination in schools. It was believed that fostering a greater understanding of other cultures was necessary to live in harmony, and that cultural sensitivity may reduce, or eliminate, international and domestic conflict (Appelbaum, 2002). Private companies began offering scholarships focused on foreign exchanges and international studies (Pickert 1992), but public support for such initiatives still lagged. It was not until 1946, with the inception of the Fulbright Program, named for Senator J. William Fulbright, that the U.S. government sponsored such an international exchange. This exchange was intended to "promote international good will through the exchange of students

in the fields of education, culture and science” (U.S. Department of State, available at <http://fulbright.state.gov/history.html>)

The melting pot ideals came into question as a result of the Merriam Report (1928). Initially intended to examine the conditions of Native Americans, this report had far reaching implications with the impact of deculturalization of U.S. immigrants. Toward the end of the 20th century, initiatives for multi-cultural school reform, along with results from the Merriam Report, brought into question the concept of losing one’s ethnic identity. Evidence emphasizing the value of one’s own culture reversed the previous beliefs toward assimilation or “Americanization”.

Post World War

Following World War II, greater attention was focused on desegregation, multi-cultural education and the concept of a global community. In the decades that followed efforts continued to reduce racism, ethnic tensions, and other prejudices that existed within the U.S. citizens and communities.

The Supreme Court’s landmark ruling, *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), declared it unconstitutional for the state to support separate but equal schools for black and white students. With this case sparking the flames for the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s, multicultural education came to the forefront as African Americans, and then other groups, began to demand that discrimination cease. Ethnic groups demanded that “the schools and other educational institutions reform curricula to reflect their experiences, histories, cultures and perspectives” (Banks, 2010, p. 6). Additionally, these same groups demanded that schools hire teachers and administrators from diverse backgrounds to ensure that their

children would have successful role-modeling. As a result of these demands, schools and educators responded with quickly developed “single-group studies” (Sleeter & Grant, 2007; Banks, 2010). However, these elective ethnic studies courses lacked depth and were typically only taken by students of the group being studied.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 determined that “no person, on the basis of race, color, or national origin, could be excluded from or denied the benefits of any programs receiving federal financial assistance.” At the same time, as these changes were being implemented throughout the nation, the Immigration Act of 1965, was also put into effect, permitting a new wave of non-European immigrants to legally enter the United States. This resulted in an ethnic shift as immigration doubled between 1965 and 1970, and then doubled again between 1970 and 1990. This new wave of immigrants was not of European descent but typically from Asia, Central and South American, creating demographic diversity that had not existed in the previous 300 years (Frum, 2000).

In the ensuing decades, the Civil Rights movement redefined the term multicultural education to describe “a wide variety of programs and practices related to educational equity, women, ethnic groups, language minorities, low income groups, and people with disabilities” (Banks, p. 7). By the end of the century “attention of both educators and the American public itself was being captured by free schools, open classrooms, and how individual centered and society centered curricula could be worked out within them” (Marsh & Willis, p. 55). As a result, numerous governmental programs were created, each attempting to help disadvantaged groups.

Late 1900s – Present

In the late 1900s, skepticism escalated toward education and educators in the U.S. “Many pressures mounted on schools for what then became known as accountability” (Marsh & Willis, p. 57). Accountability asked that teachers be responsible for what their students learn. This apparently simplistic request created an unrealistic demand that teachers also control the significant influences that family and other outside forces have on a student’s learning and desire to learn. “When applied to curriculum, this kind of pressure led toward the narrowing of what was taught and how it was taught to small and non-problematical units, especially those that could most easily be tested” (p. 57).

As the confidence in the U.S. education system plummeted, hundreds of national reports were produced by various governmental agencies as well as private organizations. One report, the National Commission on Excellence in Education (NCEE), stood out in terms of its long-lasting influence on curriculum. The results, released in April 1983, *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*, was embraced by President Reagan and later established him as an educational reformer. Marsh and Willis (2007) purported, “The report identified a crisis that it alleged the nation was facing; its proposed solution was largely through the reform of the curricula of American secondary schools” (p. 57). The opening paragraphs played heavily on the fears of Americans that our schools were failing to meet the needs of the students and society they were designed to serve. The report stated to the American people that “while we can take justifiable pride in what our schools and colleges have historically accomplished and contributed to the United States and the well-being of its people, the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a nation and a people” (National Commission

on Excellence in Education, 1983, p. 5). The NCEE made several accusations and recommendations for what it called the “Five New Basics” required for high school graduation. However, it failed to recognize that in its comparisons to the previous century, where approximately ten percent of the high school age population attended secondary school, the report was released at a time when nearly 90% of the high school population attended school. The U.S. had changed tremendously over the century and now served far more than the previous elite, but encompassed a larger and more diverse student population. With numerous simplified recommendations, ultimately no major reform was recommended. It was merely suggested that schools needed to get back to teaching the “basic academic subjects, spend more time on this task, test students more and measure the results more frequently” (Marsh & Willis, p. 60). With the rapidly changing demographics of the nation, this one-size-fits-all approach to curriculum left little room for curriculum flexibility, wisdom and decision making ability of the teachers, and certainly lacked freedom for individuality.

In January of 2002, President George W. Bush signed the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act into law, enacting “the most sweeping changes to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965” (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). At the heart of this bipartisan platform were high hopes of improving the performance of students in American schools by setting high standards and establishing measurable goals. In doing so, states were to determine their own standards, and were also required to develop assessments in basic skills in order to remain eligible for federal funding. “NCLB is based on precisely the same assumptions and strategies as *A Nation at Risk*: Allege an educational crisis that can be cured by emphasizing a few basic academic subjects, spending more time on the task of teaching them, testing students more and measuring the results more frequently” (Marsh & Willis, p.

62). A test driven educational system was cemented by the passage of this law, while the effects varied widely. Spring (2008) likened many of the goals of NCLB to other similar goals throughout the history of US education. Spring discussed the similarities in the early years, when schools focused on “providing everyone with an equal opportunity to compete for jobs and wealth” (p. 490), and the later attempts to use schools as a way to “create and maintain a common American culture” (p. 490) while supporting “the use of standardized tests as a means of governing the educational system, sorting students for future employment, and providing equality of opportunity. Spring proposed the notion that, perhaps, “the historical events inevitably lead to No Child Left Behind” (p. 491).

Under NCLB, schools that were previously experiencing success, continued to do so, while struggling schools had increased pressure to raise test scores, especially those with large populations of students from low income communities, English language learners and students of color (Valli, Croninger, & Chambliss, 2008). With new attention to academic standards, multicultural education, diversity and equality were seen as non-academic and attention quickly shifted to test scores and basic academics subject matter (Sleeter, 2007).

Simultaneously, the intellectual work disseminating from the universities established a foundation supportive for multicultural education and advanced the perspectives that differed sharply with those of most of the political and economic leaders (Banks, 2010). With whites no longer the majority in many major U.S. cities (U.S. Department of Homeland Security), Islam as the fastest growing religion in the U.S., and 20% of U.S. households speaking a language other than English, (U.S. Census 2006), a major thread running through most debates about schooling was the relative importance of preparing students for jobs

versus preparing them for active citizenship, and whether it is possible to do both (Banks, 2010).

While K-12 public education was focusing on standardization of curriculum, the internationalization of higher education was rapidly occurring at unprecedented rates. Between 1954 and 2002, the number of foreign students jumped from a total of 34,232 to 690,923 (Institute for International Education, 2010). Acknowledgement of interdependence among world nations enabled university leaders to include internationalization into mission statements and strategic planning. Such initiatives also included proposals for increased attention to foreign languages at all levels of education. However, budget constraints and reductions of most federal initiatives for international education significantly reduced or eliminated resources of international agencies. These agencies included such programs as the Fulbright program, the national Security Education Program and the U.S. Information Agency (Kanet, 1996).

Other forms of resistance toward multi-cultural education existed by sheer nature of who held the power and privilege in creating school policies and practice. While some scholars promoted and worked toward multi-cultural efforts, critical theorists argued that schools intentionally served the interests of the wealthy and powerful, while purposefully excluding those less privileged. McLaren (2003) posited that “schools operate mainly to reproduce the values and privileges of existing elites” (p. 289). Under the belief that social order prohibited equal opportunities, true efforts toward multi-cultural education had the potential to “transform society, with the learner functioning as an active subject committed to self and social transformation” (p. 102).

Internationalizing a university campus requires a commitment to more than simply offering foreign language and study abroad programs. When internationalizing, top level administrators and faculty must resist hesitation to make changes in curriculum. At the heart of internationalizing a campus is internationalizing the curriculum (Johnston & Edelstein, 1993) and recognizing that attitudes of administrators, faculty, professional staff and students all contribute to the culture of acceptance for diversity (Hayward, 2000). Collectively, all stakeholders must contribute to the collaborative goal.

With the rising awareness of diversity issues, and decades of hope that schooling might be the great equalizer, there remain critical concerns regarding the nation's schools. Nieto (2000) noted, "School conditions in our society have been consistently, systematically, and disproportionately unequal and unfair, and the major casualties have been those students who differ significantly in social class, race, ethnicity, native language, and gender from what is considered the 'mainstream'" (p. 181). It is time that educators embrace diversity while infusing it into their practice, rather than addressing it as a single-subject, yet how to do so remains a crucial question.

Mono-Cultural Teaching Population

Marx and Marx (2011) posited that the vast majority of teachers in U.S. schools are European American, middle-class, and monolingual in English and thus, culturally different from many of the students they teach. This study will describe the value that an international student teaching experience has on a first-year teacher's ability to use culturally responsive teaching in 21st Century schools.

There is ample evidence provided by Marx and Moss (2011) that “the vast majority of teachers in the U.S. are European American, middle class, and monolingual in English, and, thus, culturally different than many of the students that they teach” (p. 36). The authors further discussed the devastating effects when “teachers often hold ethnocentric beliefs that negatively influence the educational experiences of diverse students” (p. 36). There is a growing population of non-Western immigrants in the U.S and Europeans now comprise only a small percentage of the nation’s immigrant population. According to the 2006 U.S. Census Bureau report, the top 12 emigrant countries to the U.S. were Mexico (173,753), People’s Republic of China (87,345), Philippines (74,607), India (61,369), Cuba (45,614), Columbia (43,151), Dominican Republic (38,069), El Salvador (31,783), Vietnam (30,695), Jamaica (24,976), South Korea (24,386), and Guatemala (24,146). This change in population distinctly contrasts with the Western-based cultures in which most U.S. teachers were raised and have lived among most of their lives. Teacher educators generally agree that “it is imperative that we address this culture gap if we are to meet the educational needs of all students” (Marx & Marx, p. 36); however, these teacher educators are typically of the same European, dominant culture as the students that they teach. Providing cross-cultural experiences enables pre-service teachers to uncover their own cultural identities, learn about other cultures, and examine the socio-cultural aspects of education (Cochran-Smith, 2005). Admitting that there are some things better learned outside the control of the faculty can be a challenge. Nevertheless, advocates of international student teaching programs believe that building bridges across cultural boundaries is possible, but will require a high degree of tolerance for ambiguity, and an understanding of the role culture plays in shaping thinking and behavior (Cushner & Brennan, 2007).

The methods that universities have employed when attempting to create multicultural educators are as diverse as the students requiring their attention. “Although these efforts undoubtedly offer some benefit in terms of increasing cultural awareness, they are not sufficiently linked to practice to influence the professional lives of the participating candidates in lasting ways” (Cushner & Brennan, 2007, p. 5). The current study focused on lived experiences abroad, where pre-service teachers exited the cultural comfort zones that most have lived comfortably within, and truly experienced what students may potentially experience in their classes.

International Student Teaching

A review of current literature provided several articles that focused on common traits gained while student teaching abroad. Several of these traits include the student’s ability to have improved self-awareness, increased self-efficacy, empathy and respect for individual differences, and culturally diverse teaching strategies. While most of these studies took place in European or Western cultures, parallels can be drawn among and between the values of these experiences. This study ascertained the impact that each trait has on a teacher’s ability to effectively teach students in 21st century schools.

Student teaching in other cultures enables teacher candidates to simultaneously strengthen their practices and personally stretch beyond their traditional zone of comfort, while away from support networks provided at home, in school, or by friends, and to develop interpersonal relationships with host nationals. Opportunities exist for student teachers to broaden their cultural knowledge, develop a global perspective, and increase their understanding of the values of multicultural education through interaction with children,

professionals, and adults from varying cultural backgrounds (Cushner & Brennan, 2007). International student teaching is becoming increasingly popular as universities recognize the value in encouraging such programs, and student teachers seek out these opportunities to become culturally proficient both personally and professionally.

Merryfield (1997) posited that, in order “to achieve cross-cultural understanding, one must develop an understanding of one’s own heritage and the role of one’s own culture in the world’s system” (p. 9). In traditional student teaching experiences, pre-service teachers generally focus on becoming acquainted with the children they are teaching and best practices in the classroom. However, when student teaching in an international setting, pre-service teachers encounter an additional, and often times an unexpected challenge to understand one’s own cultural identity and value systems. Stachowski and Brantmeir (2002) suggested that, through cross cultural experiences, teacher education programs can encourage, and, indeed, require student teachers to think more broadly about whom they are and the factors that have influenced their identities. Cross-cultural student teaching offers firsthand comparisons of lifestyles, values, and ways of thinking and doing. These opportunities for critical comparison can result in a clearer sense of the student teachers’ own ethnic and cultural identities.

Self-awareness

Universities that provide the opportunity to student teach abroad, typically require a preparatory course on campus prior to the international student teaching experience. Self-awareness is one of the key issues addressed in such a course. Questions are often discussed that enable one to ponder about what it is to be an American as well as seeing oneself as

others see us. This recognition encourages the student teacher to contrast cultural assumptions and values even while still living in their home culture. It is important that student teachers reflect upon these topics prior to leaving home, because the extended immersion experience of these student teachers not only enables, but also forces them to move beyond their comfort zones while living among the culture of the students they are teaching in the classroom. Oftentimes, these student teachers are faced with realities such as being a minority for the first time wherein they cannot return home in the evening to what is known and comfortable.

Zeichner and Hoeft (1996, as cited by Stachowski, 1998) noted, “Completing student teaching in schools serving pupils with cultural backgrounds different from that of perspective teachers is, to many educators, an inadequate preparation for cross cultural teaching, unless these experiences extend out into the community” (p. 1). An example of this could occur when one is student teaching abroad and lives within the community, among the students who are in the classes being taught. While living among the local communities, student teachers begin to recognize differences from the foreign environment they live in and those of the U.S. These contrasts cause self-reflection and raise self-awareness of personal beliefs on community involvement and structures, family values, work ethic and values.

Stachowski and Brantmeier (2002) described a student teacher’s reflection of teaching in England: “My time in England has forced me to re-evaluate my understanding of myself and where I come from ... It is a bit difficult to be critical of a lifestyle of which I am a part, and being here has allowed me to remove myself from that lifestyle and examine it” (p. 10). Through self-examination, student teachers begin to form opinions, either positive or negative, about their home culture. Some commonly identify positive aspects of home

culture and a renewed appreciation for many conveniences of home such as the variety of goods provided at the grocery store, traveling on U.S. roads and established traffic laws, policies and attitudes regarding environmental issues (p. 10). In addition, student teachers reflect and raise awareness of their attitudes about U.S. schools. In a study conducted by Stachowski and Brantmeier (2002), student teachers reflected on U.S. schools, noting their enhanced appreciation of U.S. mainstream education as well as the structures, procedures, attitudes, and outcomes of elementary and secondary schools and educators back home. They often remarked that U.S. schools produce more well-rounded individuals, and both teachers and pupils have a greater number of opportunities and resources available to them. Lessons tend to be more creative and stimulating in the U.S., and teachers have better attitudes and are more dedicated. School buildings were also perceived as being larger and cleaner in the U.S.

This appreciation for the home culture is often counter balanced with recognition of some downfalls in U.S. society. The student teacher may encounter some eye-opening experiences and place higher value on foreign policies, customs, or even attitudes. Student teachers are struck with the realization that the pace of life in the U.S. is often overstressed and uptight, with little time set aside for enjoying quality time with family members and close friends; ethnocentrism is prevalent in the U.S. while awareness of the world outside of the U.S. is significantly lacking (Stachowski & Brantmeier, 2002).

Romano (2007) quoted a student teacher in Japan to summarize the self-awareness aspect of international student teaching, noting that the student's cultural awareness has expanded from the classroom into the community. Romano also revealed a heightened consciousness:

I have learned quite a bit in a short time that I have been here. One thing I have noticed most of all is that I have become very aware of myself because of how different I am than those with whom I interact. Before I arrived, I knew this was something that would happen, but I had no idea to what extent it would be. In watching people around me, I see that I differ in my physical appearance, the way I eat, the way I interact with people, the way I stand on the train, and even the way I buy something at the store. (p. 205)

When student teachers think more broadly about who they are and the factors that have influenced their identities, they are better able to understand the dynamics that define the cultural identities of their pupils and use this knowledge to best serve the youth in their classrooms. Additionally, as student teachers compare their home culture with that of their student teaching experience, they begin to develop a clearer sense of their own ethnic and cultural identities, which Zeichner (1996) identified as key characteristics of effective teachers in culturally diverse societies (Stachowski & Brantmeir, p 5).

Increased self-efficacy

Teacher efficacy, commonly demonstrated in teachers with overseas experience, measures the extent that teachers believe their actions will have a positive effect on student achievement. Teachers with strong efficacy tend to assume personal responsibility for making sure their students learn. When these teachers encounter difficulties, they view them as obstacles to be overcome by discovering appropriate teaching methods, not as indicators that students cannot learn. A teacher's willingness to stay with a student in a failing situation is indicative of a teacher's confidence in his or her teaching ability and/or the student's ability to learn (Gibson & Dembo, 1984, p. 570). "Unlike typical study abroad experiences, student teachers abroad are generally on their own, where self-efficacy becomes possible" (Cushner & Brennan, 2007, p.6). Imagine the student teacher who rides a Japanese train to

school daily with the names of train stops written only in Japanese characters, or the student teacher who must barter in a foreign language when purchasing fruits and vegetables at the market each day. Other student teachers may be invited to dinner at a new friend's home only to find that arriving on time is unheard of in that culture. After several weeks of successfully navigating such interactions, the student teacher is likely to have an increased sense of self and, ultimately, believes that there are few goals that cannot be personally achieved if given a chance.

When living abroad, student teachers encounter a variety of new ways to live, eat, socialize, and confront challenges in daily life. For example, while Americans may find value in waking up early in the day to get the most of the day light hours, another culture may value sleeping in, taking afternoon naps, and staying up late. It may be easy to make hasty judgments of such differences in cultures, after living within a new culture for some time, one begins to find value in different ways of living and recognizes that *different* does not equate to *wrong*.

A strong sense of self-efficacy is often recognized as international student teachers typically complete the experience with a heightened sense of confidence. They believe that they have the power to make a difference in the lives of their future U.S. pupils and perceive they are personally able to ensure that their students get a complete education (Stachowski & Brantmeier, 2002). It is their belief in their own abilities that encourages them to take on challenges in the classroom and school environment, be more self-reliant, and advocate for children as they feel that they can personally make a difference in their student's lives and education. Teacher efficacy and empowerment in multicultural education often go hand-in-hand with international student teaching. The international experience culminates with the

student teacher feeling confident as a truly multicultural person; thus, competent as a multicultural educator.

Empathy and respect for individual differences

An obvious symbol of respect for differences occurs when student teachers become comfortable within the culture in which they are living that they begin making friends within their new communities. While living abroad, lifelong bonds are frequently formed with people from diverse backgrounds. Oftentimes the challenge of living in a new environment requires an immediate need for trust amongst the surrounding people. People with these kinds of experiences are more likely to seek out greater diversity of friends and maintain those friendships long after the experience together is finished (McMillan & Opem, 2004).

Effective teachers of students who are racially, ethnically, culturally different from themselves have learned how to recognize and build on assets that students bring, interpret students' classroom behavior accurately, contextualize problems students encounter within sociopolitical rather than cultural deficiency analysis, and communicate constructively with adults in student's lives (Villegas, 2008). This is made possible when the teacher has respect for individual differences of the students. In addition, teachers who values diversity are more likely to incorporate multicultural topics into the curriculum they teach. Curriculum choices often include units that incorporate other cultures, environmental problems, compare and contrast cultures, varied transportation systems, second languages, historical artifacts, art, and musical influence from around the world, to name a few.

Culturally diverse teaching strategies

As indicated in a case study conducted by Noordhoff and Kleinfield (1993), white pre-service teachers noted the impact of a semester-long immersion experience in a small indigenous Alaskan community. While this was obviously not an international experience, the culture of the student teachers was vastly different from that of the local community. The student teachers lived in the community and became involved in activities such as sewing and beading groups, local church activities, or cross country skiing. Noordhoff and Kleinfield (1993) videotaped them three times over the semester while they were student teaching. The videotapes showed their progress to shift from teaching as *telling* to teaching as *engaging* the children with culturally relevant knowledge to connect academic knowledge with what the children know (Sleeter, 2008). Native American educator, Cornel Pewewardy (1993, as cited by Ladson-Billings, 2001) asserted that one of the reasons Native American children experience difficulty in schools is that educators traditionally have attempted to insert culture into education, instead of inserting education into the culture.

Student teachers gain culturally relevant knowledge when placed in international settings. While educators must view all students as individuals and be cautious not to form normative assertions, increased exposure to diverse cultures can assist student teachers in recognizing the wide range of cultural values that exist outside of their own culture. If diversity is not identified as cultural differences, differences in values might be misinterpreted and even unintentionally viewed as signs of disrespect. One example wherein a cultural difference may present barriers between the student and the teacher can be found in cultures whereby students are taught that looking an adult in the eyes is a sign of disrespect. A teacher may insist that a student to look at them in the eyes when speaking to them, while

the student may be intentionally and respectfully, avoiding eye contact. Another example is seen in recognizing that certain cultures demonstrate an increased likelihood of lacking self-esteem, thus culturally relevant teaching materials can be used to promote self-esteem of pupils with these cultural backgrounds (Stachowski, 2001). A third example of a cultural misinterpretation is the recognition that, in some cultures, there is a tendency to resist brainstorming as informal discussion are thought to be rude. Finally, it is widely recognized that effective communication for second language learners includes clear and concise directions with more visuals and hands-on activities, while relying on other methods than language (Bryan & Sprague, 1997). These examples, while certainly not encompassing all cultures, serve as suggestions for the increased understanding of culturally relevant teaching practices that can be enhanced as student teachers experiences increased exposure to diverse cultures.

Despite how subject matter might be depicted in a traditional U.S. textbook, norms differ worldwide. My personal experiences living abroad have opened my mind to varying norms, such as: (a) Egyptian neighborhoods are not divided into square blocks; (b) Japanese police officers can be found in small structures on several corners throughout town, as opposed to a centralized downtown police station; and (c) Brazilians eat a large meal at noon, while dinner is a small portion of food served around 10:00 pm. With a variety of cultures represented in U.S. classrooms today, teachers must possess cultural sensitivity while delivering the subject matter to students. For example, when teaching an elementary social studies curriculum, it cannot be assumed that the students in the class will all enter with the same prior knowledge of such topics as neighborhoods, community officials, and typical mealtimes. Oftentimes this cultural understanding cannot be taught, whereas it needs to be

experienced to truly be understood. “You can’t play a piano by asking simply to have a look at it. You’ve actually got to lift the lid and play the keys. How can you get somebody to be a global citizen if they don’t actually interact with somebody in another place?” (*Phi Delta Kappan International*, 2008, p. 2).

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

Qualitative researchers “look at their own lives to see if they can find anything interesting to study” (Esterberg, 2002, p. 26). This study has evolved out of my own life experiences as a student teacher in Cairo, Egypt. I have often reflected upon the impact that living and working in a non-Western culture had on my frame of thinking from that point forward, as I have recognized the many ways in which those experiences shaped me both personally and professionally throughout my teaching career. Today, as a facilitator of similar placements for student teachers in international locations, I am reminded daily of the many challenges and rewards that come with such a lived experience.

The purpose of this interpretivist study was to explore how first year teachers describe the intercultural development and sensitivity that occurred while student teaching in a non-Western culture and the value that those experiences abroad bring to their current classrooms. The focus of the study was to capture the essence of the experiences abroad as perceived and described by the participants, and how those experiences influenced both the tacit and explicit practices in their first year of teaching.

The chapter begins by describing the rationale for using a qualitative approach for this study. Additionally, information is provided regarding epistemological and theoretical perspectives that were used to inform this study as well as methodologies, methods, participant characteristics, trustworthiness, and delimitations and limitations of the study.

Approval to conduct the study was granted by the Office of Research Compliance at Iowa State University before conducting any research involving human subjects. Copies of

communication to the participants are provided in Appendix A. Reflection and interview questions are shown in Appendix B.

Rationale for Use of a Qualitative Approach

Qualitative research was the most appropriate methodology applied in this study as I examined the lived experiences of student teachers as they began their teaching careers and reflected upon their student teaching experiences in non-Western cultures. Eisner (1998) described qualitative considerations in human affairs as a “ubiquitous part of life and manifest themselves whenever we experience the qualities of the environment” (p. 21). He further explained that “experience is what we achieve as those qualities come to be known. It is through qualitative inquiry, the intelligent apprehension of the qualitative world, that we *make sense*” (p. 21). Sharing the stories of student teachers provided an opportunity for them to simultaneously make meaning of their experiences as the knowledge gained abroad influenced their current teaching practices. As the primary instrument for data collection and analysis, it was my hope that I would encourage rich description by being adaptive and responsive as the participants described in-depth accounts of their experiences.

The essence of qualitative research is to allow meaning to be socially constructed and interpreted as individuals interact with their world. The meaning can have multiple interpretations and is not fixed, but rather, can change over time (Merriam, 2002). As the primary instrument for data collection, the researcher must try to understand the meaning of social events in context, while considering the subjectivity of human participants as well as the subjectivity of the researcher herself (Esterberg, 2002). The inductive nature of qualitative research provides an avenue for the researcher to gather data, and to build

concepts and themes that might emerge from the data. The method of allowing a situation to speak for itself was described by Eisner (1999) as an emergent focus. In such a situation, the researcher focuses on selected common themes, which become the major object of the researcher's attention.

Epistemology – Constructionism

Epistemology is “the theory of knowledge embedded in the theoretical perspective and thereby in the methodology” (Crotty, 1998, p. 3). It is concerned with the production of knowledge, and essentially it is how we know what we know. Constructionism is the epistemology that was applied in this study. As described by Crotty (1998, p. 8), constructionism is the rejection of one human truth; rather, knowledge, truth, and meaning are described as coming into existence in and out of our engagement with the realities of our world.

When teachers live and teach in communities much like those in which they were raised, they are likely to interact exclusively with cultures that are similar to their own. However, when pre-service teachers choose to complete student teaching abroad, they are also choosing to immerse themselves in communities in which they are unfamiliar and typically uncomfortable. This new environment often provides opportunities for them to gain cultural understanding for the students in their classrooms, as well as cultural sensitivity as they experience the realities of life as a minority.

Theoretical Perspective – Interpretivism

Interpretive research draws on both phenomenology and symbolic interaction. However, as Merriam (2002) stated, it is unique in that it is “interested in (1) how people

interpret their experiences (2) how they construct their worlds and (3) what meaning they attribute to their experiences” (p. 38). While all qualitative research is concerned with constructing meaning, interpretivism looks specifically at how social actors make sense of reality and come to understand the world around them.

In basic interpretive research “the researcher is interested in understanding how participants make meaning of a situation or phenomenon” (Merriam, 2002, p. 6). The researcher inserts herself into the process of making meaning of the participant’s accounts of a situation. As posited by constructivism, there is no one true reality; rather, reality can be socially constructed, thereby enabling the researcher the liberty to interpret the participant’s words and actions into social explanations of a phenomenon.

Guided by basic interpretive research, this study attempted to explain a human and social reality as interpreted by first-year teachers who completed their student teaching experience in a non-Western culture. By applying data collected through interviews with these first year teachers, “the researcher will inductively analyze the data to identify the recurring patterns or common themes that cut across the data” (Merriam, 2002, p. 7).

Crotty (1998) described the interpretivist approach as one that “looks for culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world” (p. 67). The rationale for using the interpretivist approach for this study is closely related to another similar study. Merriam and Muhamed (2002) examined the nature of learning in older adults in the non-Western society of Malaysia. Merriam and Muhamed posited “some might assume, because this study was conducted in a different culture and the concept of cultural values was used to frame the study and interpret the data, that this is an ethnographic study” (p. 38). It may be assumed that the current study is ethnographic in nature because of the

cultural experiences that impacted the novice teachers being studied. Elements of ethnography are infused within Merriam and Muhamed's study as well as this study; however, a true ethnographic study would necessitate an extended stay in another cultural at the time the research is conducted. Additionally, a full socio-cultural interpretation of the data would be expected in ethnography. Neither an extended cultural experience nor a socio-cultural interpretation were present in this study. Nevertheless, in basic interpretivist fashion, attention focused on how first year teachers perceived the cultural competencies gained during their experiences abroad and how those perceptions currently shaped their lives, both personally and professionally.

Interpretivism is also closely linked with Max Weber's *verstehen* approach, "whereby understanding meaning and intentionality is emphasized over and above casual explanations" (Prasad, 2005, p. 14). With its German roots, *verstehen* does not translate literally to English, but has come to be loosely synonymous with "understanding" within the realm of qualitative research. Weber argued that social sciences are concerned with understanding, which is uniquely different from natural sciences which deal with explanations. Within the contextual boundaries of social science, *verstehen* is not limited to rule governed methods of explanations, but rather the interpretive understandings of human actions. This study utilized Bennett's Developmental Model for Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) to understand the perceptions of the participants that were described in Chapter 1.

Verstehn enabled the researcher in this study to look beyond prescribed rules for interpretations. Rather, the research constructs new understandings of how the participants perceive and interpret their experiences abroad and its relevance to their first year of teaching, as they employ culturally competent pedagogy. There is no current explanation for

these perceptions that exist. This study aimed to create and understand that which was not understood in previous studies.

Methodology – Phenomenology

Lived experiences for groups of individuals are at the heart of phenomenological studies. Phenomenological researchers seek the central, underlying meaning of an experience and emphasize the intentionality of consciousness where experiences contain both the outward appearance and in the inward consciousness based on memory, image, and meaning (Creswell, 1998).

By temporarily suspending all judgment of what is known, phenomenological studies require the researcher to “bracket” prejudgments and experiences. Phenomenology asks the researcher “to engage with the phenomena in our world and make sense of them directly and immediately” (Crotty 1998, p. 79). Through the use of bracketing, the researcher lets the experience or phenomena speak first hand, while attempting to “recover a fresh perception of existence, one unprejudiced by acculturation” (Sadler, 1969, p. 377). Crotty (1996) purported that phenomenology allows us to set aside, as best we can, the prevailing understandings of phenomena and revisit our immediate experience of them, possibilities for new meaning emerge for us or we witness at least an authentication and enhancement of former meaning.

As the researcher in this study, I bracketed my own opinions as a former participant in the experiences that I studied. While there are a multitude of ways in which my experiences living and working in a non-Western culture have shaped who I am today, these

experiences were bracketed as I sought the meaning that the participants have constructed from their own unique and individual experiences.

A final key component of a phenomenological study is the intentionality of consciousness. Consciousness is directed toward an object; it is consciousness of something and, therefore, the object cannot be separated or described apart from the person. Reality of an object, therefore, is inextricably related to one's consciousness. Through this intentionality of consciousness, the reality of an object is only perceived with the meaning of the experience of an individual (Creswell, 1998, p. 53). Phenomenology, as the methodological approach applied in this study enabled me as the researcher to explain and understand the experiences of first year teachers who completed their student teaching abroad. Their experiences in non-Western cultures will be probed and allow the participants perceptions to become reality. The meaning of their experiences will be given an underlying structure and therefore I, as the researcher, can better understanding what it means for someone to have similar experiences as the participants.

Research Design

Participants

Qualitative research is interested in gaining a deep understanding of a small number of specified cases. When conducting qualitative research, there is greater interest in depth than in breadth, as the intent is not to produce generalizable results that can be applied to a larger population. According to Creswell (1998), the participants must "be individuals who have experienced the phenomenon being explored and can articulate their conscious experiences" (p. 111). The participants in this study were selected through purposive

sampling in which I intentionally sampled the research participants for the specific perspectives they may exhibit (Esterberg, 2002).

In recent years I have worked closely with numerous pre-service teachers who completed their student teaching experience abroad. Because this study focused specifically on non-Western experiences as well as first-year teachers, there were a limited number of eligible participants. Participants in this study were limited to recent graduates from the same Midwestern university who had completed their student teaching experience in a non-Western culture and had already accepted teaching positions for the current school year.

As contracts and teaching positions were still uncertain at the time of the study, I had not located the desired eight to ten participants that I had hoped to find. Five participants expressed interest in being part of this study. These five participants were Caucasian and female, as is common in the teaching profession. Two candidates graduated with majors in secondary teaching; one in elementary education and one in art education. Their student teaching experiences were completed in American schools located in Egypt, Singapore, Thailand, and two in Brazil. Each had accepted a teaching position and was to begin her career in the academic year 2011-2012. Two accepted teaching position at public schools in the United States and two accepted positions at private American schools overseas. Of those staying in the U.S., one was planning to teach in Kansas, while the other would be teaching in Minnesota. Of those who were to return to overseas schools, one was planning to teach in Singapore and the other in India.

Methods

Qualitative methodology was employed as a framework for this study. Data gathering methods included: (a) a demographic survey of participants; (b) in-depth interviews pertaining to their experiences abroad and teaching practices; (c) in-depth follow-up discussion questions that further investigate the strands that arose from the initial interview; (d) artifacts, including lesson plans and curricular documents; and (e) semi-structured blog kept throughout their first year of teaching.

Demographics

Prior to conducting the interviews, demographic information was gathered on each participant in the study. The participants completed their student teaching experience in a non-Western culture and were currently in their first year of teaching. Due to the nature of this study and its interest in cultural competencies, the participants were asked to report personal characteristics such as ethnicity, and native language. Participants were also asked to respond to questions specific to the demographics of both the school where they student taught and the districts in which they were currently teaching. The district demographics included questions about the total student population, ethnicity of students, and languages spoken by the student body. With a limited number of participants, the responses are not intended to be generalizable to a larger population but, rather, to inform the literature of these individual experiences.

Phenomenological interviews

Participants were asked in face-to-face or Skype interviews to describe in detail their student teaching experiences in a non-Western culture. These questions were asked to

generate insights as to the participant's perceptions of the meaning and values placed on the international student teaching experience. Seidman (2006) recommended that phenomenological interviews occur in three phases; however, due to the pre-existing relationship between the researcher and the participants, this study combined the recommended first and second interviews. In Seidman's recommended first interview, the researcher established the context of the experience by exploring the life history of the participant. The second interview concentrated on the details of the participant's lived experiences both in the non-Western culture as well as in the first year of teaching. Since I was already familiar with each participant's background and the context of their student teaching experience, it seemed logical to combine these two phases.

The third phase, or second interview, asked the participants to reflect on the meaning of their experiences and how it impacted their first year of teaching. Seidman (2006) described "meaning", not as one of satisfaction or reward but, rather, as the "intellectual and emotional connections between the participants' work and life" (p. 18). Seidman continued to explain that making meaning requires that the participants look at how the factors in their lives interacted to their present situation. It is the combination of exploring the past to clarify the present, and describing the concrete details of their present experience that establishes conditions for reflecting upon their current teaching.

All three phases of the interview are important. It is through the process of reconstructing the details of their student teaching experiences, selecting stories from their past and imparting meaning upon those stories that the participants will construct meaning of the experiences.

Each participant was interviewed a minimum of two times. The interviews were conducted in 90-minute sessions, allowing adequate time for participants to reconstruct their experiences and put them into context of their lives to reflect on the meaning (Seidman, p. 20). Interview questions were semi-structured to enable other questions to emerge during the interviewing. The semi-structured nature of the interviews enables additional ideas to be explored while providing opportunity for rich and thick descriptions. Semi-structured interviews explore topics more openly and enable the participants to express their opinions and ideas in their own words. Esterberg, (2002) posited that semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to “move beyond our own experiences and ideas and really understand the other person’s point of view” (p. 87). It is expected that the researcher has some basic understandings about the topic being discussed and the responses to the questions will shape the order and structure of the interview.

With permission, the interviews were voice recorded to allow voice intonation and other impressions not possible through written responses only. Responses were transcribed, analyzed, and open-coded to detect emerging themes. Use of open coding enables the researcher to work line by line through the data while identifying any possible themes that seem to emerge. Pre-established codes are avoided to ensure the researcher is not searching for what *ought* to be there, causing the oversight of what actually *is* there (Esterberg, 2002).

Open-coding is used to analyze for recurring themes and focused-coding is used once there are no additional emerging themes. When the same codes are being found repeatedly, the researcher narrows in on themes that seem particularly relevant and which may have the most significance when analyzed. Focused coding also enables the researcher to generate in depth follow-up discussion questions. As is common in basic interpretive research, the

overall interpretation will be the researcher's understanding, mediated by the researcher's perspective, of the participants' understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Merriam, p. 38).

In addition to conducting interviews, participants were asked to contribute to a mutually accessible blog to enable them to respond to posted and guiding questions, similar to the interview questions. The blog format was used to provide a more on-going and detailed report of the participants' stories. Blogging enabled the participants to contribute on their own timeframe as opposed to a pre-determined and scheduled time. The same structure used to analyze the interview data was also applied to analyze the blog data.

As participants engaged in lesson design, they were asked to submit samples of their lesson plans to demonstrate their work in the classroom and the implementation of possible meaning made from their experiences. For example, if a participant described an increased respect for diverse learners in the classroom, their lesson plans were considered as representative of this construct. If the students read a chapter on communities in a U.S. textbook and the teacher/participant recognizes that the community in the given location is unique from that which is described in the chapter, the teacher may adapt the lesson to represent the local community and ask students to create a Venn Diagram illustrating similarities and differences.

Through demographic survey questions, in-depth interviews, blog records, and artifacts, this study sought to make meaning of the experiences that the participants had in non-Western cultures. Further explorations sought to answer how these experiences served as a catalyst for deepening the participants understanding of teaching and learning in their first year of teaching.

Data Analysis

In qualitative research, analyzing the data is an on-going process which entails several steps. Creswell (2009) recommended utilizing six steps for analyzing data:

1. Organize and Prepare the data for analysis;
2. Read through all of the data to gain a general sense of the information and its overall meaning;
3. Begin the coding process of organizing the material into chunks of text before bringing meaning to the information;
4. Use the coding process to generate a description of the setting or people as well as the categories or themes for analysis;
5. Advance how the description and themes will be represented in the qualitative narrative to convey the findings; and
6. Make an interpretation of the data by asking “what are the lessons learned?”

As the researcher continues to peel back the many layers that are represented in the data, deeper understandings and new interpretations of the data are uncovered.

Trustworthiness

Multiple strategies can and should be implemented to ensure trustworthiness and validity of the research being conducted. According to Creswell (2009), there are eight primary strategies for assuring accuracy of findings. Although I did not employ all eight strategies, I applied the four most frequently used strategies: triangulation, member checking, rich and thick description, and clarifying the biases of the researcher.

Triangulation requires the researcher to use more than one data collection strategy. I did not rely solely on interview responses, nor did I rely solely on lesson plans. It is not uncommon for responses provided in interview questions to be asynchronous with their actions. For example, a participant may tell me that they have gained respect for other cultures, yet their lesson plans may demonstrate disrespect or ignorance. Credibility is gained through the convergence of several data sources.

Member checking involves conducting follow-up conversations with participants to share themes or final reports with them. This provides them the opportunity to comment on the findings. After I reviewed all of the data, I separated it into themed categories. Then I brought these fairly polished products back to my participants to ensure that it generally represented their perceptions as well.

Rich, thick description is commonly referred to in qualitative studies as it provides the depth of understanding that is necessary in this type of research. The more detailed the participant is in their description, the more realistic the findings become.

As I have stated previously, because I brought my own particular biases to this study, I self-reflected to create an honest narrative describing how the interpretations that I provide in this study are shaped by my background and engagement with international student teaching. This, in combination with triangulation, member checking and rich, thick description, will add to the trustworthiness of this study.

Delimitations

The study was limited in scope and consciously excluded any potential participants not meeting the defined boundaries. This study sought to examine the experiences of

student teaching experiences in non-Western cultures, and was specifically delimited to participants who had done so in the academic year prior to the study being conducted. Additionally, this study was delimited to participants who had also obtained first year teaching positions in the same year this study was conducted. All participants in this study were graduates of the same Midwestern teacher preparation program and may not be representative of other graduates from other programs across the country.

As a qualitative study, the results are not generalizable to other circumstances. Each student teaching experience is unique, as is each teacher education program; therefore, several variables contribute to the distinct characteristics of this particular study.

Limitations

A limiting factor in this study was the size of the participant pool, as there are not a great number of pre-service teachers who choose to student teach in non-Western cultures. Fortunately, all qualifying potential participants, agreed to be part of the study, providing this study with five willing participants. All participants in this study self-selected to student teach in a non-Western culture. One must consider the possibility that pre-service teachers who choose to complete student teaching in a culture unique from their own may be pre-dispositional to display many of the characteristics attributed to the experience abroad. It is possible that any cultural sensitivity noted, may have been present in the novice teachers regardless of the student teaching location.

Additionally, all participants in this study were supervised by the researcher during their student teaching. While the research felt that a positive rapport and trusting relationship had been developed, it should be noted that the portion of the data that was collected from the

student teaching experience had been written at a time when the students were being graded for their work.

Finally, as is true with any human respondents, it is assumed that all responses by the participants were honest and without fabrication or embellishment. This study is rich with details of the lived experiences of the participants, and therefore it is assumed that their stories are truthful.

Summary

The chapter outlined the methodologies, design, and methods that were employed in this study. A description and rationale were given to explain the use constructionism as the epistemological approach in the study. Furthermore, interpretivism and phenomenology were described, respectively, as the theoretical perspective and methodology in this study. The design for this study was selected to illuminate how first year teachers describe the intercultural development and sensitivity that occurred while student teaching in a non-Western culture and the value that those experiences abroad bring to their current classrooms. Chapter 4 will present the results of the study as voiced by the participants and the themes that emerged.

CHAPTER 4. RESULTS

The initial results of this study are presented in chapter 4. This chapter presents a brief description of the participants' backgrounds, and their experiences with diversity prior to student teaching as well as their student teaching locations. Next, reflections from the participants' first day of student teaching are described and analyzed. Finally, the participants' final reflections are presented and analyzed. When presenting the final reflections, the findings are organized by the guided questions that the participants were asked to address regarding the impact of their experiences at the conclusion of their student teaching experiences. Direct remarks from the participants are woven throughout this chapter in effort to represent and better depict their experiences

Profile of the Participants

The participants were purposefully selected to take part in this study. Purposive sampling enabled the researcher to select participants who met the criteria for the study. Each participant was required to have student taught in a non-Western culture in the year prior to this study being conducted. The participants were also required to serve as first-year teachers at the time the study was being conducted. This section provides a demographic depiction of the participants before and during student teaching. Pseudonyms were used to provide confidentiality and anonymity regarding the participants.

Alissa

Alissa was raised in, what she described as, a "bedroom community" to a university town of less than 60,000 people. The town itself had no stoplights and was surrounded by farmland. When asked to describe the diversity that existed within her community, there was

little to speak of with the exception of two foreign exchange students in her high school whom she befriended. College exposed her to an increasingly diverse student population, although the university she attended was also attended predominated by white students.

Alissa first began to consider Study Abroad programs during her freshman year. She described her interest as stemming from a desire to *“really experience another culture, beyond just traveling through it.”* With the understanding that her college offered international student teaching, she initially expressed interest in student teaching in an English-speaking country. However, having had several friends in college who spoke highly of their own travels throughout South America, she chose to student-teach in Brazil. Alissa completed her student teaching in a privately operated Pre-kindergarten through 12th grade school located in the capital city of Brasilia. The school catered to the needs of Americans, Brazilians, and students from multiple other nationalities. Over half of the students at the school were Brazilian nationals; less than 20% were American students, while the remaining students represented approximately 45 different nationalities. Alissa student taught in both 1st and 2nd grade classrooms. She is now teaching third grade in a public school in the Midwest of the U.S.

Amanda

Although her family moved several times throughout her schooling, all of Amanda's childhood was spent in rural communities within the same Midwestern state. Amanda described the schools as *"not extremely diverse in terms of race or religion."* She went on to say, *"I know there's a lot of ways to measure diversity, but my schools were predominantly Caucasian students. I could count on my hands the other ethnicities. Students were from the same Christian belief background. So quite a bit of continuity in the schools I grew up in."* However, even with the little diversity that existed, Amanda contended that she had interacted with people from a more diverse background. She attributed these interactions to teams that she played on and also her interest in learning Spanish, beginning in high school and accelerating in college when Spanish became a passion.

While in college, Amanda found herself involved in several diverse student groups on campus, namely with Saudi Arabian students. Amanda illuminated her interest in the Saudi culture by explaining:

I wanted to get to know where they were from. I was good friends with a lot of them and I wanted to see how they grew up, and what made them who they were. I was really curious to learn about Islam, to be honest. In the States, there is such a negative perception toward that part of the world. I kind of wanted to go to see for myself.

She continued, *"I was just really craving that experience... hands-on, eye-witness kind of experience."*

Although her first choice was to student teach in Saudi Arabia, Amanda's student teaching coordinator encouraged her to consider Egypt instead, as the university had a long-standing relationship with several schools there. With a major in Art Education, Amanda completed her student teaching in Cairo, Egypt at an independent coeducational day school

that offered an education program for pre-kindergarten through grade 12. The school had a strong fine arts program, which particularly appealed to Amanda. Among an enrollment of approximately 1,400 students, nearly half were U.S. citizens. The remaining students were Egyptian nationals or other nationalities. Amanda shared her time between the elementary, middle level and high school art teachers. She is currently teaching intermediate level art in a private American school in Mumbai, India, and is engaged to marry a man of Indian decent, whom she met in India.

Darci

Like the other participants, Darci described her hometown as small, rural, and lacking in diversity, “*with only a handful of students who were non-white.*” After high school, she studied at a small liberal arts college that had greater cultural diversity although her interactions with diverse groups were limited. An educational excursion to the Caribbean during her sophomore year sparked an interest in various cultures. During her graduate studies, Darci became involved with a non-profit organization as she tutored immigrants who were preparing for the U.S Citizen and Immigration Services (USCIS) test to become citizens and practicing conversational English with English language learners at the university.

Having heard numerous positive reports from her peers who had studied abroad during their college years, Darci never wavered in her dreams to student-teach abroad. She student taught at a day and boarding school that was established in 2001 and whose grounds extended to over 100 acres of land. Nearly 100 boarding students lived on campus, and over 400 students attended the day school. Slightly less than half of the students were full or part

Thai, with the remaining comprised of 35 other nationalities. Darci is now teaching high school biology in a large metropolitan school district in the Midwestern U.S.

Jacey

Jacey was raised in a town of fewer than 3,000 people. She described religious affiliations to be the extent of the diversity in the community in which she was raised, stating that there were “*essentially three big churches in town: Lutheran, Methodist, and Catholic. It was basically a farming community where everybody knows everybody type of place.*” Her surroundings changed slightly when she went to college, as she described: “*I visually saw more diversity in terms of different races, but in terms of what I essentially was exposed to, meaning who I actually hung out with and talked to and who I interacted with...No, there was not that big of a difference in college.*”

She was initially attracted to this university because of its vast Study Abroad program; however, as a college athlete, it was challenging to commit to a semester away from her team and training. Therefore, Jacey considered international student teaching as the perfect opportunity to combine Study Abroad with a required semester of coursework. She had long dreamed of seeing more of the world but, more importantly, she considered Study Abroad as an opportunity to prepare for her upcoming career as an educator. Jacey remarked, “*What caught my attention was the diversity that I would be faced with in the classroom. And that’s something that obviously, I hadn’t really had.*” Describing herself as a firm believer in multi-cultural education, she went on to describe a passion for exposing students to different points of views: “*I teach English, so for me, different authors from*

different backgrounds, cultures and what not. Now that I think of it, perhaps I had that desire because I wasn't given that as a kid."

Jacey credited one small unit in her high school AP English class for exposing her to authors from different cultures. As she recalled this awakening Jacey stated, *"I never considered that there was literature outside of white American male and a few female authors that I read in high school. And in that one unit, I was like 'oh my gosh, how small town am I?' and it got me hooked."*

Jacey completed her student teaching in a high school English classroom, in the city-state of Singapore. This private school is one of the largest American International schools in the world, and serves a diverse learning community of more than 3,800 students from more than 50 countries in grades pre-kindergarten through grade 12. Jacey was hired as an English teacher at the same school where she student taught.

Janelle

Janelle grew up in a rural, farming community and graduated in a class of 37 students. With the exception of an occasional foreign exchange student and two students with African ancestry students, Janelle had very few interactions with diverse groups of people until she entered college. While in college, she lived in a dormitory that also housed the international students, allowing her the opportunity to meet several students from other countries although she still described her college years as being surrounded by mostly Caucasian students.

Janelle's passion for international travel was ignited when she participated in a university program as a summer camp counselor on a military base in Okinawa, Japan.

Through this summer camp she realized that her dream was to teach overseas, and the best road to pursuing that dream was to student-teach overseas. Like Alissa, Janelle student taught at the same privately operated Pre-kindergarten through 12th grade school located in the capital city of Brasilia, Brazil. The school catered to the needs of Americans, Brazilians, and students from multiple other nationalities. Over half of the students at the school were Brazilian nationals, less than 20% were American, and the remaining represented approximately 45 different nationalities. Janelle spent the first half of her student teaching experience working with elementary Art students, and the second half with secondary Art students. Her experience student teaching with the International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculum in Brazil contributed significantly to Janelle being hired as an IB art teacher in the only IB school located in her home state in the Midwestern U.S.

Themes Emerging from Student Teaching Reflections – Day 1

Throughout the student teaching semester, participants were required to submit reflections periodically. The initial reflection did not require the participants to answer direct questions but, rather, asked them to generally describe, react, and reflect upon their student teaching environment. Two themes emerged from the Day 1 reflections: (a) a welcoming environment; and (b) professional dedication. The final reflection asked specific questions which are described in greater detail later in this chapter. Multiple themes emerged from the responses that each participant gave to the final reflection question. For the purposes of this study, only their first and final reflections were analyzed for emerging themes.

Welcoming environment

Upon arriving at their international destinations, the participants explicitly expressed the welcoming hospitality that warmly greeted each of them. This was described both in the context of the local people in and among the community as well as the school community. More than one participant described the methods of expressing affection, even from strangers similarly: “...when you meet someone, you inevitably hug and kiss both cheeks. People are much more likely to break each other’s personal bubble during a conversation, with a gentle touch on the arm, or holding hands.”

From the onset of their experiences, the participants were immediately invited into people’s homes for dinners and asked to join groups on excursions in the local area. They were even catered to during their mundane daily tasks as willing volunteers assisted them with language barriers in transportation and the purchasing of goods. Although seemingly surprised by such “truly extravagant” generosity, Jacey captured the initial welcome as one that she could become easily accustomed to: “I feel like I could really embrace this country and all its new and exciting lessons it has to teach me.” She went on to tell of the honest and accepting individuals from all different backgrounds that made up the country.

Darci described both her diverse living and working environments as “welcoming and free of judgment.” If countries can be summarized by the actions of its people, these participants clearly felt from their first day that they were warmly welcomed into their new cultural environments. As one participant so eloquently expressed, “I can learn a lot about how they place their priorities. Tasks, to-do lists and schedules should never trump people.”

Professional dedication

The second theme that emerged throughout the initial reflections was that of awe and amazement toward the professional dedication of the teachers, and the unique teaching practices that were before them. Although most were still struggling with jet lag, the participants undeniably recognized the distinct teaching practices that would soon become familiar. In addition to the multiple languages, religions and nationalities represented in the classes, the student teachers experienced a variety of new programs and teaching tactics as well. Further descriptions of these tactics are provided in Chapter 5. Being from Iowa, a state comprised of only one International Baccalaureate (IB) school, the student- teachers had not previously visited a school with an IB curriculum. Nevertheless, three of the five participants were student- teaching in schools with this diploma program. In addition to the IB curriculum, Amanda was exposed to her cooperating teacher's *"silent teaching method,"* implemented partially in effort to overcome her own dyslexia, but also to provide for the varying needs of her students. *"Watching it in action seemed so incredibly daunting. Of course the pros always make it look easy; we'll see how it goes when I give it a shot!"*

Amanda characterized the classes as *"a melting pot of nationalities"* with students having *"unique ethnic backgrounds that influence what they know."* While describing her school as *"amazing"*, Amanda went on to say that *"this overused adjective does not do it justice; the quality of the teachers, the level of work ethic and the dedication to being on the leading edge in the classroom is unlike anything I have ever seen."*

Similarities were drawn between the host culture that encapsulated the student teachers and the schools environments where they spent their first day of student teaching.

"While this country is very open and accepting to all people, so is [this school]."

Distinctions cannot be clearly drawn between the school and the culture as what happens in the school operates as a “*reflection of the country itself*” (Alissa). In Jacey’s first day reflection, she described how the country she was living in also impacted her hopes and future actions as an educator:

In the short while that I have been in Singapore, including my first day at this school, I have learned that this is a very unique country; it’s almost as if the country changes each person that lives or visits here into exemplary world citizens. From the locals to the vacationers, and finally the students, parents, and teachers at this school, Singapore is full of honest and accepting individuals from all different backgrounds. From what I’ve experienced so far, I plan on using this consistent message of honesty, trust and openness within my classroom not only during my student teaching, but also in my future classrooms. I will embody an accepting and trustworthy attitude with all my students and colleagues in order to portray the type of behavior that I expect in return.

One might expect that, upon arriving in a non-Western culture with language barriers and distinct traditions, these student teachers may have felt overwhelmed or even described elements of culture shock. Not one student teacher expressed any difficulties or frustrations as they assimilated into the new environment. Their first day reflections depicted nothing but jubilation, acceptance, and a warm welcome into their new homes.

Final Student Teaching Reflections Based on the Research Questions

The remainder of this chapter focuses on the student teaching experiences of the participants based on their final reflections written at the conclusion of their student teaching semester in a non-Western culture. The findings illuminate the student teachers’ responses to four primary research questions:

1. How do first year teachers describe the intercultural development that occurs while student teaching in a non-Western culture? The first question asks participants to

consider their mindset at the completion of their student teaching experience as it compared to the beginning of their experience.

2. How does student teaching in a non-Western culture bring value to the first year teacher's classroom? This question primarily addresses the actual teaching skills gained throughout their experience, specifically focusing on diverse strategies that may be considered unique in a typical U.S. classroom.
3. What role does student teaching in a non-Western culture have on the tacit and explicit practices used in a first year teacher's classroom? This question reflects on the personal impact that the experience had on the participant.
4. How do personal influences in a non-Western culture impact student teaching and, ultimately, the first year teacher's students? The last question asks participants to reflect upon the anticipated professional outcomes of an international student teaching experience.

Question 1. How has student teaching abroad influenced your mindset (as a teacher or in general)?

Commonalities among participants

Two themes became apparent as the participants discussed the influences of student teaching abroad on their mindset. Those two themes were (1) professional relationships and collaboration; and (2) enthusiasm for teaching.

Professional relationships & collaboration

All five participants mentioned professional relationships in some capacity. Amanda described the professionally-minded faculty with years of experience as important factors

contributing to her growth as an educator, while Jacey portrayed an environment rich with collaboration as an incentive to take more risks in the classroom. Janelle described collaboration as a source of encouragement to provide a better education for her students. Jacey celebrates the impact that the experiences has had on her mindset, not only for the immediate semester, but for the future as well:

During my student teaching semester [abroad] I have grown both personally and professionally. From the endless collaboration with colleagues to the many opportunities for reflection through "talks" with my cooperating teacher, I have developed into the educator I've always wanted to be. Working with the faculty, as well as the students at SAS has changed the way I view teaching. SAS provided me with an environment where learning and taking risks in the classroom is not only accepted, but celebrated.

The collaboration and professional relationships mentioned were not limited only to the cooperating teachers assigned to mentor them, but was extended to include school faculty, colleagues and people from outside of the school walls as well.

Enthusiasm for Teaching

Enthusiasm for teaching was expressed explicitly by four of the five participants. While one confirmed that she had, indeed, made the right decision in choosing the teaching profession, another described the experience as incredible, and expressed excitement for the opportunity to be exposed to various cultures and teaching diverse populations of students.

After a year of anticipation, Amanda recalled how much she appreciated working with children:

Being at the university immersed in classes and textbooks for four years can really tend to surround you and submerge you but this experience helped me break back into the joy of teaching, the hands on, face to face interactions that I as an educator thrive on.

Additionally, Jacey discussed her excitement for teaching in the context of both student teaching and her upcoming career as a teacher. When noting the location of her student teaching and the diversity within the student body, her enthusiasm was not only for the profession, but for the values that she hoped to instill in her students.. She stated, *“My experience with student teaching has only made me more enthusiastic about helping my future students to become life-long learners who are constantly striving to stretch their knowledge and perspective of the world around them.”*

Question 2. What unique skills have you gained while student teaching abroad?

Overwhelmingly, the participants responded to this question with a new level of appreciation for diversity. Although Amanda had an extensive travel history prior to student teaching, she summarized the impressions of the diverse student body by stating, *“Working at an international school has shown me a whole new definition of diversity.”*

Exposure to multiple nationalities & unique perspectives

Exposure to multiple nationalities was unparalleled to anything that the participants had experienced in their home state. One participant remarked, *“Never in Iowa had I worked with a group of 16 students representing nine separate nationalities”*, while another participant reiterated this point stating the following:

Now, depending on where one teaches in the United States, this could be part of life already, but as far as my experience goes, this is the first time that I have taught this many students in one class speaking English as a second language

Jacey, who admittedly had limited experiences with diverse cultures prior to student teaching, discussed the overwhelming impact that this new view has offered her:

During my semester abroad I encountered a lot of different perspectives in each of my classes as well as in my social life. All the different cultures and worldviews my students brought to each class really opened my eyes to the different points of view that students from all around the world may have. In any given class I would have questions thrown at me that I had never really considered because I was unaware of that perspective.

She further addressed the unique perspective this experience provided with the following description:

This is unique to my experience teaching in Singapore because had I stayed in Iowa I would have been in classes full of students with similar worldviews as myself. However, in saying this I'm not implying that those worldviews are necessarily narrow or close-minded, just that a student from India sharing their insights and perspectives in class will have a very different approach than a student from a small town in Iowa.

When reflecting on the various cultures, languages, social classes and other various dynamics impacting any diverse classroom, Alissa made a valuable point; *“As the classroom teacher, I had to find a way to lead all these students into a cohesive classroom community. Whether I am in Brasilia or Iowa, these are challenges that all schools face.”*

An interesting final point in relation to exposure to diverse cultures was an increased cognizance of this worldview and its impact on personal judgments. As one participant became more aware of her previously limited scope on the world, she recognized that her judgments of situations may have also been limited in scope. She expressed that in future interactions she will be differently able to assess a situation based on increased life experiences.

Second language speakers necessitated differentiated instruction

Participants gave extensive responses that revealed an increased ability to embrace and teach to diverse student needs within the classroom setting. They disclosed acquiring a

wider set of skills to accommodate the varying needs of their students. Amanda elaborated on the impact that such a diverse student population had on the culture of the classroom:

I have seen (and admire) the use of multiple languages in a classroom and many of the students have a very global perspective of the world due to their third culture upbringing. ESL students were very common, and it really helped me to improve my communication by using multiple ways to describe one item or process for the students to better understand, as well as visuals.

While some participants expressed a new ability to incorporate multiple points of view due to the wide range of culture represented in the classroom, others discussed visual representations to accommodate second language learners. Although Janelle was student who taught on a different continent, her experience was remarkably similar to Amanda's. Janelle described the impact that the multi-lingual students had on classroom dynamics as well as the modes of instruction:

I have gained the ability to alter the delivery of my speech to different students and different classes due to language barriers. In any one of the classes I taught, one could hear at least three different languages being spoken at one time. All students know English, but some students hold it as a second or third language, so altering the delivery of my lessons was a useful tool to capture the attention and allow for understanding of all students. I used many visuals and developed handouts to aid this. I showed the steps to every lesson I did, as part of producing visuals.

Darci expressed the importance of vocabulary when teaching students who do not speak English as a native language. With an increased attention to language, Darci learned that there is a vast difference between asking a question which illicit a one-word response versus an open-ended question which requires a student to define or describe an idea or issue. This firsthand experience enabled her to recognize the confusion that can exist when using different dialects of the English language or when conversing with those who speak another primary language. This caused her to focus additional attention on vocabulary acquisition as a basis for understanding content knowledge.

Living in a foreign community, as well as teaching students of varying cultures, necessitates an ability to assimilate. This held true both in the neighborhoods in which these participants lived, as well as in the schools where they were student teaching. In addition to varying instructional techniques, participants also discussed not only a need, but also a desire to adapt to the other cultures in unpredictable or unexpected situations:

Along with the readiness to accept all new things comes the ability to adapt quickly to your surroundings. Because of my teaching overseas I have developed the ability to learn my environment and take the necessary steps to assimilate quickly. In terms of my school life and the teaching skills I've gained through this, I am now much more equipt to jump into a teaching team or curriculum, which may be new to me, and be successful in implementing myself as a part of the group.

When comparing her home culture and upbringing with the student teaching location, Jacey explained her new perspective:

While this may be the case in all new schools or teams I join, I feel that being in Singapore has taught me how to do this successfully without putting labels on the experience (e.g. "good" or "bad"). Therefore, in my teaching this has helped me to look at new methods and strategies as different, not any better or worse than what I learned in college or in my field experiences.

Ultimately, the participants had direct contact and built meaningful relationships with students and colleagues from various cultures while expanding their understanding not only of the world but also of teaching. Amanda summed her experience up by stating, *"I would say I learned just as much about the world from my students as they did from me."*

Question 3. How has student teaching abroad influenced you personally?

The theme throughout these responses depicts a new-found awareness or a new lens in which the participants are able to view themselves. As they were introduced to an outsider's perspective, the participants recognized new views on their home culture, personal value, and characteristics. Additionally, daily interactions in the non-Western cultures

resulted in a surprising awareness of their own biases, preferences, stereotypes, and assumptions. Because each participant specifically elaborated on the personal growth and awareness, this question will be broken down as elaborated upon by each participant.

Self-awareness

Amanda. Perhaps Amanda's description of herself as an Egyptian was the most revealing sign of how intimately she immersed herself into the culture during her student teaching experience. She answered this question in Arabic, stating, "Ana Masria" [I am Egyptian]. She gave an elaborate explanation of the significance of this phrase:

While this statement is incredibly inaccurate, it conveys how I feel personally here. I have developed a life in Cairo that includes very dear friends and families. I worked hard at picking up the Arabic language and that challenge alone of learning a new language (without instruction) (while student teaching) (in a completely new country), had a profound affect on me personally.

In addition to gaining a new culture, Amanda also came to appreciate her own native culture by stepping away from it:

Being in Egypt specifically has enabled me to reflect on home and the things I love (and miss) such as clean air and green grass, but also see the value in living in the midst of such an ancient civilization. It has opened my eyes to this half of the world too, literally.

Amanda also came to the humbling realization that, although she perceived herself as well traveled with a global view of the world, there were many cultures that she had not yet experienced:

I believe I came into this experience with a fairly worldly, conscientious view of humanity but it was such an incredible experience just to meet my students and the other teachers who have seen so many other countries and lived in so many other cultures that showed me that I'm just at the tip of the iceberg when it comes to understanding this whole world.

Additionally, she opened her mind to the idea of visiting places that had not previously intrigued her:

Before this trip I had little interest in living or working in Asia, but now (perhaps that I am closer, or have met others who loved their time in Asia) I see it as a viable option for my future. It has definitely continued to open my eyes to the world and learn to embrace differences with joy.

Janelle. Janelle described personal and individual growth in both her thoughts and perceptions of the world. She spoke about her previous travels and the culminating effects that each foreign culture had on her development. More importantly, she discussed the personal traits that had impacted her, such as her ability to adapt, reflect, analyze, and keep adapting. She described her place in life, “*As a young person, getting ready to graduate, I know I'm still finding myself and this experience has both justified my thoughts on who I am as well as shaken them to their core*” while she continued to illustrate her place in the world; “*In the big picture I am a part of the world or nation and who I am as an individual will hold a small part in it.*” Like Amanda, Janelle gained access to an outsiders perspective of her home culture as well and recognized the varying views of the United States, often unrecognized from the homeland:

My thoughts on how others view the United States seem to change with every country I live in. Perceptions and ideas of the U.S. weigh greatly on how the U.S. is presented to the people in the news, in conversation, and through their own government. I have learned that every country will have supporters as well as haters of the United States. It's interesting to find that many Brazilians, like many other cultures, love U.S. entertainment. The rest is pretty split, depending on who you talk to.

Additionally, Janelle recognized characteristics of the Brazilian culture that she had chosen to incorporate into her own life: “*My thoughts have been further justified, in that people are the most important thing in life.*” She explained that each time she traveled she

gained a new perspective on other cultures as well as increased self awareness. She commented about the high priority that Brazilians placed on family and relationships, while opening their homes to others and making her feel comfortable while there.

Jacey. Numerous factors played a role in the personal growth that Jacey experienced while student teaching in Singapore; namely living with a new family and being surrounded by people who did not relate to her on a daily basis. “Singapore has challenged me and how I react to new people and places. While I've always considered myself to be an open and accepting individual, my experience overseas has taught me to control my immediate reactions a bit more carefully.”

Jacey described her initial reactions during her first weeks, as she found herself immersed in cultural diversity like she had not previously experienced:

When I first arrived in Singapore and started meeting all of my colleagues, I was quick to be surprised or shocked at certain things people did or said; these reactions were never meant to be hurtful or narrow-minded they were simply my genuine reactions to the things people said or even the things people claimed never to have heard of or experienced.

Having lived all of her life in one state, Jacey had not been exposed to the array of diversity that she was amidst during her student teaching. Through this experience, she recognized that her thoughts, reactions, and opinions were not necessarily commonly shared when the people around her came from various cultural backgrounds. Living with a host family exposed Jacey to the inside perspective of a new family environment. Moreover, spending most of her days with people who did not necessarily relate to her small town upbringing challenged her to examine how she reacted to new people and places. While her perceived self-image was one of

acceptance and honoring differences, Jacey quickly recognized when her opinions were in the minority:

I've always considered myself to be an open and accepting individual; my experience overseas has taught me to control my immediate reactions a bit more carefully. When I first arrived in Singapore and started meeting all of my colleagues, I was quick to be surprised or shocked at certain things people did or said; these reactions were never meant to be hurtful or narrow-minded they were simply my genuine reactions to the things people said or even the things people claimed never to have heard of or experienced.

After her first month in Singapore, Jacey noticed that people seemed to feel uncomfortable around her or hesitant to share certain information with her. Upon reflection, she attributed this to what she described as her immediate reaction and facial expression that seemed to create disconnect between her and the people she met. She explained, “*While I may feel connected to other people, that doesn't necessarily mean they will understand the things I've been through or I'll understand the things they've experienced.*”

While reflecting on her personal growth throughout the semester of student teaching, Jacey explained that, through her increased interaction with a diverse population, her self-awareness was elevated as she recognized a need to absorb and reflect on each encounter while making a conscious effort to be humble in effort to ensure that the persons with whom she was interacting felt comfortable and willing to share their ideas. She also recognized that, through this enculturation process, she would continue to grow in her own personal understanding of cultural differences. She shared this new awareness in her final reflection: “*In the end, the different experiences and opinions people hold shouldn't act as something that shocks me, it should act as something that intrigues me and pushes me to learn more.*”

Alyssa. Alissa described the experience of student teaching abroad as one that stretched her personally. The extensive lived experiences in a non-Western culture enabled Alissa to dwell among various cultures “in language, culture, mindset and pace of life.” Through this “indescribable experience,” she moved beyond culture shock and learned to embrace her new environment. Being placed in another culture so vastly unique from her own enabled her to reflect on her own presumptions and background while recognizing these differences.

Darci. When inquired about personal growth during student teaching, Darci revealed new insights to her own travel preferences and inner strength. Since her experience was completely on her own, Darci learned that she preferred having someone with whom to share her experiences, but, at the same time, she commented that “sometimes it is nice to start off alone and just meet and travel with new people.”

I learned how to be open to new experiences and renewed my excitement in trying everything once. I am more confident in approaching new people- this has given me the opportunity to share experiences with people from all over the world.

Commonalities among participants

The themes throughout these responses depicted a newfound awareness, or a new lens in which the participants were able to view themselves. As they were introduced to an outsider’s perspective they recognized they gained new views on their home culture, and their personal value and characteristics. Additionally, daily interactions in the non-Western cultures brought about a surprising awareness of their own biases, preferences, stereotypes, and assumptions.

Question 4. How will these personal influences impact your teaching and, ultimately, your future students?

The professional impact revealed by the participants was extensive and intertwined with their personal growth . While the participants noted the personal aspects of increased self-reliance, expanding veiw points, first hand experiences, and appreciation for diverse cultures, this simultaneously impacted the professional ways in which they interacted and built rapport with students and embraced their individual needs.

Teachers are routinely pressed to be creative when using resources available to them. However, the acquisition process takes on a new meaning when one lives aborad and seeks resources that U.S.-educated teachers are accustomed to finding at a local convenient store, but which are not necessarily available in the country where they are teaching.

Materials are imperative as an art teacher. Lack of, abundance of, just enough, it's all important. It may seem like a no brainer, but knowing the materials that are available, and being able to find alternatives to those that are not is key in teaching art, or anything for that matter.

Janelle described her school as having an abundance of resources for items that could be found in Brazil. However, when her art projects required items not found locally, she had to rely on her own creativity to find substitutions. She relied on recycled material and “junk” to create projects that were, sometimes, more meaningful than projects using items purchased from the store:

I know that in my future, I will probably not have the materials nor the budget of this school for supplies. I also know that I will be just fine, because I will use my resources, my surroundings, and my brain to make the most of the materials I have, or don't have!

In addition to learning to be creative with resources, the participants also discussed other ways in which they were professionally impacted while student teaching in a non-Western culture. Most notable was the significant attention focused

on their newfound recognition of the importance of accepting and valuing differences in the classroom. Each participant noted at least one way in which her teaching would be influenced forever by this realization. Darci noted that, although the various differences among students may initially seem challenging, *“It is important to find something to like in each and every student. No matter what, there is always something there!”* Recognizing that her students were well-travelled and often more culturally aware than she had experienced in her home-state, Amanda noted her to desire to *“keep up”* or even *“catch up”* with her students’ experiences, and the importance of this; *“I think that the more I continue to explore the world; to live in new countries and get to know new cultures, the better I can serve my students.”* Alissa’s comment further explained that valuing student differences is not exclusively important to teaching overseas, but will follow her into any teaching environment that she finds herself:

Having this experience as a student teacher will definitely impact the way I approach teaching. I want to bring the skill sets I developed here to any school I teach at in the future, whether it be Iowa or Indonesia! I think all students will benefit from a multicultural education that caters to each individual students' needs.

Jacey added to the professional impact by noting her own disposition and the environment that she created for her learners. When referring to her *“new relaxed and openminded approach”* to teaching, Jacey commented:

Both of these traits will impact my students as my classroom will be an environment that is safe and secure where students will always be accepted and able to share their unadulterated feelings and thoughts. My relaxed and open minded approach to working with the students will help them to feel comfortable and willing to share all of their insights.

As Alissa looked back on her experience student teaching in Brazil, she recognized that it was unparalleled in many aspects from her peers' student teaching in her home state:

It was such a unique experience to teach at an international school. Teaching with a multicultural perspective was a natural consequence of having students from all over the world. Differentiation was also a necessity, as there were students at all stages of language acquisition, backgrounds, and cultures.

However, as Alissa described the natural consequences of establishing teaching practices rooted in such an environment, the relevance could be translated into any environment. Janelle emphasized this point further:

It will always be different, seeing as how I will have a different environment, different students, different everything. The idea is to learn the most about the students in my classroom in order to make the best adjustments possible for learning.

Finally, Amanda summarized the impact of an international student teaching experience as noted by all of the participants in various formats:

The continual process of learning to understand and appreciate other cultures will most certainly affect my teaching style and the students in my classroom as I will be able to understand them at a new level as well. I am extremely thankful for the opportunity I have had here to grow as an educator and as a member of humanity and know that my positive experiences here will only benefit myself and my students in the future.

In the analysis of the final reflections submitted at the conclusion of the student teaching experience, there were commonalities among the participants' personal and professional themes as they reflected on the influence of the student teaching experience in a non-Western culture. While the purpose of this study was not to draw conclusions which might represent a large number of people, the responses did bring to the surface several trends that might be depicted through the lens of these five participants. When reviewing the

final student teaching reflections of these participants, the following themes appeared repeatedly throughout the final reflections. The participants expressed:

- High regard for professional relationships and collaboration;
- Enthusiasm for teaching and validation of the decision to be a teacher;
- Expanded view of the world;
- Incorporation of multiple world views into teaching strategies;
- Increased ability to alter lessons to meet diverse needs, diverse cultures and second language learners;
- An “outsider’s” perspective, which provided a new view on the home culture and personal values that derive from that culture;
- Recognition of inaccurate biases and assumptions about the world or its people;
- Ability to differentiate instruction meaningfully and authentically; and
- Increased rapport with students based on life experiences and world artifacts

Summary

This chapter presented a profile of the participants in the study, relevant demographic information regarding the five participants, and the data results from the first and final days of the participants’ experiences student teaching in a non-Western culture. The First Day Reflections indicated that participants felt warmly welcomed into their student teaching environment. They gained respect for the professional dedication of the teachers that they worked with and reaffirmed their career choice and commitment to the teaching profession. The open-ended questions from the Final Student Teaching Reflections yielded multiple themes that reflected the intent of this study, which was to describe the intercultural

development that occurred when student teaching in a non-Western culture. Those themes included: (1) professional relationships and collaboration; (2) enthusiasm for teaching; (3) exposure to multiple nationalities; (4) ability to differentiate instruction, especially for second language learners; (5) increased self-awareness; and (6) professional growth.

CHAPTER 5. FINDINGS

This chapter addresses the participants as they reflected back on their student teaching semester during the year that followed student teaching, as they were in their first year of teaching. Using the previously described theoretical framework, the participant interviews were analyzed according to Bennett's (1993) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS).

DMIS Themes from Interviews of Participants as First Year Teachers

In the analysis of this study, each participant fell in the ethnorelevant side of the continuum and in the *Adaptation* stage of the DMIS. While analyzing the data, the predictability described by Bennett (1993), became apparent as numerous participant quotes matched almost identically with Bennett's interpretations. As Cushner (2012) suggested, the extended period of time in a diverse environment caused the participants to move from the comfortable stage of minimization into the stage of adaptation, where they began to recognize that differences are important and worthy of embracing.

Described by Bennett as expected behavior in the stage of Adaptation, the participants in this study gave particular attention to three themes, thus categorizing them in the ethnorelevant side of Bennett's continuum and in the Adaptation stage. Four themes that appeared repeatedly throughout the interviews were: (1) increased interaction with people of other cultures; (2) realization that people are the same, yet different, and those differences are important; (3) ability to think or act outside of their own culture; and (4) expansion of authenticity, the definition of one's self, to include alternative contexts. The emergent

themes are detailed in the following sections, with participant quotes and behaviors listed for each theme.

Increased interaction with people of other cultures

Responses from all participants articulated increased interactions with people of other cultures. From personal activities such as grocery shopping, host family living arrangements, neighborly exchanges, and social activities at various embassies, to professional interactions with school maintenance staff, teachers, students, and student's parents, all aspects of the participants' lives encompassed close interactions with diverse cultures. One participant remarked, *"Never in Iowa had I worked with a group of 16 students representing nine separate nationalities"* while another noted, *"All the different cultures and worldviews my students brought to each class really opened my eyes to the different points of view that students from all around the world may have."*

In addition to cultural differences, economic diversity was another dynamic that was routinely encountered. In contrast to the participants' own middle-class upbringing and field experiences prior to student teaching, the students who attended American international schools were typically from wealthy and highly affluent families. Likewise, it was also not uncommon for the participants to encounter people who were homeless or poverty stricken throughout the non-Western communities in which they lived.

Exposure to multiple languages was also prevalent during the participants' time living abroad. In addition to living among communities where English was not the native tongue, participants also taught students who spoke a variety of languages, depending on their home culture. As one participant explained, *"I have seen and admire, the use of multiple languages*

in a classroom, and many of the students have a very global perspective of the world due to their third culture upbringing. ESL students were very common.” Another participant added to this by stating, *“In any one of the classes I taught, I could hear at least three different languages being spoken at one time. All students know English, but some students hold it as a second or third language.”* Multiple languages also impacted lesson planning, as noted by another participant: *“Altering the delivery of my lessons was a useful tool to capture the attention and allow for understanding of all students.”*

It was revealed that the lived experiences abroad caused participants to be more confident when approaching new people, while also building shared experiences with people from all around the world. Recognizing the value of these new relationships and those yet to be forged, Amanda summed up her experiences:

I believe I came into this experience with a fairly worldly, conscientious view of humanity but it was such an incredible experience just to meet my students and the other teachers who have seen so many other countries and lived in so many other cultures that showed me that I'm just at the tip of the iceberg when it comes to understanding this whole world.

Participants described people whom they met while living abroad as *“very dear friends and families”*, indicating that relations went beyond surface level understandings. It did not seem to matter whether the interactions occurred in the professional or personal environments. What mattered was that, through these interactions, all participants concurred that they had encountered different cultures, world views, and perspectives while opening their eyes to *“the different points of view that students from all around the world may have.”*

People are the same, yet different, and differences are important

Throughout their reflections, the participants commented on a variety of differences that they encountered. However, almost without exception, these comments were followed

with a form of positive interpretation of these differences. Rather than ethnocentrically viewing anything differenced as an error in judgment or action, the participants gave value to the alternative ways of thinking and doing, thus adding to their own perspectives.

The participants recognized patterns in social lives of people from other cultures, and noted the similarities more than the differences. One participant commented that, *“Their everyday life isn’t that much different than my everyday life.”* Jacey added:

People are people, no matter where they come from. The experiences that they’ve had and the struggles that they’ve had to go through may be quite different, but really, at the end of the day we’re all humans and we have the same worries and wants, and we worry about the same petty things no matter where in the world we may be. I came to that realization in both my experiences outside of the school, just walking around Singapore and meeting the locals and what not.

However, as Jacey continued, distinguishing characteristics were also observed and valued:

But I also learned that especially from my students... In a class of 17 sophomores, I had 10 different nationalities represented, and yet they were just 15 year old sophomores. And the point of view they had on certain things such as religion and family values, that was the difference!

As most participants described, there was not dominant culture within the schools, and, somehow, being unique was actually the norm. Janelle described this environment by stating, *“They all intermixed. It wasn't that I'm from here and you're from there and I'm going to hang out with this group of people. It wasn't like that at all. It was very nice to see and very eye-opening. Everyone just kind of gets along with everyone.”* Janelle continued by elaborating on the dynamic camaraderie among the students, which she depicted as non-judgmental and accepting of differences; *“I think that every student is going to still embrace where they are from and I think their friends become a part of that. That's what it seemed like to me that they were all honoring each other in that way and being a part of it.”* Jacey admitted that teaching a diverse group of students was no better or worse than her peers in

her home state, but she also recognized the value that this mutual acceptance brought to the classroom as she detailed the meaningful conversation that these various points of view brought to classroom discussions and interpretations of various novels. As she reflected upon similar discussions she had attempted in a more homogenous group of students, Jacey found the conversation to be rather dull when students possessed relatively unvarying schemas.

All of the participants noted, in some capacity, that the students had similar traits to other students throughout the world, and the similarities were greater than the differences. However, their unique characteristics were what brought value to their classrooms and the schools, in general. Amanda captured the sentiments of the other participants in her final student teaching reflection as she discussed the ways in which her experience was unique from her peers in a more traditional student teaching placement:

Teaching as a profession goes deeper than how old the kid is or where they're from or what they believe or what color their skin is, or what language they speak or anything. It's about educating the child. It's about nurturing them and I think for me, I learned to fully embrace kids regardless of anything and I don't think that in Iowa that I would have not embraced kids, but I don't think that I would have had to stretch myself to understand them at so many different levels

This final quote demonstrated the recognition of the various ways in which students may differ but, ultimately, teachers must find cause to celebrate each child for the unique place he or she has in the classroom.

Participants think or act outside their own culture (typically occurs when living abroad)

One aspect noted by several participants was the concept of time and how it was viewed or valued in the non-Western cultures in which they were living. While US Americans tend to be rather time sensitive, other cultures sometimes take a more casual

approach to the concept. Occasionally, participants displayed annoyance at an apparent lack of structure, but essentially, participants began to appreciate a slower approach toward daily involvements and quickly assimilated to the lifestyle.

Darci described her life at home in the U.S. as one of always feeling rushed. In comparison, she described a “*very different feeling while living in Thailand,*” as she noted the importance placed on family and friends while living there. As she returned to the U.S. to begin her career, Darci struggled with failed attempts to replicate relationships that were formed in the four short months she lived in Thailand. She described these challenges following her return to the U.S.:

I have a roommate, and I will go whole weeks without saying more than “how’s your day”, or “have a good night” sort of thing because I’m constantly working and I think that I try to balance more and keep this perspective open and that if it doesn’t get done today it will be ok. Coming back to the states was a lot harder than leaving the states

Similarly, Alissa reflected on her experience in Brazil and displayed her mixed emotions between the value of personal relationships as demonstrated through extensive conversations and the conflict this created when there was a need to be somewhere at a pre-designated time:

I enjoyed that people were the priority and there just wasn’t as much of a rush. And yet sometimes because I was around other Americans and in an American school, sometimes it would take like feelings of pressure from other people or realizing that “if this were in America this would not be ok!” Like, if someone was just taking a really long time to talk to someone when we had somewhere to go.

Although there was occasional tension, Alissa described the experience as one that caused her to be stretched personally which enabled her to reflect on her presumptions of other cultures. She recognized that, although there were some drawbacks to alternative

social norms, there were also advantages. Janelle reiterated Alissa's sentiments as she described her view of the priorities of the people in Brazil: *"People are the most important thing in life. Brazilians are very family and relationship oriented, as well as very open to sharing their home and family to make others comfortable."* Janelle added that *"There is no expectation. They just really want to make sure you feel at home and go out of their way to make sure you are taken care of."* As she reflected on her own priorities, Janelle recognized that her actions didn't always demonstrate this same priority:

I think I naturally catch myself sometimes thinking I don't have time, or I don't want to do that, but then I think why wouldn't I want to help someone out? And I kind of reflect back to when I was [in Brazil] and it's really not hard for you to go out of your way in most cases.

Janelle took her reflections further as she demonstrated the impact that Brazilian hospitality had on her professional life. As she discussed students who were lost or confused in the school or in her class, she remembered the time that people took for her when she was in a similar situation. Janelle talked about recognizing confused expressions on student's faces and her increased patience with student concerns as a direct result of her experiences in Brazil.

Similarly, Jacey also described the ways in which her student teaching experience had impacted her teaching, and changed the way she approached lessons in her first year of teaching. Where she may have previously had a more limited scope of understanding differences, and possibly discredited some differences if they varied too far from what she considered to be acceptable, Jacey now felt more equipped to incorporate differences into her teaching. She explained that teaching overseas enabled her to learn from her environment and take the necessary steps to assimilate quickly.

Jacey provided an example of a class discussion during her first year of teaching. While students discussed a novel based on family values, a debate arose over the responsibility of a daughter to give up life dreams to care for a family as oppose to pursuing life dreams of a career. As her class was comprised of students of various ethnicities, the debate became real when some students insisted that choosing to pursue one's own dreams over caring for a family member was evidence of self-centeredness and a lack of compassion. As Jacey described her initial reaction to this conversation she admitted, *"So that was kind of the first 'whoa' experience of 'I'm not in Iowa anymore' and the people I'm surrounded by don't have the same values or morals that I do."* However, her experiences during student teaching had enabled her to move beyond the initial reaction and create a comfortable environment for a respectful discussion that incorporated different opinions into the conversation.

Amanda provided another example of an increased ability to think outside of her home culture as she described her heightened respect for diverse religious beliefs. As she previously explained, the impetus for choosing a predominantly Muslim culture for student teaching was her desire to better understand what she believed to be misconceptions of this religion. Prior to student teaching, she described a *"spectator view"* of Muslims in Iowa with her understandings being limited to *"they don't eat during Ramadan, and they try to pray a lot during the day and, the women cover."* Amanda's perspective changed as she gained a more comprehensive view of Islam during her student teaching experience in Egypt. *"Going from a place where there were maybe 20 Muslims in a town, to a place where there was maybe 20 Christians surrounded by Muslims, it was interesting being in the minority religiously and just seeing how that daily behavior is accepted and normal there."* Through

this exposure, Amanda recognized that *“It’s not just motions, there’s a real dedication to [the faith] and it’s a lifestyle”* while also noting that it was good for her to remember that her childhood home life was not necessarily the norm in the world. Although she ultimately reaffirmed her own religious beliefs, Amanda also gained an increased respect for other beliefs and was able to speak from a more informed perspective rather than with the spectator view she described previously.

A final example of thinking outside one’s own culture is, perhaps, an example of social class more than national culture that was learned while living abroad and working with students from a highly affluent cultural upbringing. Amanda also provided an example of her changed viewpoint when she recognized her error in judgment regarding her students perceived lacking skills sets or deficiencies. When asking students to use a blade during an art project on print making, Amanda was astonished at the number of times that students cut themselves. Having previously done this project with the same age group in Iowa, she immediately assumed, *“they’re just careless, clumsy kids”* and discounted the fact that used this privileged group of students rarely had the need to use their hands for skilled labor. Amanda recalled her students’ surprise when they saw her change a light bulb in the classroom, which deepened her understanding of the wealthy Egyptian culture:

If something’s broken at home, they call someone to fix it. They don’t even call, their maid calls someone to fix it. Or if something needs to be altered or sewn, they have no concept of how that works and so just the skill set, the physical skill set that my students brought to the classroom was affected by the culture they live in.

Amanda further exemplified her understanding of Egyptian culture as she explained the rationale behind what might be perceived as *“lazy”* in a Western culture:

Egypt is a culture that tries to generate jobs because there are so many people in that area, that they need work. So people do just the most unthinkable jobs [for someone] in the States. They do the most random jobs and a lot of labor and a lot of repair and service work is done and so students that have the money to employ those people don't even know how to use their hands to do simple skills.

Rather than blaming her students for lacking the skills necessary to use a blade, Amanda was able to use her personal experiences in Egypt to better understand the reason behind these lacking abilities and alter her teaching accordingly. In her final thoughts on this situation, Amanda commented, *“Hey, this is life and this is how we operate. Let's work around it. Let's work with it;”* an approach that will surely translate into other situations as well.

Authenticity; the definition of one's self is expanded to include alternative context

Throughout student reflections and interviews, there existed a strong sentiment of pride in personal growth among the participants that resulted in a new sense of self. The *expanded self* ranged from newfound inner strength and a relaxed attitude to open mindedness and identifying personally with the host culture. The participants realized that leaving their comfort zones and living in a non-Western culture on a daily basis certainly impacted their view of themselves as well as their personal interactions. Their comments encompassed changes expansions in both their personal and professional images as depicted in their own words:

“I feel like I meet a different version of myself in each place I go”

“In living in another culture, so many of my assumptions and ways of thinking have been challenged, and I believe that I have changed for the better”

“You learn so much about teaching, but... you become the person that you are meant to be because you are absolutely removing yourself from everything you've ever known.”

Ana Masria (I am Egyptian). While this statement is incredible inaccurate, it conveys how I feel personally here.

“I have developed into the educator I've always wanted to be.”

While all five the participants displayed an expanded self, Amanda described how she believed these changes occurred:

I think when you're surrounded by things that are very different to you and you're exploring it you kind of have to remind yourself of who you are and why that's different from what you're seeing. And you either choose to morph and change and accept what you're seeing as new truth or you are kind of reaffirmed in what you did believe and you can see and understand what you're seeing, but it reconfirms who you are in some ways and that it's different, but it's unique. It's really helped me develop a new sense of who I am.

Others spoke of the stage in life that they were in while student teaching. As the end of their college years approached and their professional lives were before them, one participant described it as a “*time to redefine yourself*.” Janelle further explained:

As a young person getting ready to graduate, I know I'm still finding myself and this experience has both justified my thoughts on who I am as well as shaken them to their core. In the big picture I am a part of the world/nation and who I am as an individual will hold a small part in it.

Bennett (2001) described the stage of Adaptation as one which “takes the form of cognitive frame shifting, where one attempts to take the perspective of another culture” and the concept of “reciprocal mutual obligation is formed” (p. __). This mutual obligation was evidenced by the participants as they expressed their desire to alter their ways of thinking and behaving, not out of a sense of obligation but, rather, because it authentically felt right to them.

This section illuminated the thoughts and actions of the participants and they told the stories from their experiences student teaching in non-Western cultures. These experiences propelled the participants to the stage of Adaptation.

Adaption Stage of Cultural Sensitivity

The participants clearly displayed evidence of being in the *Adaptation* stage of Cultural Sensitivity. As stated in the initial over-arching research questions, this study sought not only to determine their level of cultural sensitivity, but also how to determine what value that brought to their first year of teaching. For the purposes of this study, *value* was determined by tacit and explicit teaching practices. In the final interview, participants were asked to discuss the influence that their student teaching experience had on their first year of teaching with regard to teaching philosophies, and pedagogical assumptions and understanding of learners. Additionally, they were asked to share how these philosophies translated into their classroom interactions and activities. This remaining portion of this chapter draws on the final interviews and discusses the personal and professional impact, as described by the participants, in terms of their teaching philosophies and explicit practices in the classroom.

Alissa

In a rather challenging job market, Alissa initially credited her experience student teaching abroad as impacting her ability to get a job as new graduate. While numerous factors came into consideration, “*what stood out the most was the student teaching experience abroad.*” Alissa explained that she had an interview arranged in a school district that interested her, and while she was there visiting, she had the intention of seeing as many schools as possible within that district. Before the day was over, Alissa had interviewed with numerous district administrators and she was offered a job. When asked her opinion of her desirability as a candidate, Alissa commented that “*everyone saw that [I student taught in*

Brazil] and it totally stuck out and they all asked about it. It definitely came in to play in all of my interviews and in my answers to questions they asked.”

Alissa credits international student teaching for inspiring the global perspective that is apparent in her classroom. She shared a desire to expose her students to various cultures while still implementing the mandatory curriculum. International student teaching caused her to think critically about differentiating instruction while making learning culturally relevant to her students:

Something that I really grew in as a teacher during my international student teaching experience was the ability to differentiate. It was such a necessity in Brazil when I had such language differences, as well as a range of learning abilities and language abilities- differentiation was just a necessity, so that comes easily to me now because of my student teaching experience.

Alissa shared examples of integrating cultural or global awareness into her daily teaching through various formats. One example included the world map placed on the bulletin board with numerous pins in respective locations indicating the settings of various books they have read.

My goal is that these 3rd graders will leave my classroom being more aware of the work beyond their little town or even Kansas City and recognize that there are the same uniqueness's of people all over the world. As topics come up in literature, we take the time to stop and talk about how life here is different and the same from these other places.

Additionally, Alissa labeled the table groups in her classroom according to the different countries that the students chose. The name of a country and its flag were posted over each table:

Just little things like that they all remember, “Oh, I was South Africa”... and they have a sense of where South Africa is. They know what the flag looks like and who knows what interests those little things will inspire, but as I get further into teaching, my goal is to go deeper into some of those little things I

have started. And continue to find more quality literature from different cultures and find ways to integrate my love for the global perspective and share that with my students.

Throughout the interview, Alissa repeatedly expressed her desire to “do more” with respect to incorporating a theme of international awareness in her classroom. From the cultural representation in biographies on her bookshelf to the classroom décor, and the identification of student groups by diverse flags and country names, students in Alissa’s class gained exposure to cultures and traditions that were not necessarily part of the explicit curriculum but, rather, woven intentionally throughout the fabric of Alissa’s teaching as a direct result of her own positive experience student teaching in an international location.

Amanda

Unlike Alissa, Amanda pursued and successfully accomplished her goal of getting her first teaching job in an international school. Amanda was hired to teach at a reputable American school in India. She described the school as a progressive school with a diverse population of students.

It is an American School, and the only American school in [this city], which makes it unique and desirable and is very expensive to attend. The kids who are here are from over 50 different countries so when you think of 700 student and 50 different countries, that’s quite a ratio of diverse students. It’s a very high tech school. That’s something that sets us apart too.

When teaching such a diverse group of students, Amanda recognized the need to understand the various cultures and be sensitive to issues that may impact some students more than others. In previous interviews, Amanda expressed her desire to better understand Islam as central to her decision to student teach in Cairo. The insights gained while student teaching in a predominantly Islamic culture became apparent in her first year of teaching.

When asked how her student teaching experience uniquely impacted her teaching today, her initial reply was: *“I think I understand now what it means for a kid to be Muslim and come to school completely wiped out the day after Ramadan ended, and things like that I understand.”* Her understanding of other cultures did not cease with the Islamic culture, but rather transferred to other cultures as well.

I feel like I can make the first move and ask my students about those things now because I have a better understanding of, if this person is from Thailand for example, and I can ask them about things that are important to them. Like the flooding in Bangkok last weekend, just little things like that- rather than waiting for it to come out of the students, I feel more equipped to actively ask them about cultural stuff.

In addition to gaining empathy for various cultures, Amanda also displayed an understanding for her students from diverse socio economic groups. As she explained early in the interview, the school was quite expensive to attend, and in many ways was similar to the school where she student taught. Although Amanda did not grow up with a lifestyle similar to her students, her position as a teacher in an international school allowed her unique opportunities for extensive travel. She commented on the relevance of this travel as means of better equipping her to understand her students: *“I know they are all going to travel on the weekends and being able to relate to them and being able to understand that and ask meaningful questions about those travels.”*

Second language speakers are common in international schools, which enabled Amanda to have numerous interactions and experiences teaching second language learners, not only during her student teaching but also in her first year of teaching. The students she was taught while student teaching in Egypt resembled the English language abilities of her

students in India. As Amanda strived to emulate the practices of her cooperating teachers, she described the strategies she used in her first year of teaching:

I have been flashing back to last year to how I modified instruction to the whole class, and making sure I was using my hands, repeating slowly, holding up the times as I say them to show what they are. And having ESL students really kind of heightens your awareness of their level of understanding.

Empathy for culture, socio-economic differences, and second language learners contributed greatly to the tacit practices in her classroom. Amanda was also asked to discuss the curriculum that she teaches and the more explicit practices in her classroom. When doing so, Amanda shared her insights on the International Baccalaureate curriculum which was implemented in the school where she taught: *“it is such a universal curriculum that it gets at what’s most important. You teach concepts rather than content.”* Amanda further explained how this curriculum directly impacted her thought process as she prepared lessons or units: *“And so as I’m planning my lessons I’m thinking about ok, if we need to tie this to history... you don’t need to tie it to American history, at an American school we can tie it to any history that makes sense to how the kids will relate to it.”* Furthermore, Amanda offered a specific example from her classroom that had occurred on the same day as the interview, in which it became apparent to Amanda that common knowledge in the Midwestern U.S. can differ greatly from common knowledge in a setting of diverse students living overseas.

We were talking about monuments and they had studied Stone Hedge, they had studied the Eiffel Tower, they had studied the Pyramids and the Great Wall of China, and these huge land marks all over the world. And this one student said, “Miss, isn’t there a statue in the US where there’s a bunch of people’s heads carved on it?”

As Amanda contemplated the student’s question, she tried to think in the context of her current location, and the student’s schema. After thinking though the context of the situation,

she realized that this student life experiences were not rooted in the US, and therefore, concepts commonly understood by peer groups in the US, were not the case in the international school setting:

India has a lot of statues of five headed God's or thing like that, and then he said, "I think maybe they are presidents or something..." And I was like "Oh, Mount Rushmore!" And so that kind of back ground is very common place, in the Midwest especially, but in an international school, that kind of a monument isn't what will come to their mind when they are thinking of historic landmarks.

Amanda provided another specific example of a lesson in her own classroom. When translating her philosophies into actions, Amanda described a watercolor unit that she taught, "What is kind of funny to me is that the actual lessons I teach hardly change. "Whether I was in Iowa, or Cairo, or India, or middle level or elementary, it depends most on what you want [the students] to get out of it. You can put an emphasis on different parts of it." She further elaborated on what she previously explained with regards to concepts taking precedence of content:

For example, this unit that I did on water colors- we are learning about deforestation and the mangrove tree. And deforestation is a subject that is talked about all over the world. But here, we went into how does that happen in India, and in the world. And in my art room we used watercolor as a medium to choose how they wanted to express how they feel about what is happening. And some of them have lived in places where they have witnessed deforestation and others have-not. So although, watercolor is something that is taught everywhere, what is neat here is that the focus in on the concept of preserving parks and rainforests and wrapping your mind around [the idea] that by caring for the forests, we are acting as caring citizens of this world and it just takes it a little further and makes it meaningful.

Amanda recognized that a more traditional curriculum would have focused solely on the techniques of watercolor, with less expression. Her appreciation for the curriculum can be noted in her comment, "Here it makes so much sense to have everything connected."

Knowing the transient nature of her student population, Amanda recognized that the focus of her lessons could not be centered on their life in India, as it was likely one of many locations that her students would call home over their lifetime. This knowledge enabled Amanda to embrace the IB curriculum while better serving the needs of such a diverse group of students.

So the idea that when you plan something, you can't think about "what makes sense because we are in India, or what makes sense because they are American", but you think about what makes sense in the unit because we are a citizen of this world and it's a very globally minded curriculum, so it talks about things that these kids can take with them no matter where they go.

The final point that Amanda made addressed the make-up of the students and the teachers in the school and the vast experiences that they brought to the school. With such diverse experiences among everyone, authenticity was heightened by the stories they offered or the artifacts they shared:

Like last week, we looked at an artist who was from Israel, and two of my students are Israeli. So I asked those girls outside of class whether they understood what this artist did. And one of the girls said she was too young to understand it, and the other girls said, yeah, I can understand- so it's kind of interesting to pull who you would usually bring in as a guest speaker from your own student body.

This point was reinforced as Amanda was offered an opportunity to be a guest speaker in a class that was learning about Egypt:

And I'm not even Egyptian. But the kids were studying different countries and they just wanted a firsthand witness of some things about Egypt. So they were asking me about mummies and crocodiles in the Nile, and you know little things that kids think of. And the kids who heard [my] firsthand experiences had pretty phenomenal projects, even though I didn't feel like I provided them with that much.

She further discussed the follow-up conversation with the classroom teacher on the importance of what she shared:

And the teacher later said to me, you know, it makes all the difference to have someone who's experienced something to share about it. We find that's true in the States too but how often do you find someone who has been to Egypt or China and can come in and talk about it. It can happen, but it happens quite frequently in International schools.

Throughout Amanda's interview, she shared numerous examples of ways in which she was impacted by student teaching experience in a non-Western culture. She discussed the preparation that it provided for working with diverse groups of students, as well as specific examples of lesson creation and implementation, uniquely based on the mindset she was equipped with as she approached her students.

Darci

Darci opted to return to the U.S. to begin her teaching career, and was hired in a large urban school district. In vast contradiction to the school where she student taught, Darci found herself as one of ten other science teachers in the high school. Midway through the school year, Darci was still adjusting to class sizes that were more than double her student teaching experience. She described a desire to collaborate with other teachers but expressed difficulty in finding time with so many other teachers, often on different time schedules and levels of the building. Although she claimed that collaboration occurred more in the larger school environment due to sheer numbers of teachers teaching the same subject matter, she also commented on the importance of daily interactions in the more intimate environment overseas.

Despite such contrasts between student teaching in a private American International school in Thailand and her first year of teaching in a metropolitan city in the U.S., Darci found the student teaching experience relevant to her first year teaching. She remarked, *"I definitely think there is stuff I did there that I brought back with me."* Since her student

teaching placement utilized the Middle Years (MYP) portion of the International Baccalaureate program, Darci has continued to infuse international concepts into her teaching. The use of rubrics was initially introduced to her in college, and later became an integral part of assessment that she further incorporated into her student teaching, and subsequently into first year of teaching:

Integrating the rubrics is something that I had actually learned a lot about at [the University]. My advisor, when I was a grad assistant, I did a lot of grading on rubrics but that is something that was sort of developed and refined while I was [student teaching]. It's interesting because we are contemplating doing one test a trimester here that is the same for every school in the district. So it would be the same for my class and at both the other high schools, so there has just been talk about how things like that are going to be graded. And [my cooperating teacher], at [student teaching] would often grade tests using a rubric and so that idea has interested me and I have shared that with other people here.

In addition to the assessment strategies, Darci also shared specific teaching strategies that she integrated into her first year of teaching. Although her student teaching experience provided little experience with students with learning disabilities, it did offer a lot of exposure to second language learners. Darci has now transferred techniques previously used with second language learners and utilized those same techniques with her lower achieving students:

So a lot of what they focused on was in language or newer English speakers but there wasn't a lot of assistance for students with learning disabilities. That is something I am taking into consideration a lot more here. I am thinking about accommodations a lot. I'd use a lot of assisted note sheets, so at the diploma [IB] level the teachers I was working with made a lot of assisted note sheets. And I guess I hadn't really thought about that but I do that here as well. Not so much for students who are struggling with the language, but for students who have other learning needs. It is interesting to see that the accommodations that these students are receiving are accommodations that really would benefit all students.

Working with a so many second language learners also has caused Darci to look closely at the importance of understanding vocabulary. Within the discipline of biology, her students are introduced to words not commonly used in the English language; therefore she has placed an increased emphasis on acquisition of biology vocabulary.

But I do focus a lot more on vocab now than I would have if I hadn't been in Thailand. So I make vocab cards for the class now- and I don't think I would have recognized that this was so essential if I hadn't been exposed to so many students with language barriers. It's interesting how much better I think students do when they know the language, and I put together how hard it is for student to get the biology vocab.

While increased exposure to second language learners impacted the methods of delivery that Darci used in her first year of teaching, this exposure also impacted her ability to empathize with the various stages of language acquisition that some of her culturally diverse students experienced. During her time in Thailand she recognized that any language skills that she gained were purely auditory. She recognized the difference between her own ability to understand something the Thai language as opposed to her ability to speak, read, or write in the Thai language. Consequently, she recognized the challenges that her students were facing during her first year of teaching when their behavior mirrored her own behavior while she was in Thailand. She realized that, when students expressed body language indicating an understanding of a concept but were unable to articulate their understanding, it was up to her to delve deeper to decipher if the disconnect stemmed from understanding the concept or the inability to express that understanding. Darci explained, *"It's not necessarily that they don't understand it, but it's a skill, and they don't seem to know how to summarize yet."* She provided an example of a situation where a language barrier limited a student's ability to define a vocabulary word, however, when provided with the definition, this same

student was able to match it to the appropriate term. As Darci looked ahead to alternative methods for assisting this student, she drew upon strategies that were used during her time abroad, and further contemplated the idea of reading the test to the student and allowing them to rely on auditory skills rather than literacy skills.

In conclusion, Darci made a point to express her desire to teach overseas someday. She described it as “*something that is hard to put in words*”, although she attempted to explain:

...the feeling that I had while I was there, and the people I met while I was there. The diversity in the staff was so much higher which makes it easier for kids to relate to the people who are teaching them. I just liked how it was set up, and how invested people were in what they were doing. It was such a short time, it was 4 months, and yet I would not hesitate to contact any of those people if I went abroad again. Whereas here, I feel like I can spend months interacting and still I would not, yeah, ...it's a different approach on friendship.

These final statements further exemplified the welcoming environment that has been described worldwide, as well as the appreciation for people of various cultures:

I had no idea how to get anywhere, how to order food, or anything. So you just accept people for what they contribute and in that you realize just how many amazing things that people can do. And that you wouldn't have necessarily encountered them otherwise, had you not been so vulnerable to be in that position.

Although great contrast existed between the student teaching and the first year of teaching, Darci articulated numerous occasions where she made connections and meaningful relevance from one experience to the other. During her first year of teaching, Darci applied unique teaching strategies that were gained from having a British educated cooperating teacher as well as an international curriculum during student teaching. Additionally, her lived experiences as a second language speaker enabled Darci to empathize with students

struggling to understand vocabulary and probe students to further understand and learning complications.

Jacey

While it is not uncommon for student teachers to be considered for new positions in the districts where they student teach, this is not always the case in international schools which typically require two years of experience and often times a graduate degree. Hiring a student teacher is especially not common practice in the school where Jacey student taught. Jacey described the school she worked at as “*very large, with over 3,000 students and staff pre-k-12 on the campus. The school is extremely academic. The kids are very motivated, very driven, as are my coworkers. They are very passionate and highly intelligent people.*”

However, due to the unprecedented support of her mentors and the school administration, Jacey had the unique fortune of being hired in the international school where she completed her student teaching:

I had the rare opportunity to enter into a “new job” where I knew all of my co-workers, I knew the curriculum, I knew the students, I knew other teachers and the administration, so I guess I would say that it is my first year of teaching, but it feels like my second semester because I student taught there last year. My student teaching just completely prepared me for what I was walking into. It was more of a continuation I guess.

Graduating mid-year afforded Jacey the opportunity to obtain a long-term substitute position for one semester in her home community immediately after her return from Singapore. This stark contrast gave balance to what she had experienced abroad and forced her to examine those differences. Through this examination, Jacey gained further respect for the professional dedication of her soon-to-be colleagues abroad, as well as a new insight on what was possible when classes were rich with a variety of cultural differences.

When asked to further discuss the extent to which her student teaching shaped teaching philosophies, Jacey described the cultural sensitivity that permeates all of her professional decision making. *“I take into account just the idea that I am not going to have 17 kids in the classroom that are all from the same country, or state or small town. They are not all from the same background. So the first thing I would say is that I take into account their cultural background.”* Although she admitted that there were times she had to re-think her initial reactions, she recognized that culture is central to everything that happened in her classroom:

I am brainstorming what I want them to do on the first day back [after winter break]. And I going to have them do a free write. And of course the first thing I think of is that I want to ask them what they have done over the break. And my initial hunch is to have them tell me what you did over Christmas, and how did you celebrate Christmas with your family. And then I stop myself and I say well, I know for a fact that I have over seven Muslim kids who did not celebrate Christmas so they are not going to know how to answer those questions.

Moreover, Jacey told of the “critical lens” concept that she acquired during her student teaching experience, and described how that concept also strengthened her ability to relate to students and make lessons meaningful to each student:

The idea is that whenever you read a novel, a short story, you always bring your own ideology to the text. Whatever you believe, your deep seeded morals, you are applying all of those things to that text, whether you know it or not. And the idea of critical lens is... we call them a lens, so we think of it like a pair of glasses, and so there are many different glasses, or lenses that you can put on in order to analyze a text differently.

More specifically Jacey detailed how this cultural sensitivity applied to the conversations she had with students during a novel study that focused on gender roles. Recognizing that the variety of cultures represented in her classes would be inclined to also represent a spectrum of perspectives on the topic of gender roles, Jacey did not shy away

from the conversations. Rather, she embraced this as an opportunity for rich dialogue by establishing a common understanding:

I brought it up in class and I said being from such a diverse class, I am sure you understand that we all come from different places with different beliefs and values. But I think we can all agree on what we think are universal understandings of what a man and woman should be treated like and what the roles should be.

When asked to describe how this conversation may have been different in the area where she had previously substitute taught, Jacey commented, *“I think as a teacher I wouldn’t have had any..., I don’t think I would have any students challenging the idea that women have just as many rights as men.”* Recognizing the value that cultural variety adds to a class, Jacey added, *“I have four different sections of freshmen of which two of them it became a debate and two of them which everyone agreed with what was being said, which, by the way, leads to a very boring discussion.”*

Furthermore, Jacey accounted another book study which examined *“social dichotomy and how two opposites exist in the same piece of text, and how a character can experience both feelings.”* With the focus on race relations, Jacey commented on the global awareness that existed among the students she worked with. *The students are one of a kind. I know I’m a first year teacher, but so far, in my short teaching career, these students stand out.”* She added, *“They are just so aware of the world outside of them which is unusual for students at this age.”*

Ultimately, this enhanced global perspective is something Jacey expressed as a goal of her own, as well. She described the impact that student teaching overseas had on her personal and professional goals:

Student teaching overseas has pushed me to be a bit more open to reinventing myself every so often. I think that's what you do when you leave home. It's a chance to really see who you are as a person outside of who you were for the first 18-21 years of your life. I look ahead and it's a big questions mark as opposed to a set path that I am going to take. Which, I strongly feel that if I had stayed in the U.S., it would have been all laid out. I would have a ten year plan. I don't want that now. In two years, I don't know where I am going to be, and I'm ok with that.

Janelle

Janelle had the great fortune of launching her teaching career in the only International Baccalaureate (IB) program in her home state, in a school that many teachers aspire toward throughout their careers. While several of her colleagues had expressed awe and disbelief that she was hired in such an academically rigorous and well respected school, Janelle contributed her student teaching experience in an IB school in Brazil as equipping her with the required experiences and skills sets that set her apart from other candidates.

When asked to describe the ways that student teaching abroad influenced her first year of teaching, Janelle responded:

Student teaching gave me a lot of input for IB. Instead of being a new teacher and not having a clue of the requirements of IB on me as a teacher, I definitely have had a lot of opportunity for input here because we are just going through the big steps of becoming on IB school. And so I have been asked a lot about what I already know about an IB school, and especially art in an IB school. So it has definitely helped me out in my current position.

In addition to the IB curriculum that underscored much of her teaching, Janelle also depicted specific lessons and projects that encompassed her daily interactions with students. She described her class as rich with projects that involved other countries while emphasizing a multiple points of view. Although Janelle had traveled extensively prior to student teaching, she added, “I know that has a lot to do with how I view things because of my

student teaching in another country.” In her first weeks of teaching, Janelle had her students create Peace Flags, inspired by the Tibetan Prayer flags: *My main goal in that was to kind of go off of what other cultures believe in. And we put our own twist on it, but it exposed them and opened them up to what other cultures believe.* As previously noted by other participants, the IB curriculum emphasizes *concepts* as a vehicle to enforce content. The example that Janelle provided further attested to this fact. While her peace flag projects centered on the concepts of cultural awareness and open-mindedness, the creation of the flag required art skills.

As an art teacher, Janelle provided abundant examples of ways in which Brazilian art influenced her teaching, both conceptually and through specific skills that she taught. One elaborate example was demonstrated by Janelle’s emphasis on graffiti as an art form. Janelle described the presence of graffiti that surrounded her in the city of Brasilia, *“When I was even on my walk home- there was graffiti everywhere and it was absolutely gorgeous. Graffiti there was a visual art, which you don’t see much here.”* During her student teaching experience in Brazil, she had the opportunity to work with a group of graffiti artists. Together with the elementary Art teaching, the classes broke into thematic groups based on world peace and began sketching murals. As the projects evolved, all of Janelle’s lessons spiraled out of the project: *“They started sketching it. And then we taught them to use spray paint. The actual artists came in and they sold the art pieces to raise money for the school. And they displayed the art in the mall and it was really cool.”* This experience with graffiti in her student teaching peaked Janelle’s interest in the concept which became a focal point for a project during her first year of teaching. Janelle brought back numerous pictures of the graffiti in Brazil and shared that with her students in Iowa. This led to projects that decorated

the walls in her classroom, local community buildings, and displayed work in area shopping malls. As Janelle described:

I brought in some of the picture to show my students and we did graffiti on the wall in the classroom and on cardboard with the 7th graders. And currently, we are working on a piece that will actually be in West Des Moines. We talked about graffiti a lot and what I did with the 6th and 7th graders is more “mural” based, and with my high school students we are actually going to take a bus and go do graffiti on a wall of a workout building.

When asked about the extent to which her current work is a reflection of her student teaching, she replied definitively, “*Oh I know it stems from what I saw there. Brasilia has definitely influenced all of the lessons that I have done here.*”

In addition to the art lessons that were heavily influenced from her time in Brazil, Janelle’s also expressed the ways in which her experiences there impacted her interactions with students: “*I share a lot with them. I shared it with the parents also. We talked about different lesson plans and I have shared images of what I saw to and from work every day when I lived in Brazil and they found it very interesting. With different places I have been, I bring in things from other areas.*” She laughed as she told about a student who questioned how she spoke English so well, as the student thought she was from a different country: “*They remember my stories and my experiences. Or they seem to! Some of those students have been abroad, so they can relate, and those that haven’t have seen so many images that it starts to inspire them.*”

As many other participants expressed, Janelle was also highly influenced by her experience as “the other” while living in a non-Western culture. She was able to recall how it felt when everyone around her spoke another language, and the frustrations that came with the inability to communicate in the community she lived in. She brought this understanding

to her classroom and extended her liberties to her students that she otherwise would not likely have allowed:

I have a few second language speakers also. I find it really interesting especially with my high school kids, that they speak in their native language first, but having that experience kind of lets me allow them to speak their native language. I am not afraid of what they might be saying, because I have had so much exposure to second languages. As long as they are comfortable telling me what's going on, then I am fine letting them use their art time to speak however they are comfortable. So if they want to speak in Spanish to a friend, I'm fine with that. I can relate.

Janelle further emphasized the benefit this leniency had on her students as she described that it not only honored the students' native language, but also allowed students to use their first language to check for understanding with their peers. Janelle remembered this as being crucial in her student teaching in Brazil, as younger students would rely on friends with higher levels of English to assist them: *"I feel better about letting their friends help them when they don't have fluent English language skills."*

As Janelle indicated, her student teaching experience impacted her in numerous ways. From the school that hired her, to the graffiti art projects displayed around Iowa's capital city, to the welcoming environment that she created for students of all cultures, the lasting impact of four months of living and teaching in a non-Western culture will continue to weave among her students and others that Janelle encounters.

Summary

This chapter presented the (a) DMIS analysis and (b) First Year Teaching Interviews. Using DMIS, the participants were analysed based on the student teaching reflections and the subsequent interviews which occurred during their first year of teaching. All five participants displayed attributes of a person in the Adapataion stage of cultural sensitivity, which is

uncommon for the typical teacher in the U.S., but common for someone who has had an extended lived experience abroad.

Finally, this chapter examined the participants as they moved from their experience as student teachers into the professional classroom as fulltime teachers. The participants recalled their daily interactions with students and shared the value that their student teaching experience in a non-Western culture added to the tacit and explicit practices they used in their classrooms. The data from all sources used to explore the research questions comprising this study will be discussed in Chapter 6.

CHAPTER 6. DISCUSSION

Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore and gain understanding of how first year teachers described the intercultural development that occurred while student teaching in a non-Western culture, and the value that those experiences abroad brought to these teachers' classrooms in their first year of teaching. The focus was to capture the essence of their experiences abroad as perceived and described by the participants, and how those experiences influenced both the tacit and explicit practices in their first year of teaching.

This study focused primarily on experiences student teaching in non-Western cultures, in part, to increase awareness of the opportunities that exist in non-Western cultures for university administrators and aspiring educators. A common misconception held by university students and faculty alike is the idea that international student teaching placements are limited to English speaking countries, as many are not familiar with American International Schools. Another belief often held by university faculty is the idea that student teaching within the framework of a familiar American curriculum lacks cultural depth and understanding. This study sought to illuminate the rich cultural experiences of the participants within the context of both a non-Western culture and an American curriculum.

Current literature on the topic of international student teaching is heavily rooted in Western cultures, and typically ceases at the completion of student teaching. In addition to increasing awareness, this study attempted to add to that existing body of literature, by extending specifically into the potential impact of an international student teaching experience during the first year of teaching with the focus solely on non-Western student

teaching experiences. Previously studies have closely examined international student teaching experiences, but none have exclusively examined non-Western cultures while also extending into the first year teaching experience. Experiences in non-Western cultures provide exposure and interactions with second language speakers while also increasing experiences with populations that emulate immigrant populations in today's U.S. schools and communities.

The literature review focused on previous studies addressing the impact of international student teaching, mainly in Western cultures, as well as the increasing needs for teachers in today's schools to be prepared for diverse student populations. Additionally, Bennett's Developmental Model for Intercultural Sensitivity was utilized to frame the study, while shedding light on variables that impact teacher's abilities to relate, interact and empathize with culturally diverse students. Within Bennett's theoretical framework, this study sought to examine attitudes and behaviors that were displayed by the participants both during the student teaching semester as well in the first year of teaching. The data used in this study included student teaching reflections, blog entries, and semi-structured interviews with the participants during their first year of teaching. The reflections and blogs were received in written format and, therefore, straightforward correspondence. The interviews, however, were verbal and, thus; required a multi-faceted approach for analysis.

Qualitative research methodology was applied to allow ample opportunity for the participants to share detailed examples of socially constructed meaning derived through lived experiences in non-Western cultures as well as in their first year of teaching. Grounded in socially constructed meaning, phenomenology guided the methodology of the study with continued emphasis and reliance on the lived experiences of the participants.

Participants in this study were comprised of five purposefully selected first-year teachers. It was required that each of the participants had completed their student teaching experiences in non-Western cultures during the academic year prior to the study being conducted. The location of the participants' first year teaching job was not a factor as this study looked specifically at how the student teaching experience equipped each participant to teach in *any* environment. Data were gathered, reviewed and analyzed through reflections from the student teaching experiences. Additionally, two interviews were conducted with each participant using various formats. Given the widespread geographical locations of the participants, interviews were conducted via telephone, Skype, or face-to-face.

The first of the semi-structured interviews occurred in the semester that followed the participants' student teaching experience. This first interview focused specifically on the student teaching experience, asking the participants to recollect their time abroad. More specifically, participants were asked to consider any changes in their beliefs on the various cultures that exist not only in the world, but in schools as well. Participants were asked to tell their stories, rich with details and rooted in situations that caused them to re-think their own perceptions as they became increasingly exposed to various cultures. Finally, the first interview asked participants to address what differences existed between student teaching experiences in a non-Western culture as opposed to their early field experiences or their peers who completed student teaching their home culture.

The second semi-structured interview was intended to shift attention toward the first year of teaching, as teaching strategies, attitudes and behaviors that were gained from student teaching were implemented in the participants' own classroom settings. Participants were

also asked to discuss their personal philosophies or assumptions about learning as well as how these underlying assumptions translate into classroom activities.

The interviews were recorded and transcribed by the researcher. Transcripts were analyzed using open and focused coding (Esterberg, 2002). It was through this data analysis process that the essence of the participants' lived experiences was discerned. At the conclusion of each interview, the recording was transcribed and emailed to the participants in effort to validate the trustworthiness of the transcripts (Esterberg, 2002). After approval by the participants, the transcripts were read in their entirety two to three times each to gain a holistic sense of the information while using open and focused coding. Upon thorough analysis, the data were broken into chunks, coded, and organized by emergent themes which were discussed in Chapters 4 and 5. Chapter 4 focused specifically on the themes from the student teaching experiences particularly relevant to the non-Western cultures in which they lived, whereas Chapter 5 encompassed the participants' first year of teaching relative to Bennett's Developmental Model for Intercultural Sensitivity. During this time, Bennett's DMIS was also read in its entirety to gain an accurate depiction of the stages of intercultural sensitivity.

This chapter discusses the findings of the study and provides implications for policy, practice and teacher education, as well as suggestions for future research. The chapter concludes with the researchers final thoughts on this study.

Discussion

A synthesis of the data in this study, when applied to Bennett's theoretical framework, not only accurately depicted the experiences of the participants as they navigated

intercultural situations, but also specifically extended Bennett's theories by applying them in a non-Western setting as well as beyond student teaching and into the first year of teaching. Given the nature of this study, Bennett's theory is limited in that it does not differentiate between the varieties of possible intercultural experiences, as it assumes that all experiences have the same potential impact. When visiting a variety of states within the U.S. one is likely to encounter notable cultural differences; however, those differences are limited in scope and not as unique as when one visits another country. Depending on a person's upbringing, it is likely to experience cultural differences when visiting rural, urban or suburban areas of the U.S, and even more so when venturing into lived experiences in Western or non-Western cultures. It is possible to travel abroad and never leave the confines of a military base, a compound, or a five star resort and therefore, never truly experience that culture.

To further elaborate, a person whose home culture is Western will experience even greater disparities when visiting a non-Western culture than when visiting a Western culture. As demonstrated in this study, an extended stay in a non-Western culture has a greater impact on cultural sensitivity than a Western culture simply because the range of diversity is greater. Bennett's theory does not differentiate between intercultural experiences that provide minor cultural adjustments, and those that are all encompassing. Bennett (2001) did state that "the underlying assumption of the model is that as one's *experience of cultural difference* becomes more sophisticated, one's competence in intercultural relations increases" (p. 13). With this in mind, it would be accurate to say that an experience in a non-Western culture provides a more sophisticated level of intercultural relations as a result of vast exposure, inundation and interactions among diverse languages spoken, religious customs, cultural traditions, gender roles, and vast discrepancies in socio-economic groups. Bennett's theories,

although quite general, were amplified as the participants spent extended amounts of time in intercultural situations. The participants confronted cultural differences in some predictable ways, while also exemplifying the depth and breadth of the impact within the non-Western nature of this study.

As previously noted, the greater majority of U.S. educated teachers have European ancestry; thus, the non-Western emphasis of this study expounded upon Bennett's model in that the myriad of cultural differences in non-Western locations is far greater than that of Western cultures. Therefore, in a non-Western culture, the abounding cultural differences serve to further increase the intercultural relations and competencies gained by those living within such cultures. There are certainly unique differences that a person must acclimate to within a Western culture; however, these differences are not as encompassing as the comprehensiveness of a non-Western culture. Whereas there may be unique language, customs, and religious practices encountered on an individual basis within Western cultures, a person living in a non-Western culture is often inundated simultaneously with these differences, and without reprieve. For the duration of the time spent living in a non-Western culture, one must live within that culture, and with the inability to retreat into customs that are known and comfortable.

The analysis of the participants revealed that a clear distinction exists between the participants in this study and a majority of U.S. teachers with a more limited scope of experiences. That distinction lies in how individuals view differences. Hammer and Bennett (2003) described individuals in the ethnocentric stages as avoiders of differences, whereas those in the ethnorelative stages as seekers of differences. Cushner (2012) asserted that "There is every indication to suggest that today's classroom teachers and teacher education

students are stuck in the ethnocentric side of this scale and may not have the requisite disposition to be effective intercultural educators nor possess the skills necessary to guide young people to develop intercultural competence” (p. 604).

Cushner further illuminated numerous relevant studies that also utilized Bennett’s framework as a reliable instrument to examine the intercultural sensitivity of both classroom teachers and students in those classrooms. These studies indicate that 84%-91% of the U.S. classroom teachers participating in these studies fell at the minimization stage or below (Bayles, 2009, Mahon, 2006, 2009; Pappamihel, 2004). Two additional studies (Pedersen, 1998; Straffon, 2003) looked at the intercultural sensitivity of the school-age students and found data that contrasted from that of the classroom teachers, suggesting that the students are better prepared to embrace diversity than many of their teachers. Cushner (2012) summarized these studies with the assertion that “the greater amount of exposure to difference (urban vs. suburban and rural schools in the Pedersen study and the amount of time in international schools in the Straffon study), the higher level of intercultural sensitivity. As this chapter unfolds, this statement by Cushner becomes crucial and central to the analysis of the current study.

These aforementioned assertions ignite the necessity for teacher education candidates to awaken their breadth and depth of experiences to enable them to relate to students from diverse backgrounds. Without intentionally interrupting cultural hegemony, prevailing cultural norms are inevitably imposed by the predominantly White, middle class, and monolingual teaching force in U.S. schools. Beliefs about teaching and learning go unchallenged when misconceptions about diverse children’s lives and cultures are socially reproduced by abounding stereotypes. The National Center for Educational Statistics (2009)

attested that, during the 2006 to 2007 academic year, more than 4 out of 10 students in U.S. schools were from underrepresented groups. This being the case, the participants experiences in non-Western cultures were substantial, timely, and relevant as there is further indication that this ratio will continue to rise, with 20% of U.S. public school enrollment now being comprised of students with Hispanic ancestry. The participants in this study revealed that their experiences in non-Western cultures disrupted their previously deficient paradigms and replaced them, thus increasing their ability and desire to coalesce into a diverse, yet harmonious, society.

The non-Western focus of this study illuminated the lived experiences of the participants during their student teaching experiences, where they often co-existed as constituents of the societies while they were living abroad. For these participants, the closest resemblance of their home culture was found within the school hours, where the language of instruction was English and the school structure mostly resembled a U.S. school day. However, even within the confines of the school campus, multiple languages could be heard among both students and staff, and the cultural diversity in the classrooms was far more apparent than is typical in U.S. schools. Although it is likely that the participants were inadvertently granted some social privileges by the sheer nature of being U.S. Americans, they undoubtedly found themselves submersed in sea of language barriers, diverse religious practices, and cultural norms. Through their daily routines of interacting within the communities in a foreign language, the participants gained firsthand experiences with the accompanying challenges while trying to assimilate into a society. In their attempts to assimilate, their obvious accents, or inability to speak the language was just one characteristic that made full assimilation impossible.

In addition to the language barriers, the participants also described numerous other encounters where they had to readjust their habits or lifestyles to meet the expectations of the cultures in which they were living. Through their daily routines of interacting within the communities in a foreign language, the participants gained firsthand experiences with the accompanying challenges while trying to assimilate into a society. Ranging from culturally different methods of greeting new friends, to the timeliness of one's arrival and deviating routes home to avoid interrupting public prayer time, the participants provided copious examples of lived experiences that altered their thinking and behavior both personally and professionally. Additional challenges came when attempting to buy groceries, reading labels not only in a different language, but in some case, even in a different alphabet, making attempted pronunciation impossible as well. One participant spoke of her experiences with daily prayer calls and the need to coordinate taxi rides, shopping trips and other routine activities to accommodate prayer times throughout the day. Other participants told of needing to differentiate between black market sales and legal sales in effort to remain within the laws of the country, or bartering for better prices and in some cases not being taken seriously because of their female gender. The participants recognized the limits that societies imposed on them when they demonstrated insufficient language skills or cultural deficiencies. When these challenges became personal experiences, the participants felt the frustrations as limited language or cultural abilities were misinterpreted as lacking ability or intelligence.

The participants' social equilibrium was disrupted when the dominant culture in which they were living held distinctly unique beliefs and perceptions from what the participants perceived to be true about social engagements and interactions. Although the

social equilibriums will likely be re-balanced upon returning to their home culture, these participants have enhanced their awareness of others through their own lived experiences, thus bringing new empathy to their teaching and to the students that they will teach. This empathy is depicted by Bennett within the adaptation stage of DMIS. Through the extended period living in such a diverse culture, and without the ability to withdraw from the diverse setting, the participants' level of cultural sensitivity actually advanced beyond the superficial recognition and acceptance of cultural differences. Most teachers, who have never lived outside of their home culture for any extended period of time often place emphasis on the commonalities of all people, ethnocentrically expressing such ideas as *"Deep down we are all the same"*, or *"When you really get to know them, they're pretty much like us."* However, even as the participants move back into their home cultures, they will carry with them the ethno-relevant self-awareness as well as the awareness of others, accepting cultural differences as viable alternative method for interacting.

Whereas it is possible to have had similar experiences in Western cultures, the inundation with vast differences in a non-Western culture was all encompassing for the participants in this study. As Cushner (2012) suggested, the extended period of time in a diverse environment enabled the participants to move from the comfortable stage of minimization into the advanced stage of adaptation, where they began to recognize that differences are important and worthy to embrace. This study augments Cushner's recommendation for teachers to extend beyond their inherently narrow-minded perspectives and environments and provides evidence of participants exhibiting transformational intercultural interactions, as based on their experiences specifically in non-Western cultures. Being from European ancestry and commonly upheld Western traditions, the participants

found that living in a non-Western culture altered almost every aspect of their lives, causing them to deal with the discomfort often experienced by students who comprise an increasingly larger percentage of U.S. classrooms. Through this disequilibrium, the participants gained empathy and cultural sensitivity found in the Adaptation stage, which can also be characterized as “intentionality” and “authenticity” and “typically occurs when casual contact with other cultures becomes more intense”, such as when living abroad for a significant amount of time (Bennett, 2001).

It seems impervious to distinguish the interwoven personal impressions from the professional impact of participant’s experiences living in non-Western cultures. There are two levels within the Adaptation stage: the first being “*cognitive frame-shifting*”, and the second being “*behavioral code-shifting*.” In the initial stages of adaptation, the participants began to feel the appropriateness of cultural empathy and attempted to reorganize their behavior to replicate characteristics of another culture, rather than their primary culture, in particular situations. For example, as one assimilates into a culture where it is customary to greet one another with a kiss on the cheek, a U.S. American in the initial stage of adaptation will authentically feel the appropriateness of the greeting and move toward this behavior, although, perhaps, awkwardly at first. In the later stage, one’s behavior shifts naturally into the behavior of another culture and the greeting is comfortable within the context of that culture. As the participant interviews depicted, the individuals in this study discussed numerous ways in which they found themselves thinking or even acting outside of their primary culture. Participants routinely described the pace of life in the U.S. as compared to the non-Western cultures that they experienced. While it is increasingly expected that people in the U.S. live a fast-paced life in order to accomplish more tasks in a day, participants

began to value the slower pace that they experienced in non-Western cultures. As participants dedicated more time to developing relationships, helping others and enjoying the moment, they not only gained appreciation for this new view on time, but also began to incorporate it into their own daily life and interactions. The participants also expressed ways in which they had expanded their thinking to accept different perspectives, value different lifestyles, and resist judging others based on their skills sets. By understanding that life experiences contribute to a person's skills sets, the participants came to embrace the skills that people possess rather than judge according to the skills that are lacking.

Another distinguishing characteristic often observed in the Adaptation stage is the development of one's cultural identity. As the participants wrestled with the authenticity of their own cultural empathy, they began to wonder how they can still maintain their own personal identity yet behave in these alternative ways. Bennett (2001) answered this question by stating "the definition of self is expanded to include the alternative contexts" (p. 22). Within this new identity, the participants in the study supplemented their repertoire of acceptable behaviors in various cultural contexts and, thus, who and what they identified with as different from their former perceptions.

In the most advanced stages of *Adaptation*, people may begin to feel bicultural to the extent that they identify with the alternative culture, and their behavior shifts naturally between their alternative and primary cultures (Bennett, 2001). This expanded sense of self was the most apparent theme across all participants. Without prompting, each participant discussed a new sense of identity. The participants expressed the sensation of being alone in a new culture and looking at themselves and their own culture from the outside in. As they became absorbed in a culture different from their own, their own cultural norms became

apparent when they conflicted with their new environment. More than one participant described this as a time for self-discovery as well as an opportunity to become exactly whom they wished to be. The extended time living abroad also enabled them to develop an elaborate sense of self efficacy. This was not only depicted in their words but also in the manner in which they carried themselves throughout the interviews.

The self-efficacy displayed in the participants, when translated into teaching strategies could potentially have a rewarding impact on their ability to facilitate learning in their classrooms. As the participants encountered countless obstacles while living in non-Western cultures, they learned to persevere beyond those challenges. As this study uniquely extends beyond student teaching and into the first year of teaching, these levels of perseverance were examined beyond the student teaching semester. When applied to classroom instruction, the participants demonstrated persistence in their first year of teaching, allowing the teacher to approach a student's learning with the same commitment to success that the participants applied when navigating a diverse cultural situation. A teacher with a heightened level of self-confidence is less likely to find deficiencies in a struggling student's inabilities to grasp a concept and is more likely to look within themselves for new approaches for teaching, just as the participants explored new approaches to language barriers, or other daily tasks while living in a non-Western culture.

This same self-confidence could also have adverse effects if not situated in the context of the learning environment also. It should be noted that the economically privileged status of the student population in the American International schools where the participant's student taught is in contrast with the more underprivileged student population that commonly accompanies diverse students in the U.S. Even though the finding in this study indicated that

experience in non-Western cultures increased the participant's abilities to differentiate instruction, it did not account for students living underprivileged lives. Although Darci provided several testimonies for increased abilities to relate to diverse students, her first year of teaching in an inner city school carried unique challenges that were not present during her student teaching experiences. While she empathized with her students who were having difficulties with language or adapting to the culture, she also recognized the potential shortcoming of her experiences student teaching in the private school in Thailand. What she has gained though, is the understanding of what her students may be experiencing as they attempt to adapt to the U.S. culture that Darci easily identifies with. Her experiences in Thailand provided her the self-efficacy and empowerment to over-come obstacles with students, but could potentially be a barrier as well. If a person is overly confident in their abilities, or strategies that lead to success in one population, they could potentially neglect to situate the experiences or fail to recognize that what leads to success in one environment may not lead to the same success in another environment.

Implications and Recommendations for Policy, Practice, and Teacher Education

The findings from this study have implications for policy and practice among teacher candidates, teachers, and teacher educators. This study focused predominantly on the experiences of pre-service teachers while student teaching in international locations, and many of the lessons learned can be utilized to inform university policies and practices, especially within teacher education programs.

Over a decade has passed since Gay (1999) urged teacher education programs to place critical emphasis on culturally competent teaching practices. Gay warned that "...no

one should be allowed to graduate from a teacher certification program or be licensed to teach without being well grounded in the dynamics of how the cultural conditioning operate in teaching and learning” (p. 34). Since that time, elective courses have been introduced to teacher education programs and additional criteria have been added to syllabi, but few, if any, mandates have been made on teacher education programs to indicate sincere effort toward prioritizing the transformational cultural awareness of teacher education candidates. The results of this study indicate that there are multiple paths that could potentially lead to the development of teacher education programs that prepare highly capable teachers who are prepared to embrace the diversity in U.S. schools.

First, we must cease the shallow approach to multi-cultural teacher education that allows teacher education faculty to facilitate courses on a topic they have little or no passion toward. An example provided by teacher educator, Ukpokody (2011) is unfortunately not uncommon. Ukpokody introduced an initial “sage on the stage” approach toward teaching a course that is intended to foster positive disposition toward diversity even though his passion for cultural diversity “did not intersect with [his] cultural competence to lead transformative, social justice and culturally responsive pedagogy” (p. 450). Although Ukpokody developed this passion, the change occurred over time and as a result of a variety of lived experiences with diversity; as he noted, “the litmus test of one’s cultural competence occurs when a person interacts with other people with different worldviews” (p. 450).

The words of Malcolm X ring true today: “We can’t lead where we won’t go” (as cited in Ukpokodu, 2011, p. 450). Just as it would be absurd to imagine a person with no experience or expertise in the sciences to teach a college level course in this discipline, it is preposterous to think that teacher educators with limited experiences outside of their own

culturally encapsulated world views and no passion for cultural relevant teaching could possibly instill such values or passion in their pupils. Culturally relevant teaching is as crucial to education as the academic skills and it is imperative that teacher educators have the experiences and passion for both, in order to pass this passion on to their learners.

As the results of this study have emerged, there is evidence to suggest that an extended lived-experience abroad, where one is immersed in a foreign culture, has a transformational impact on one's personal and professional cultural competencies. Whereas this study focused specifically on pre-service teachers, it is likely that the same impact would be had on teacher educators with similar lived experiences. Just as university students have a variety of opportunities to study abroad, so too should teachers and teacher education faculty. These opportunities should not only be made available, but strongly encouraged by administrators with the understanding that the proactive approach to building these strengths in the teacher education faculty will be passed onto the students in the courses they teach, and ultimately the students in k-12 education.

Culturally relevant teaching cannot be taught in isolation as a separate course, or even as a unit within a course. Culturally competent teachers weave examples from various cultures throughout their narratives and lessons while also thinking critically within a variety of cultural contexts on a local, national and global scope. These examples come from life experiences and may initially take the shape of a simple story. However, eventually these stories transform into a set of values and beliefs which allows teachers and teacher educators alike to effectively reach their students and bridge connections from life experiences to academic learning. Cultural competencies among university faculty, as well as classroom

teachers, are central to connecting with students, building relationships and fostering equal opportunities for all learners.

With the focus of this study primarily on non-Western cultures, it is important to note the particular dynamics and challenges that exist and may be more prevalent than in Western cultures. Just as there has been resistance toward multi-cultural education, resistance toward non-Western student teaching is to be anticipated as well. As stated by McLaren (2003), some scholars “believe that schools serve the interests of the wealthy and powerful while simultaneously disconfirming the values and abilities of those students who are most disempowered in our society already”(p. 189). McLaren asserted that critical pedagogists, however, attempt “to provide teachers and researchers with a better means of understanding the role that schools actually play within a race-, class-, and gender-divided society” (p. 189). Opportunities to student teaching in non-Western cultures is a means for pre-service teachers to gain respect and understanding through increased exposure to diversity, rather than avoiding differences and socially reproducing existing barriers.

Language barriers, comparable educational environments, and safety are among some aspects that must be considered when implementing student teaching placements in non-Western cultures. Language barriers can seemingly create great obstacles for university personnel attempting to communicate with schools in non-Western cultures. As stated initially in this study, American International schools exist in almost every nation around the globe. English is typically the language of instruction in these schools. Teachers and administrators are upheld to the same level of English proficiency as in any U.S. school, diminishing the often misconceived communication gap between university personnel in the U.S. and school administrators or potential cooperating teachers in non-Western cultures.

The schools are held to the rigorous international and U.S. standards as mandated by the entities that accredit them. Most American International schools are accredited by the same accrediting bodies as school in the U.S., but are additionally held accountable for international and host country standards as well. It is not uncommon for graduates of American International schools to earn one, two, or three diplomas at the time of graduation. Whereas a U.S. diploma is standard, it is also possible the graduate will also earn an International Baccalaureate degree and a diploma from the host national curriculum as well.

The students who attend American International schools typically come from privileged families and are from diverse family backgrounds. As described by each of the participants in this study, it was common for the student body to be comprised of host country nationals and other expatriate families living overseas for diplomatic or international business related purposes. Although the social capital of these students does not emulate the challenges commonly found among lower socio-economic diverse population in U.S. schools, the students in American Internationals schools do bring their own unique set of challenges. These challenges include unique cultural values and tradition, limited English skills, parents who may be routinely away for business, or in some cases, living elsewhere while the student lives on the school campus, and a host of other challenges. In some cases the students may be living in a dichotomy of two cultures, where their school day operates predominantly on U.S. norms but their home life is rooted in non-Western traditions. While this may seem easily dismissible, this dichotomy impacts such issues as arrival and ending times of school which may differ greatly from the student's neighbors or other family members. It may be typical for children in some cultures to stay awake until the early morning hours, as it is traditional for their family to sleep late into the day. School meal

times and quantities of food at particular times of the day is often based on Western traditions, offering smaller portions at breakfast and lunch, while expecting the students will have a large dinner in the evening. However, often times the families of these students live in accordance to their own culture, with a large lunch and smaller dinner. Additionally, students in American International Schools often experience a school day in English, yet an evening in another language.

Although the students at American International Schools typically do enjoy great social capital outside of school, the conglomeration of these unique characteristics are part of the culture of the school and the student body that the teachers and student teachers take into account when building relationships and constructing academic learning. As evidenced in this study, the value gained through a student teaching experience in a non-Western culture is not diminished because of the privilege the student's experience. The daily interactions that the student teachers experienced with multiple nationalities inside the school day, and the rich cultural experiences while living in the host culture outside of the school, provided interactions with a variety of cultures and increased not only the ability to empathize with one culture, but a host of cultures, while recognizing that each is similar and unique in their own ways.

University policies on travel must be evaluated and assessed prior to any international student travel. As with any extended travel experience associated with a university, it is important to consider safety precautions. Student should not be allowed to travel to any country listed on the U.S. State Department warning list and university personnel must keep an updated watch on this list as it routinely changes in accordance with world events. It is crucial to maintain a database with records for each student traveling. The database should

include the student's legal name, contact information for people in the international location and full email, phone, and physical address of destination, including the school and home where the student will be working and living. Other important information includes the travels dates, flight itineraries, copies of passports, liability insurance and health insurance. Students must provide evidence of both forms of insurance, including policy statements of individualized letters from the companies stating that the coverage extends outside of the U.S. All information regarding student travel should be housed in a central location, such as the Study Abroad office or the likely other location. If disaster strikes, parents, students and faculty should be able to determine within one phone call if any university students are in a treacherous situation or in need of assistance. Prior to student departures, individual meetings should be conducted with the university personnel overseeing the placement, provide ample time for questions and all documents to be recorded. Safety must be of primary concern when considering placing student teachers in international locations, but when proper policies and procedures are followed, international student teaching placements in Western or non-Western locations can be life changing experiences.

It should be noted that universities can do more to encourage students to obtain international experiences during their college years. Opportunities for study abroad, capstone projects, international internships and summer employment make up only a few of the possible avenues that university students can take advantage of, however, few do. Cushner (2011) explained that "although 81% of first year students say they plan or wish to study abroad, at best, only 5% of first-year students ultimately do study abroad, and few of the students who study abroad are preparing to be teachers" (609). Several factors come into play as the first year students create course schedules, but if advisors and faculty value

international studies, they will increasingly support the students desire to participate in such programs. Oftentimes, students are reluctant to take an extended period of time away from campus for fear that they will fall behind in their studies or extend the timeline it requires to graduate. International student teaching is one way that pre-service teachers can combine required course work with an opportunity to experience another culture while also building their capacity to relate to future students. Financial restrictions may also deter students from taking part in international programs, however, non-Western cultures tend to be significantly less expensive than Western cultures, and in several cases student teachers have spent less money while student teaching abroad, than their peers who student taught in their home state.

Finally, this study has implications for hiring practices of the administrators in U.S. schools. There is not significant research available to indicate if hiring administrators consider the potential benefits of an international student teaching experience. A study conducted by Gilson and Martin (2010) examined the perspectives of Iowa administrators toward teaching candidates who student taught abroad. Although more than 90% of the respondents believed that pre-service teachers with student teaching experience abroad would have an expanded world view and be more tolerant and understanding of educational differences or other barriers to education, there is no evidence to suggest that administrators look closely at these characteristics when choosing their final candidates for teaching positions. Gilson and Martin further explained the administrator's perspective by stating, "Unless respondents have experience with teachers who gained their experience abroad, it is difficult for even the most tenured administrator to quantify the degree to which those experiences might make applicants more qualified candidates" (p. 10). The results of this study could serve to inform hiring administrators of the cultural competencies gained through

an international student teaching experience and potentially influence the hiring practices of administrators.

Recommendations for Future Research

The results of this study have opened the opportunity to explore other similar studies regarding international student teaching. Whereas this study focused primarily on student teaching experiences in non-Western cultures, and included five participants from the same mid-west university, there are additional variables that could also be considered when researching this topic.

This study was the first to focus specifically on the experiences of student teachers only in non-Western cultures. Far more universities offer student teaching in Western cultures than they do in non-Western cultures, and therefore relevant research on those experiences is not difficult to obtain. It would be valuable to conduct a comparative study, building upon this study, to include five student teachers who completed student teaching in a Western culture and compare the experiences. Since most student teaching experiences in Western cultures occur in host country schools, rather than schools with U.S. curriculums, the influences on the first year of teaching could produce interesting insights. Whereas host country schools provide a thorough and elaborate understanding of one culture and curriculum, there may be differences in how the depth of one culture influences first year teachers.

This study encompassed student teachers from the same mid-west university and access to student teachers in non-Western cultures was limited to the participants from this particular university. The results of this study could be used as a basis for a survey

instrument to form a qualitative study with a larger pool of participants. A more comprehensive study may be extended to include various universities and include different student teaching locations with participants who go on to teach in a wider range of school settings for their first year of teaching. This larger research pool could also glean insights regarding the percentage of international student teachers who return to the U.S. to teacher as opposed to those who choose to begin their careers abroad. This study demonstrated that two out of five participants chose to remain abroad, while the other three returned to the U.S. A larger participant pool could provide further information on the career paths of the participants.

Finally, a case study dedicated to researching one student teacher in a non-Western culture could provide details not included in this study. While this study looked only at the first day reflections and the final reflections of the student teaching experience, a comprehensive look at the student teaching experience would garner further details of the challenges and celebrations as the participants experience the dips and valleys of the non-Western culture. This study focused on the initial and concluding thoughts of the experience of living in a non-Western culture, which were overwhelming positive. However it cannot be assumed that the participants did not experience struggles along the way. Additionally, a case study could more closely examine the details and implementation of the daily impact in the first year of teaching.

Personal Reflexivity and Transformation

At the onset of this study I shared the initial steps in my personal journey toward gaining cultural sensitivity. My personal and professional life has been transformed through

lived experiences abroad. Just as the participant's experiences abroad continued to influence their lives beyond the completion of their student teaching experiences, so too have my experiences abroad extended into my life today and continue to shape me. Although I bracketed my own experiences throughout this study and kept the data true to the participants own words, I could not help but hear my own voice repeatedly in their thoughts, words and actions.

As a supervisor of more than 20 student teachers in Western and non-Western cultures, each semester I have the fortune of reading their reflections, similar to those used in this study. In reading these reflections, I recognize that the experiences the student teachers are living out and the lessons that they are learning, are predictable in many ways, however, it is the details of their stories that add richness to those lessons. Although I could tell them my stories, it is not until they are personally engage in their own lived experiences that those lessons become meaningful and begin to transform their lives, as it did mine. My desire to specifically focus on non-Western cultures stemmed from several professional conversations where I often sensed that the experiences in American International schools were discounted by the sheer nature of being a familiar curriculum, regardless of the diversity that existed within the school or outside its campus. In reflecting upon my own experiences, I questioned this thinking, recalling countless scenarios from my own experiences in Japan, Egypt and Brazil in which I remembered feeling as much, if not more, inundated with cultural, religious, economic and language diversity than what some of my student teachers in Western cultures wrote of in their reflections. Such was the impetus for my interest in exploring the impact of international student teaching in non-Western cultures.

When I unbracketed my own experiences, and I listened to the stories of the participants in this study, I was immediately lost in memories of Cairo, where I student taught in a culture more unfamiliar to me than I had ever imagined. I recalled my arrival and the overwhelming sound of the Arabic language, with shouts and guttural sounds resembling aggression in my own language, yet resulting in hugs in the unfamiliar land; I recalled two days of answering my telephone every time the doorbell rang, as the sound of the doorbell resembled what I knew to be a telephone; the constant, never ending clamor and commotion of the city, giving new definition to the term *noise pollution*; waking to prayer call at the crack of dawn each day of my three years there; and the drummer boy who proudly pounded on my door during in the middle of the night during Ramadan, reminding me to wake up as to not miss my chance to eat before the sun was up, and expecting *baksheesh* for his good work. I recalled choosing my meat by pointing to my desired portion of the skinned cow that hung by its tail outside of the butcher; I recalled needing to rely on my husband to be firm in bartering, when I couldn't be taken seriously as a woman; searching for anything that resembled a Christmas tree in December and trying to explain at the produce market that a gourd just wasn't the same as a pumpkin in October, and the donkey carts on the streets, side-by-side with the Mercedes and BMWs.

I recalled the *bowab* and his family of five living on my doorstep who were granted the rights to live there in exchange for opening doors, carrying groceries and watering the plants. And the embarrassing moment when I learned one of my most valuable lessons ever from that man; *Different is not wrong*, as he rejected my gift of an empty hair spray bottle to mist the plants before polishing the leaves. Assuming he didn't know how to use it, I demonstrated the proper spraying techniques, rather than accepting his practice of blowing

water from his mouth, through pursed lips. As I attempted to enforce upon him my Western customs and privileges granted to me as an American, I neglected to recognize that his home, my doorstep, provided no place to store such an item, and thus his mouth served the same purpose, and was far more convenient.

I recalled the Egyptian aide in the school who outwardly critiqued me, and the pride I took in cleaning my own apartment rather than hiring a cleaning lady. My culture had taught me to scoff at people who hired out work that they could do themselves; yet, in that moment, I was being judged for not providing work for someone in need. *“You American’s are so greedy with your riches”*, she exclaimed in the teacher’s lounge. *Different is not wrong*.

These encounters outside of the school taught me more than any textbook or teacher education course could possibly attempt to emulate. Through these experiences, interacting daily within a diverse culture, I learned that culture is everything. Culture is not only the language we speak, the food we eat, or the holidays we celebrate as it is often reduced to in U.S. schools. Culture is everything we say and do. It is how we interact; it is the tone of voice we use, the words we choose, the way we structure our days, the items we surround ourselves with and the space we feel comfortable within. It is all encompassing. Our culture defines us and cannot be dismissed in classroom settings.

In this study, the emphasis on first year teachers grew out of the question I am repeatedly asked; *“Will student teaching abroad make me a better teacher?”* While I have been inclined to affirm that it does, I was challenged to find literature to support such evidence, especially when the student teaching experience was situated in a non-Western culture. Throughout this study, I listened to the participant’s stories, knowing that their experiences outside of their home culture had transformed them personally and I found

myself eager to discern the ways in which that transformation would manifest into classroom practices as they began their careers.

Throughout this qualitative study, the stories of the participants are not intended to be generalized across larger groups of students. However, the details of their experiences are rich with evidence of personal and professional growth, and when looked at individually, illuminate the possibilities as teacher educators, teachers and student teachers continue this journey of becoming culturally sensitive, while providing culturally relevant teaching to best meet the needs of all students.

APPENDIX A. PARTICIPANT COMMUNICATION**Email Letter**

Hello!

I hope you are well and excited about the start of your teaching career! You have so much to look forward to!

I am writing now with a request that hope you will give it some consideration. As you may know, I am pursuing my Ph.D at Iowa State University and I am about to begin my dissertation research. I am looking for participants to be part of my study. As a former international student teacher, and currently as a first year teacher, you have experiences that fit perfectly with my proposed research.

I will preface this by saying that I don't have money to offer or gifts to bear. Your participation would truly be out of the kindness of your heart, your desire to be self-reflective in your first year of teaching, and your interest in letting your experiences influence current literature, research, practices and policy for the future of international student teaching.

I have attached here an informed consent document that outlines the details of my research. The purpose of this study is to explore how first year teachers describe student teaching abroad and the value that those experiences bring to their classrooms. The focus is on capturing the essence of the experiences abroad as perceived and described by participants and how those experiences have influenced both the tacit and explicit practices in their first year of teaching.

The informed consent document gives many details but mostly I want you to be aware that if you choose to participate in this, I don't want you to feel the need to be overly "scholarly" in your wording. I would like to hear you "think out loud" on such topics as how and why you choose your lessons, what considerations you might be making as you create units, lessons, curriculum or what influence your student teaching might have had on the decisions you are making.

I hope that you will give this your consideration and know that I certain value the level of contribution that you could provide. I am hopeful that you are interested in participating, but certainly understand if you do not. Please reply to this email to let me know your thoughts, your questions, concerns.... anything.

Thank you for your consideration and best wishes as you begin your first year of teaching!

Sincerely,
Leigh Martin

Follow-up email letter

Hello!

I hope you are well and excited about the start of your teaching career! I understand that as a first year teacher you are very busy! However, I hope that you are able to take the time to read the attached items that I recently sent you in an email.

I am writing now with a request that hope you will give it some consideration. As you may know, I am pursuing my Ph.D at Iowa State University and I am about to begin my dissertation research. I am looking for participants to be part of my study. As a former international student teacher, and currently as a first year teacher, you have experiences that fit perfectly with my proposed research.

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Thank you for your consideration and best wishes as you begin your first year of teaching!

Sincerely,
Leigh Martin

PARTICIPANT SIGNATURE

Your signature indicates that you voluntarily agree to participate in this study, that the study has been explained to you, that you have been given the time to read the document, and that your questions have been satisfactorily answered. You will receive a copy of the written informed consent prior to your participation in the study.

Participant's Name (printed) _____

(Participant's Signature)

(Date)

Investigator Statement

I certify that the participant has been given adequate time to read and learn about the study and all of their questions have been answered. It is my opinion that the participant understands the purpose, risks, benefits, and the procedures that will be followed in this study and has voluntarily agreed to participate.

Leigh Martin, Investigator

(Date)

APPENDIX B. DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS, STUDENT TEACHING REFLECTIONS, INTERVIEW FORMS, AND RECORDKEEPING

Demographic Questions

International Student Teaching in Non-Western Cultures; the Impact on First Year Teachers

Demographic questions:

1. What is your gender?
 1. Male
 2. Female

2. What is your ethnicity?
 1. White/Caucasian
 2. African American
 3. Asian
 4. American Indian
 5. Hispanic
 6. Other

3. Is English your native language?
 1. Yes
 2. No

4. Where did you spend a majority of your childhood years? (city, state, country)

5. What was your age during your student teaching semester? _____

6. What was your major(s) in college?
 1. Early Childhood Education
 2. Elementary Education
 3. Middle Level elementary
 4. Secondary Education
 5. Special Education
 6. Special area education (music, PS, art, industrial technology)
 7. Speech and Language pathology

7. What was your cumulative GPA from college? _____

8. Had you ever traveled abroad prior to your student teaching experience?

1. No
2. Yes

-If yes, where did you travel and what was the purpose of that travel?

9. Where did you student teach? (school, city, country)

10. What kind of school did you student teach in?

1. American International School
2. Host Country School
3. Department of Defense School

11. Where are you currently teaching? (school, city, country)

12. What grade/ subject area are you currently teaching in?

Day 1, Student Teaching Reflection Format

Name:

Home University: UNI Other (If other, name of University)

Placement Location (City/State/Country):

School:

Grade Level/Subject Area:

Reflection:

Day 1 Week 2 Week 4 Week 6 Week 8

First Placement Second Placement

Iowa Teaching Standard

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Choose one of the 8 Iowa Teaching Standards to reflect upon. Reflections can focus on either the school environment or the cultural environment that you are living in.

Describe a particular aspect of your current environment

Reflect upon the situation and its relevance to one of the Iowa Teaching Standards.

Plan for the future. How will you use this experience to impact your immediate student teaching, and eventually your own classroom, or your personal ambitions?

Reflections should be 2 pages, double spaced.

Final Student Teaching Reflection

Please complete this reflection upon completion of your final student teaching placement in either an out-of-state or international setting.

Name:

Home University: UNI Other (If other, name of University)

Placement Location (City/State/Country):

School:

Grade Level/Subject Area:

Please address the following questions in your final reflection:

1. Describe how this experience has influenced your teaching, or mindset as a teacher, or in general.
2. What unique teaching skills have you gained by choosing to student teach in an out-of-state or international setting? How are these skills unique to your experience out-of-state or overseas?
3. Describe any personal influences from this experience. Have you grown as an individual in your thinking or perceptions of the world /nation? If so, how?
4. How will these personal influences impact your teaching style, and ultimately the students in your classroom?

Interview #1

Guiding Questions:

Talk briefly about your own K-12 schooling. Where was it? What cultural differences existed in the schools you attended?

What interactions did you have with classmates (in either HS or college) who were culturally diverse?

How did you decide to student teaching in _____?

Were any of your beliefs about the world and its people challenged during your student teaching?

Can you remember any specific incidences where you had to re-think your own perceptions on a situation?

What do you think you have learned about yourself as a result of student teaching overseas?

In what ways are you different from your peers who did not student teach overseas?

Is there anything else you'd like to share with me about your experience student teaching overseas?

Interview #2

Guiding Questions:

Describe the school you are working in, the students, teachers and environment.

What aspects of your international student teaching influence you today?

Can you describe some underlying philosophies or assumptions that you base your lesson planning or teaching on?

How do these philosophies translate into classroom interactions or activities?

Recordkeeping

Documentation of Critical Dates

Transcripts from interviews sent to participants

Participants	Interview 1 Sent	Interview 1 Approved	Interview 2 Sent	Interview 2 Approved
Alissa	12/27/2011	01/05/2012	02/05/2012	02/06/2012
Amanda	12/19/2011	12/19/2011	3/21/2012	3/21/2012
Darci	12/27/2011	3/21/2012	3/21/2012	3/21/2012
Jacey	12/27/2011	3/21/2012	12/27/2011	3/21/2012
Janelle	12/19/2011	01/22/2012	3/21/2012	3/21/2012

Peer Review

9/12/2011: Chapter 1-3, Peer reviewed by Dr. Nicholas Pace, University of Northern Iowa

1/14/2012: Chapter 4, Peer Review by Dr. Timothy Gilson, University of Northern Iowa

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