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Erika Feinauer
Brigham Young University

Erin Feinauer Whiting
Brigham Young University

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Student Articulations of Critical Multicultural Education Concepts from One Study Abroad Experience in New Zealand

Erika Feinauer
Erin Feinauer Whiting
Brigham Young University, USA

Abstract: This study examines how six teacher candidates in one U.S. based teacher preparation program articulate understandings of critical multicultural education concepts after a field experience in a study abroad program in New Zealand. Teacher candidates were interviewed about their understandings of culture, privilege, and social inequality. Field placements were in high poverty elementary schools with high numbers of linguistic and ethnic minority students. Teacher candidate responses revealed development of cultural appreciation but a lack of engagement with issues related to privilege and social inequality. Teacher candidates further had difficulty articulating issues of power and systemic privilege enacted either in the New Zealand context, or in their home cultural context in the United States. This study calls for more explicit support for teacher candidates as they grapple with recognizing and practicing a Culturally Relevant Pedagogy in order to realize the potential of diverse study abroad field experiences for teacher preparation.

Introduction

As teacher educators, we are interested in understanding how to best prepare our teacher candidates for working with culturally and linguistically diverse students in school settings across the United States. Most teacher candidates are White/European American, middle class women, many who have not had substantial experiences with diverse students or with English language learners (Lowenstein, 2009; Hertzog, 2011; Howard, 2006; Gillespie et al., 2002). However, given the increasing ethnic, racial and linguistic diversity of students in U.S. classrooms, teacher preparation programs must attend to preparing teacher candidates for work with culturally diverse students in explicit and deliberate ways.

University level teacher preparation programs include at least one required class on teaching students from diverse backgrounds. Courses often emphasize the development of self-reflection through which teacher candidates examine their attitudes and beliefs about race, culture, and class differences (Banks, 1996; Gay, 2000; Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Gorski, 2009; 2010; Sleeter & Grant, 1987; 2006). The end goal of this type of class is to prepare teachers to enter increasingly diverse U.S. public schools to work as allies by way of taking up underlying issues of power, privilege and cultural identity (Dolby, 2000; Gorski, 2010; Hill-Jackson, 2007; Wilbur & Scott, 2013). Teacher candidates also typically participate in one or two practicum experiences during their teacher preparation program. These practicum experiences may become

transformational learning experiences preparing teacher candidates in experiential ways and linking program coursework to their future work in the increasingly diverse U.S. public school system.

Many scholars have touted the benefits of international field experiences as a way to provide the type of authentic experience needed to build multicultural competencies (Alfaro & Quezada, 2010; Colón-Muniz et al., 2010; Mahon, 2010; Merryfield, 1995; Wilson, 1983; 1993). For example, Anderson and associates (2006) found that short-term, non-language study abroad programs have a positive impact on intercultural sensitivity and that programs that put students in face-to-face settings with people from different cultures are most likely to produce positive learning experiences (Anderson et al., 2006; Deardorff, 2011).

The current study looked at how six teacher candidates in one U.S. based teacher preparation program experienced a field placement during a semester long study abroad. Students were interviewed about their experiences, which took place in high poverty schools with high numbers of linguistic and ethnic minority students in west Auckland, New Zealand. Specifically, this study examined how teacher candidates articulated their understandings of cultural difference, privilege and social inequality, as well as if (and how) they recognized aspects of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995; 2014) during their field placement. Overall, attention was paid to whether students felt that this study abroad field experience in New Zealand prepared them for future teaching experiences with culturally and linguistically minoritized students in the United States.

Teacher Preparation

Critical multicultural education courses are opportunities to engage teacher candidates in critical reflections of their own assumptions and experiences (Gay, 2010; Gorski, 2010; Sandel, 2007; Sockett, 2008), and help unpack social inequities and privileges (Whiting & Cutri, 2015; 2019). Inherent in attending to this inequality is engaging students in critical reflections of their own assumptions, their cultural identity, and their complicity in a system of inequitable social privileges. In other words, “Pre-service teachers, primarily White and middle class, are mandated to take multicultural courses and grapple with recognizing their own cultural beings and the cultural realities of others” (Hill-Jackson, 2007, p. 29).

The increasing demographic diversity of schools in the U.S., and the gap between the demographic backgrounds of teachers and students makes this even more important. The preparation of preservice teachers is one avenue through which efforts have attempted to respond to K-12 student diversity. Teacher preparation programs strive to help teacher candidates appreciate the community contexts within which they work, to design high-quality and culturally responsive instruction, and learn from students and their families. However, integrating multicultural learning throughout programs remains challenging (Jensen et al., 2018).

Being in schools for field experiences presents opportunities for teacher candidates to see issues of power and inequity in concrete and practical ways and engage with these realities in the classroom and school. Artiles (2011) warns that models of social justice should not only be seen as philosophical constructs, but that justice theories and remedies need to be grounded in “an engagement with the material conditions of inequity” (p. 433). This study investigates to what extent one study abroad program in New Zealand facilitated engagement with the realities of

culture, privilege, and social inequity for six teacher candidates through a 6-week practicum field experience in a highly diverse and high poverty school setting.

Study Abroad

Scholars assert that there are many ways that study abroad programs may promote cross-cultural awareness and sensitivity, including expanding participants' global and international perspectives, promoting an appreciation of other cultures and providing new perspectives on American cultural values (Byker & Marquardt, 2016; Deardorff, 2006; 2011; Hadis, 2005; Hansen, 2002). Field study experiences where students are immersed in specific school settings can be powerful ways to link critical multicultural educational learning to practical and personal experiences as well. Research suggests that this learning can be effective in both direct and indirect approaches (Harris et al., 2019). Additionally, although growth in intercultural competence and critical thinking can be seen among all students, it can vary among students depending on their cultural positionalities as monocultural or multicultural (Nguyen et al., 2018).

Specifically, research shows increase in emotional resilience, flexibility and openness, perceptual acuity, and personal autonomy (Kitsantas, 2002), growth in cross-cultural tolerance, self-confidence and empathy (Black & Duhon, 2006), self-efficacy and cultural intelligence (Nguyen et al., 2018), increases in maturity, compassion, understanding of other cultures, and appreciation for home culture (van Hoof & Verbeeten, 2005). Finally, research shows that participants may subsequently seek out a more diverse group of peers and friends and be more comfortable interacting with people from different cultural groups (Anderson, et al., 2006). Scholars argue that programs that put students in face-to-face settings with people from different cultures are likely to teach participants about themselves and provide realistic intercultural experiences (Akande & Slawson; 2000; Anderson et al. 2006; Deardorff, 2011; Kitsantas, 2004; Mahon, 2010; Zamastril-Vondrova, 2005).

Accordingly, studies have specifically considered the benefits of study abroad programs on the preparation of teachers (Alfaro & Quezada, 2010; Colón-Muniz et al., 2010; Mahon, 2010; Wilson, 1983; 1993). For example, Merryfield (1995) reported that teachers who had previous cross-cultural international experience were able to teach multiple perspectives about topics, and promote "consciousness awareness" (p. 23) in their students. Further, they became more sensitive and appreciative of individual differences and needs among their students. Additionally, Marx and Moss (2011) found that an immersive study abroad experience can be transformative for preservice teachers if structured to assist them in reflecting on and working through the cultural differences that emerge to develop a critical consciousness.

Alfaro and Quezada (2010) reported that teachers who spent eight weeks teaching in Mexico became more linguistically and culturally responsive to teach in ethnically diverse school communities. They noted that, through their participation in the program, they became more open to the power of language and culture in their classrooms, and gained the ability to reflect "critically on their own beliefs, attitudes, and practices" (p. 53). These studies highlight the role of study abroad programs in preparing teachers to be interculturally competent and globally aware in their own classrooms. As Benavides and Midobuche (2004) note, "How is it possible to truly become a culturally responsive teacher...when we spend so little time in contact with and experiencing what makes other people different from ourselves" (p. 51). This is a crucial issue for teacher preparation programs across the United States, given the increasing need

of teachers prepared to teach the growing numbers of ethnic, racial and language minoritized students (Colón-Muniz et al., 2010; van Hook, 2000).

Method

This qualitative study looked at teacher candidate articulations about culture, privilege, and social inequality at the end of their study abroad program in New Zealand, which included a six-week field experience in Auckland schools. This study also focused on how students reported recognizing Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995) during their field placements and how prepared they felt by their New Zealand experiences to teach culturally and linguistically minoritized students in the United States. This section describes the study participants, the context of the study, our data collection and analysis.

Participant Sample

Participants in this study were six pre-service teacher candidates in one elementary education teacher preparation program at a large private university in the intermountain west. Teacher candidates were invited to participate in this study during their time in New Zealand by the first author of the study, who was the director of the study abroad program. Six out of the nine study abroad participants chose to participate in the current study. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym for research and reporting purposes.

Research participants shared similar background characteristics. They were all White, middle class women, between the ages of 20-24 who shared a conservative religious practice, majoring in elementary education at a large private religious university in the intermountain west. All participants were in the third year of the elementary education program – a requirement for participating in the New Zealand study abroad program – and had completed a required Critical Multicultural Education (CMCE) course and one school-based 4-week long field experience in a United States classroom. Teacher candidates also completed a short culture class about New Zealand in preparation for the study abroad. The second required field experience for their elementary education program was completed by the students as part of the study abroad experience, as described below.

Structure of the Study Abroad Program

Upon arriving in New Zealand, teacher candidates spent several weeks in content and methods courses taught by Auckland University professors. These courses included methods courses for literacy, science, social studies, and maths, as well as focused units on learning about and working with Pasifika (Pacific Islander immigrants, such as people from Samoa and Tonga) and Native New Zealand Maori students in the New Zealand public school system. They were then placed in one of two schools located in west Auckland, a neighborhood with high poverty and high levels of ethnic diversity. The schools ranged from decile^{1**} level 2 – 3 and had high percentages of ethnic minority students (84% and 90% respectively), consisting mostly of

^{1**}Decile levels range from 1 -10, with 1 being the lowest income and 10 being the highest income.

Pasifika and Native Maori students. Many of these students also spoke English as their second or third languages. Each teacher candidate was placed in one of six different elementary school classrooms within the two schools for a six-week practicum experience. Two students were in 1st grade classrooms, 2 students were in split 3rd and 4th grade classrooms, one student was in a split 5th and 6th grade classroom, and one student was placed in a 6th grade classroom. Teacher candidates were engaged in various capacities in their classrooms, including observing, planning and teaching lessons, assisting their mentor teacher in all aspects of the classroom, and interfacing with parents and administrators.

Each teacher candidate also lived with a local New Zealand family, in proximity to their placement school. During weekends, and during one 2-week period, students were able to travel around New Zealand, visiting historical sites and tourist destinations. As program director, the first author was in New Zealand and worked closely with these six teacher candidates for a total of thirteen weeks. She observed and supervised the students in their classrooms, as well as facilitated the coursework and homestay experiences for each teacher candidate.

The Critical Multicultural Education Course (CMCE)

In the teacher education preparation program from which all teacher candidates were recruited for the study abroad program, all teacher candidates are required to take a Critical Multicultural Education (CMCE) course before any field experiences. Thus, each of the teacher candidates took this course before going to New Zealand, which functioned as their second required field experience in the elementary education program. The second author of this study is a member of the multicultural education faculty, and helped to develop and teach this multicultural education course.

An explicit goal of the CMCE is to help students recognize institutional inequity in addition to discrimination at the interpersonal level. The coursework promotes dispositions in teacher candidates that challenge a deficit orientation toward future culturally diverse students and parents. The course provides opportunities for teacher candidates to reflect about how categories of difference in our society (race, ethnicity, gender expectations, sexuality, social class and poverty) are socially constructed and perpetuated. These socially constructed categories are recognized as contributing to systematic and institutionalized inequitable treatment of people who are not from the dominant culture in the United States (DiAngelo & Sensoy, 2010; Gay 2010; Gorski, 2009; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017). The myth of meritocracy is challenged and deconstructed as a notion held in esteem by a culture of power in society (Gorski, 2009; May & Sleeter, 2010).

In the CMCE course teacher candidates learn about Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP), which positions students as active subjects of the teaching practice (Ladson-Billings, 1995; 2014). This approach foregrounds cultural knowledge, identity, and positioning as the underlying medium for learning. Additionally, CRP calls for students to develop critical perspectives that challenge societal inequalities as part of understanding cultural experiences. Critical multicultural education draws on such approaches to emphasize the importance of thinking about cultural differences in the contexts of power, privilege, and opportunity (see Appendix A for specific course outcomes).

Interviews

The first author conducted all the interviews with the teacher candidates as part of an exit interview for the study abroad program. Individual semi-structured interviews ranged between thirty minutes to one hour. Teacher candidates were asked about ways in which their core beliefs about learners and about themselves changed through the field study experience. They were asked about how their CMCE course prepared them for their field experience and were provided a hard copy of the course outcomes (see Appendix A) to review as they reflected on and answered questions. They were also asked what they came to understand or know about teaching culturally and linguistically minoritized students that they may not have been aware of before and how prepared they now felt to teach these students in the United States. The same ten open-ended interview questions (see Appendix B) were used by the researcher to guide the discussion for all participants.

Participants were asked the same interview questions in the same order, but the conversation was allowed to go wherever the teacher candidate led it in order to allow the teacher candidate to fully answer every question to the extent that she felt comfortable. Each interview was audio recorded and transcribed in its entirety. Teacher candidates were allowed to review the transcript of their interview and clarify or adjust any of their responses.

Analysis

Transcriptions of student interviews were analyzed iteratively, allowing for codes to emerge related to how students talked about cultural difference, privilege and social inequality (Berg, 2001; Creswell, 2009). Specific research questions are:

1. How do teacher candidates articulate their understandings of cultural difference, privilege, and social inequality at the end of their study abroad experience in New Zealand?
 - a. (How) do teacher candidates recognize Culturally Responsive Pedagogy in their New Zealand field experience classroom experiences?
 - b. In what ways, if any do teacher candidates feel more prepared to enact a culturally responsive practice in their future U.S. based classrooms, because of their field experiences in New Zealand?

Iterative passes through the data allowed us to explore the ways that these students were making sense of their experiences. To begin, interview transcripts were read in their entirety identifying first level “eclectic” codes (Saldaña, 2013), especially as it related to their understandings of culture, privilege, and inequity. With these initial codes in mind, we read them again adding detail and making connections between response types in an open inductive approach in second level coding (Berg, 2001; Creswell, 2009). These second cycle codes were then discussed and used to create an interim research text where we brought representative quotes from the interviews into conversation with each other to explore patterns more fully. A third cycle of coding then organized codes into categories that represented specific tensions where students were grappling with the concepts of cultural difference and social inequality (Saldaña, 2013). Excel was used to organize codes and to help identify themes across interviews throughout this entire iterative coding process. The seven emergent themes from our data are presented in the following sections, with illustrative examples from our teacher candidates.

Findings

The iterative analytic process described above produced seven general themes. Five distinct themes emerged related to how teacher candidates articulated their sense making about culture, and their various understandings and experiences with cultural difference in their field practicum in New Zealand classrooms and during their study abroad experience. These include *Celebration of Culture*, *Culture as Deficit*, *Recognizing Cultural Identities*, *Individual Differences Within Cultural Group*, and *Teacher Candidates as Cultural Outsiders*. Not surprisingly, given the questions in the interview protocol, two other major themes emerged in regard to recognizing and enacting CRP in their classrooms and feeling prepared to teach culturally and linguistically minoritized students in their future classrooms. These themes include *CRP Instructional Strategies*, and *Imagining Future Teaching*.

The major finding from the study was that teacher candidates focused on dimensions of culture almost exclusively and rarely spoke about privilege or institutional social inequality. Overall, our teacher candidates expressed being struck by the prevalence and importance of culture in their classroom. Linda summed this up by explaining that she “didn’t realize how much of an effect culture and family life has on the things you do in schools...all in all, it was learning about a culture and how it affects everything you do [in the classroom].” In fact, analyses revealed that social inequality was only referenced in the context of teacher candidates talking about the importance of culture and cultural difference. This finding is illustrated by the first 5 emergent themes identified (noted in the preceding paragraph) which were related to culture, while no themes emerged about privilege or social inequality.

Celebration of Culture

Most teacher candidates talked about cultural differences as something to be celebrated, and as an important and rewarding part of their study abroad experience in New Zealand. For example, in response to a question about what she found rewarding about working with minoritized students in her classroom, Cindy responded, by saying: “Rewarding? For sure getting to know about their culture. I thought that was so cool! That was one of my favorite things...to just chat with them [her students] about things from Samoa if they are Samoan, etc...” Similarly, Monica talked about her interest in other cultures, saying that she “always found culture to be fascinating,” and she “loved getting to know more about the cultures.” She also noted that it was her interaction with the students in her classroom that was the most beneficial, saying, “I feel like there was so much for me to learn from the kids about how to be a more culturally sensitive person and broaden my perspective on things.”

Teacher candidates referred to their exposure to different cultures in New Zealand as a positive learning experience. Culture appears to be a static concept, and something outside themselves that is relatively non-threatening, uni-dimensional and something that they can enjoy and celebrate. They talked about culture as an isolated artifact, or as being “quaint” (Nieto, 2002, p. 55). These teacher candidates demonstrate a superficial treatment of culture similar to the food, fun and fiesta approach, celebrating difference as benign (Banks, 2005; Akintunde, 2007).

Culture as Deficit

Despite widespread positive celebratory views toward culture, teacher candidates sometimes revealed deficit views as well. Some teacher candidate responses revealed underlying discriminatory assumptions about the cultural group memberships of their students. For example, Cindy talked about how the background of her students might hold them back, noting that,

its going to be harder to connect with them [her students] if they come from a different background.... maybe they haven't had the chance to go to museums with their family. So, there are just things that you can't connect to always if they haven't had that experience. (Cindy)

Linda similarly described aspects of one student's family background as being lacking or limiting in terms of contributing to his struggles with literacy outcomes. She interpreted his family situation as being deficit, rather than as a potential resource for him in her classroom, stating:

One little boy for example, at home he was one of the Pacifika students and was having a lot of hardships at home because he was moving around a lot and moving between family members. It was partially cultural because of the culture he came from because the whole family raises the child instead of the immediate family. Because of that, he was struggling with his reading and writing. (Linda)

Teacher candidates also made global attributions of deficit attributed to the cultural background of students, as they assessed and interpreted academic difficulties some of the students faced in the classroom. For example, Cindy described English language learning students in her class as students who “didn’t know how to critically think.” She noted that since most of her lessons were based on critical thinking, “we had to kind of go back to the basics and foundations and steps, which is important...to give them the strategies to be successful and things like that.” Similarly, Eliza talked about her perception that for her students, “literacy doesn’t seem to be such a big part of their culture.” Other teacher candidates similarly revealed their deficit thinking through a patronizing stance of acceptance or tolerance toward their students.

Thus, despite their training in the CMCE course, and their stated intentions of being culturally responsive, teacher candidates talked about their students and their students’ cultural backgrounds in ways that revealed a persistent deficit stance. These interview responses also pointed to a more superficial and unidimensional understanding of culture that is similar to the celebratory responses in the previous section. In these responses, culture continues to be viewed as something outside of the teacher candidate that resides in their students. Most of these responses revealed the specific deficit bias that their students can, or should overcome their culture in order to succeed at school. This common deficit stance frames minoritized students from a position of ‘benevolence’ on the part of the teacher candidates who are willing ‘accept’ these students despite their different cultural backgrounds (Troyna, 1988).

Recognizing Cultural Identities

Teacher candidates expressed varying insights about cultural identities, but showed an increased awareness of cultural identities in general. For example, Monica reported, “one thing that I thought was cool was all the cultural identities. There was one girl [from Pakistan]...and she’d take a second and explain where she was from and how she spoke a different language at home.” Similarly, Monica reported how she came to understand how a pan-ethnic heritage cultural identity was an important part of the Pasifika and Maori students’ cultural identities. She

noted that, “the Maori culture is really important to them, even though they come from other islands as well like Tonga, Samoa other things like that.” Finally, Eliza included herself with her students as she explained “cultural identity as who they are, this is who I am, this is how we come together.”

In these responses, teacher candidates are expressing a more nuanced appreciation for culture and cultural group membership; including a beginning appreciation of the different ways students might see themselves. They are also beginning to acknowledge cultural identity as being relevant for everyone, including themselves. However, teacher candidates did not seem to be making connections between issues of identity and power. For example, although while the cultural identity of her students was interesting to Monica, she didn’t seem to think critically about how students adopting a pan-ethnic identity might be related to issues of power in the New Zealand context.

Individual Differences within Cultural Group

Teacher candidates reported gaining an understanding of the importance of going beyond cultural group label or identification to get to know each student individually. Teacher candidates reflected on how this understanding impacted their classroom teaching. Cindy reflected that “even though they were part of similar cultures, that didn’t necessarily mean that I needed to interact with them in the same way.” Monica presented a similar idea when she said, “we had students who were from the same cultures, but had very different home lives and very different English proficiencies.” She continued to reflect on this notion, saying, “they’re still very different people and you need to not only recognize their cultures but also recognize their individuality within their cultures and the variation of those cultures.”

In this theme, we see teacher candidates coming to terms with the limitations of cultural labels and categories they have when working with their students. These teacher candidates grappled with understanding how different cultural experiences mattered for their students as part of the whole lived experience. However, the notion of cultural differences within their own culture group did not seem to inform interactions with their students, as the relevance of culture in their own lives remained relatively unexamined.

Teacher Candidates as Cultural Outsider

Teacher candidates expressed feeling inadequate or insecure because they were unfamiliar with the culture of the students or afraid of acting culturally inappropriate. For example, Eliza said, “I didn’t want to step on anyone’s feet, culturally. I didn’t want to say anything inappropriate or treat something inappropriately.” Likewise, Kimberly reported that it was “difficult, partly because I don’t have a knowledge of their culture as much.” And Monica similarly reported that her main difficulty was “with the New Zealand culture [because] I didn’t always know how to pronounce things or I would say something and they wouldn’t understand.” These various ways of feeling culturally unfamiliar or uncomfortable were expressed as presenting important pedagogical difficulties during their study abroad field experience.

Teacher candidates reported recognizing themselves as outsiders in this cultural context, and this was a new and difficult experience for them. Eliza expressed surprise at feeling like a

cultural outsider and that this experience in New Zealand was so difficult for her, based on her previous experiences in the U.S.

I feel like, in general, I understand the [Hispanic] culture very well and I kind of view myself as a little part of it. So this was a good opportunity to view that cultural identity in a sense of I don't understand this culture, I don't know where it's coming from...so I guess the most important thing is that I realized I don't know everything. I knew that...but I didn't know that. . . I think it's really good because I just got too comfortable with knowing the other culture.” (Eliza)

She further expressed appreciation for the times when she was able to feel more included and accepted, saying that her teacher was “very open and very accepting as to what you can bring as a foreigner, as an outsider, as an American to help our class improve to help my students to learn.”

Eliza's sentiment demonstrates a tendency by the teacher candidates to think of “cultures” as interchangeable when they are experiencing their own cultural position as an outsider. Teacher candidates' reflections reveal that they see themselves in relation to the “other,” within this foreign cultural context. However, culture is still treated as a category, by these participants, in which characteristics of difference are identified and cataloged in teacher candidate responses, rather than as a whole system and way of knowing and being in the world. It is clear that having experiences as outsiders to the prevailing culture is new for these teacher candidates, and a potentially powerful learning experience in their preparation to enter classrooms in the U.S. context. However, their understanding of cultural difference is limited and there is no attention to implications for equity or larger social positions in the world.

CRP Instructional Strategies

When asked, teacher candidates were able to speak clearly about the culturally relevant pedagogies and instructional practices they observed in their New Zealand classroom. They most commonly talked about what they observed their mentor teacher doing, and often this included differentiating instruction, using various grouping strategies, and otherwise attending to the instructional needs of individual students. One illustrative example came from Cindy's interview. She noted:

My teacher was really trying to focus on doing mixed ability reading groups and math groups and stuff... I noticed that she would put some of the stronger readers with some of the [English Learner] students, because they helped each other, and it was really nice because then there wasn't...the kids weren't like, “Oh, you're in the low reading group because you don't know English.” It was very much, everyone was learning to read and everyone was helping each other and it created a really safe environment for them to learn. (Cindy)

Similarly, Kimberly talked about how her teacher often had students working in small groups deliberately in order to “diversify the learning for each student.” She also noted that her mentor teacher emphasized “dialogue over lectures and instructing through teacher-student dialogue. There was a big emphasis on that... where she would ask a question and then she would get feedback from the students.” (Kimberly). These types of instructional practices were recognized by most of the teacher candidates as being used by their mentor teachers for the purpose of enacting a pedagogy that was culturally responsive and appropriate for the minoritized and English language learner.

Teacher candidates similarly easily recognized times when they or their teachers attended to and included elements of students' culture in the classroom. Sheryl described a time when they created classroom rules and how her teacher incorporated aspects of the Maori culture through an art project to display the rules the students had come up with.

We were doing a Waka, so it was a big war boat and there was a picture of every student with an oar in their hand and they had their name on their oar...we started talking about what we wanted our rules to be, like our "Classroom Treaty," ... And I noticed that when the students got to give their opinion about what they thought the rules should be that their behavior changed because they felt more ownership, obviously, with the rules and stuff. (Sheryl)

Kimberly talked explicitly about the concept of Funds of Knowledge, alluded to by other teacher candidates, saying that understanding this concept (taught in the CMCE course) helped her to view students in positive ways, noting, "that every child has something different that they can contribute and that might not always be obvious." Kimberly spoke further about how noting these funds of knowledge taught her to be "more reflective about my practice and just more reflective about what I believe and how that's influencing how I'm teaching the kids."

A few of the teacher candidates spoke about seeing inequities in their classroom, and spoke from a place of trying to resist viewing their students in deficit or reductionistic ways. For example, Sheryl spoke about noticing how prevalent inequality really was --something she admitted not knowing before taking the CMCE course. She went on to describe how this influenced the way she saw her students, saying,

[That realization] really helped me to kind of recognize that maybe the reason that students were struggling with certain things wasn't because they were necessarily a bad kid, it was because they really didn't understand what was being taught. Like, they didn't understand the hidden curriculum of how to do it, instead of they just didn't know the material. Does that make sense? (Sheryl)

Sheryl's interview revealed a beginning grappling with how to apply some of the theoretical concepts from the CMCE course to the reality of her diverse classroom in New Zealand. Linda similarly spoke about how the CMCE class made her more aware of how important it was to recognize student differences, saying "if you pretend like they don't exist, you are doing your [students] a disservice. You're not helping them have access to the curriculum, and everything you're teaching, in a way that's beneficial to them."

Other times, however, the teacher candidates would, as noted previously in the paper, speak in obvious deficit ways about their students and their families. It was interesting how this occurred even as they were describing what they viewed as culturally relevant pedagogy and practice. For example, Eliza described being dismayed at some of the negative, deficit and limiting things she heard teachers at the school say about their students. In response to hearing these negative things said about her students, she noted,

I was really grateful that I came from a background that was able to look at the students and say, no you can still achieve. I remember talking about that specifically in our multicultural class and being accepting. Even for the English language learners, still providing them a way to achieve and expecting them to succeed because they can. Just because they don't speak the language or appear that they don't understand doesn't mean that they're not smart or can't achieve. (Eliza)

Despite Eliza's assertion that she didn't hold deficit views, her language belied an underlying assumption that these students' social and linguistic backgrounds were something that needed to be overcome -- a common deficit view of minoritized learners. She even positioned herself as coming from a 'good' background where people 'still provide' a way for those other poor kids to achieve despite their less desirable backgrounds. This attitude is a paternalistic approach that positions teachers as having the answers that will "save" their students from their cultural deficits (Aronson, 2017; Gibson, 1976). These findings revealed how difficult it was for many students to overcome deeply held beliefs and biases in order to enact CRP.

In summary, teacher candidates were successful in identifying some elements of CRP that they had learned about in their CMCE course, which is encouraging. However, much of their noticing was limited to identifying how they and their teachers accommodated or differentiated instruction for students or how they honored the cultural backgrounds of their students in the classroom. Teacher candidates reported wanting to enact a CRP. However, they also sometimes spoke about their students in deficit ways while describing their efforts to do so in their classrooms. This pattern was especially apparent the few times teacher candidates spoke about the unfair ways that their students being maligned, held back, or underestimated. It seemed a struggle for teacher candidates to see inequities in the institution without describing their students or families as being deficit in some way. Teacher candidates expressed confidence in their students that they *could* overcome their difficult backgrounds, instead of being able to truly see the cultural assets and resources of the students, their families, and their communities. Teacher candidates appear to still be working to have students conform to the curriculum, rather than taking up the full CRP approach which is to enact a curriculum which is culturally appropriate to their students. None of the teacher candidates reported examining their own positional privilege as White educators, or recognized the influence of social, historical, and/or institutional, power and inequity in the classroom -- all central tenants of CRP explicitly taught in the CMCE course.

Imagining Future Teaching

All participants reported feeling more prepared to teach in diverse classroom settings in the U.S. after this New Zealand field experience and study abroad. When asked why and in what ways, they had varied responses but some similarities emerged, including valuing the actual physical experience of being in a diverse school setting, and citing their new understandings about culture as being helpful for their future work as teachers. They also talked about how this field experience provided them more certainty about their own stances and attitudes toward minoritized and multicultural students.

Teacher candidates cited being able to see diverse classrooms in action, and getting to know individual students in these classrooms as being essential in helping them feel prepared for working in classrooms in the U.S. Kimberly summed this up by saying she felt more prepared because "like I said with the thing about actually knowing what I learned in [CMCE], it's just more internalized now. I've seen it, I've had some experience with it." (Kimberly). Cindy spoke about how this experience increased her confidence and sense of self-efficacy for the future. She noted,

for sure [I feel more prepared]. Yeah. I mean, before this it was kind of like, 'Oh yeah, I could do that.' But just like, the experience of actually doing it, I

totally...I don't feel like I'd have a problem with that [teaching diverse students in the future] (Cindy)

Two students reported that this was the first time they had been in classrooms with culturally minoritized students and how their New Zealand field experiences were different from their first field experiences in schools in the U.S. intermountain west. For example, Linda indicated "I hadn't had experience with minority students before this. My practicum class last year, they were all Caucasian and they all came from similar family lives and homes."

Many students attributed an increased confidence in their ability to work in diverse settings in the future to their learnings about culture, the importance of culture in the classroom, and appreciating the cultural diversity of their students. Monica noted "I feel that I have a better understanding not only of different cultures but also of how to meet a variety of cultural needs in the same situation." Eliza reported that the New Zealand field experience "really opened my eyes to accepting the other cultures... being able to realize that you don't know everything especially with interacting with different cultures, it's going to be different."

Part of the learning about and appreciating the culture of their students, as the teacher candidates talked about it, included a desire to see the students in their New Zealand classrooms as not that different from them, or from other kids that they knew. For example, Linda noted,

There are some serious things that are the same in all kids everywhere. They all want very similar things and have that, no matter what age, they have a natural desire to get to know people and have fun with each other. Just recognizing that just because they come from one place doesn't mean that there's some totally alien type of student.

This sentiment seemed to make the teacher candidates feel better about the cultural differences between themselves and their students and to assuage any concern about their potential inadequacies for teaching in a diverse classroom. It further appears to mask any need on their part to further reflect critically on the ways cultural differences between themselves and their students might play out in important ways in future classrooms. For example, Sheryl stated the field experience,

helped me realize that the multicultural students aren't different. I always thought that it would be so hard to teach students that didn't speak English because there's such a divide between me and them, but the practicum here showed me.... helped me be more confident in myself because it showed me that it's not hard. Well, I won't say it's not hard, but it's not AS hard as I thought. It's doable.

Although this sense of confidence can be helpful for teacher candidates as they approach teaching diverse classrooms in the United States, it is unclear that the teacher candidates in this study reached this sense of self-efficacy based on critical reflection and an accurate assessment of their own capabilities. Rather, the study abroad field experience seemed to provide students with certainty about their stances, rather than to promote an ongoing inquiry about their own positionality and privilege as White, majority culture teachers in the classroom – a major goal of the CMCE class, and of preparing teacher candidates in general. For example, Sheryl felt a certain relief when she realized that she didn't see her students as less capable, saying,

I hoped that I wouldn't see them as a less smart of a child, but just to realize that they really aren't less intelligent because they can't speak your language. When I was learning about it I thought maybe that would be a problem with me, but it wasn't so that was a good thing.

Sheryl seems to be certain that she doesn't hold the deficit ideologies toward English learners that she was afraid she might have. Although this seems a generally positive finding, it also points to a lack of interest in further critically and systematically exploring any future potential biases and inequitable social systems that are surely to arise in any classroom setting with minoritized students. In this way, the study abroad field experience may have served to unintentionally undermine Sheryl's development as a teacher, and worked in counterproductive ways to the overall project of multicultural education and culturally relevant pedagogical principles and practices.

Discussions and Conclusions

Overall, the teacher candidates who participated in this New Zealand study abroad experience reported positive views about their field placement in highly diverse schools. All of the teacher candidates in our study felt that the field experience provided an authentic experience to draw on and enact the theoretical knowledge acquired in their critical multicultural education course.

Teacher candidates reported on cultural learning, in so doing, they revealed a very celebratory understanding of culture as something external to be learned about and appreciated, rather than a dynamic system enacted by people in everyday life. These interviews also revealed that, despite this somewhat surface treatment of culture overall, teacher candidates were faced with issues related to their own cultural identities. In fact, many seemed to be seeing themselves as having a cultural identity for the first time, and reported learning what it was like to not know or understand cultural norms.

Teacher candidates also reported increased self-efficacy about working with minoritized students and having their perspectives challenged because of this field experience. However, some revealed unchallenged deficit thinking toward minoritized students despite their articulations of the importance of multicultural education and CRP. Further, these teacher candidates did not connect issues of cultural difference to systemic inequality or power enacted either in the New Zealand context, or in their home cultural context in the United States. It appears that they are focused on an understanding of culture that remains mostly celebratory and personal.

For many teacher candidates in the U.S., the majority of whom come from White/European American backgrounds, study abroad field experiences may offer critical cultural learning opportunities often uncommon in U.S. based teacher education programs. The type of authentic engagement with students in diverse settings, that can be offered in study abroad field experiences, may provide opportunities for teacher candidates to think about issues of cultural difference, identity, power and inequality in more concrete ways. However, our study showed that having a diverse field study abroad environment is not *sufficient* for deepening connection to critical multicultural education concepts and goals. In particular, teacher candidates need more support in recognizing and practicing the more difficult components of CRP which connect cultural differences to social positions and systemic inequality. This requires teacher candidates to see cultural knowledge as an asset and to enact a curriculum that is relevant for their students, rather than to see nonconformity or a misfit to the curriculum as a deficit.

Scholars assert that students must reflect deeply and in an ongoing way, on the experiences they have with cultural others. Students need guidance and support about how to see

the self and the other throughout their learning (Marx & Moss, 2011; Sharma et al., 2011). Additionally, teacher educators are urged to explicitly attend to the development of critical consciousness as they organize and facilitate these study abroad experiences in order to avoid reproducing knowledge that continues “the academic instruction that privileges White teacher identity as the norm” (Sharma, 2020, p. 318)

This study speaks directly to the importance of keeping teacher candidates engaged in a constant process of self-reflection as teacher candidates move from their teacher preparation experiences into working with ethnic and linguistic minority students in their own classrooms. Field experiences cannot be leveraged for student growth and learning without being strongly connected to the broader teacher preparation program with continued and explicit links back to foundational concepts in critical multicultural education.

Limitations, Strengths, and Future Directions

There are clear limitations to this exploratory case study methodology that require caution in generalizing findings across multiple or dissimilar contexts. In fact, this study raises more questions than it answers in terms of how study abroad programs can be leveraged to prepare majority culture teacher candidates to teach in multicultural and diverse U.S. based classrooms. Certainly, this sample is one limitation of the study. Only six teacher candidates participated in the study, and they all share similar demographic characteristics as White middle-class conservative young adult women in the middle of an elementary education teacher preparation program. Further, they all participated in a specific, if not unique, field study experience during a study abroad program, which may be uncommon to many teacher preparation programs. However, these limitations are also viewed as a strength of the study, in that the specificity of the experience might be illuminating. For example, all teacher candidates had taken the same Critical Multicultural Education course in preparation for this study abroad, so it was possible to see what elements of this course were taken up during the field experience in multicultural classrooms. Finally, White middle class women make up most of the teacher candidates in teacher preparation programs across the country, making insights from their interviews instructive for how study abroad programs may aid in preparing teacher candidates to enact CRP in U.S. based classrooms.

The study design also limits our findings to the impacts of the field experiences during this study abroad to the teacher candidates themselves, not to how the attitudes and ideologies formed during this experience shape the actual behavior of teacher candidates on their future students. Longitudinal and behavioral data would speak better to the lasting impacts of study abroad experiences on teacher preparation, as would attention to longer term vs. shorter term and language learning vs. non-language learning programs.

A clear implication of this study is the need to provide teacher candidates more opportunities to reflect on their experiences in real time, not just at the end of field and study abroad experiences. Future study abroad programs, with a focus on preparing teacher candidates, should have assignments during the field experience explicitly linked to the CMCE course (or any other similar course). Students should be provided ways to bring their reflections and articulations into the same space as their experiences in order to help them make sense of what they are seeing and experiencing. All of this should be done in explicit ways that helps them connect their experiential learnings to multicultural education concepts. It seems an unfair and

unrealistic expectation for students to do this on their own, without the support and guidance of the faculty mentors who typically run study abroad programs.

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Appendix A

Multicultural Education Foundations Course Objectives

- **Cultural Identities-** Students will examine and understand the various dimensions of cultural identity, including one's own, and apply this knowledge to their thinking and behavior through a process of reflection.
- **Effects of Culture on Learning and Teaching-** Acknowledge the dynamics of culture and diversity in school success and teachers' teaching. This includes recognizing and overcoming deficit thinking.
- **Culturally Relevant and Responsive Teaching-** Identify culturally and linguistically relevant pedagogy and use theoretically grounded principles to analyze why it is effective for many different types of learners.
- **Policy Impact on Current Practices-** Interpret the historical context of diversity, discrimination, and language policies and evaluate how they impact current school practices.
- **Recognize Privilege and Inequity-** Recognize and acknowledge racism, discrimination and other forms of inequity and privilege in themselves, in others, and within institutions.
- **Theoretical Frameworks-** Recognize and use a personal moral spiritual framework along with principles and concepts of social science to guide educational accomplishments for diverse learners.

Appendix B

Protocol for Semi-structured Interviews with Teacher Candidates

Interview Question (IQ)	Suggested Follow up Questions
Describe the ethnic, social and linguistic composition of your class in New Zealand	
What was most surprising about working with the Pasifika and Maori students in your classroom?	In what ways was it difficult? In what ways was it rewarding? Share an example or specific story from your experience
How did your Multicultural Education Foundations course prepare you for this experience? (Show MCE Course objectives) (Appendix A)	What concepts or ideas from your MCE course were helpful to you as you interacted with students and teachers in your classroom? Please share an example or specific story from your experience.
What did you learn about teaching minoritized students in your NZ practicum students that will help you in teaching diverse students in the U.S?	Please share a specific example if possible. For example, an example where understanding the specific background of the student helped you in your work?
What, if any, specific strategies or approaches could you identify in your cooperating teachers' practices that were specifically for the benefit of the minoritized students?	Can you share a specific example? Did you consider these to be effective? How would you consider using these approaches in your own classroom?
What do you think you understand or know about teaching minoritized students that you may not have been aware of before this semester?	How do you come to this new knowledge? Can you share a specific example or story?
In what ways have your core beliefs about learners and about yourself as a teacher been challenged?	In what ways have these core beliefs changed or evolved through your classroom experience in New Zealand? Can you provide a specific example or story?
Do you feel more or less prepared to teach a class full of multicultural and/minoritized students?	In what ways? Why or why not? Can you give an example?
Is there anything else you think I should know?	