

**INSTRUCTORS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR ROLES IN A CULTURALLY DIVERSE  
CLASSROOM AT THE POST SECONDARY LEVEL**

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## ABSTRACT

This qualitative study investigated instructors' perceptions of their roles in culturally diverse classrooms at the post secondary level. The participants were six instructors who have had students from different cultural backgrounds in their classrooms. The study was conducted in a mid-sized city in the province of Ontario. Four categories emerged from the analysis of the qualitative data: (a) A summary of instructors' educational experiences; (b) The instructors' perceptions of culturally diverse classes; (c) The teaching strategies they employed; and (d) Instructors' roles in the classroom. The participants acknowledged and described the challenges faced by instructors in a culturally diverse classroom at the post secondary level. They also indicated the benefits and challenges faced by students studying in such classrooms. They perceived six variations on the instructor's role: lecturer, role model, learner, facilitator, diagnostician, and moderator. Furthermore, the participants described the functions of these roles and the employment of corresponding teaching strategies in culturally diverse classes.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## **Chapter I: Introduction**

### **Purpose of the study**

The purpose of this research was to investigate instructors' perceptions of their roles in culturally diverse classrooms at the post secondary level. The respondents were instructors in a mid-sized city in the province of Ontario who have had students from different cultural backgrounds in their classrooms. The design of the study was qualitative and the primary method of data collection consisted of semi-structured interviews.

### **Background**

Canada is a multiracial and ethnocultural mosaic, composed of people with different religious beliefs, and a diversity of cultural backgrounds and ethnic origins. Passaris (1989) stated that immigrants and refugees from the four corners of the world have settled in Canada and contributed to this country's demographic evolution as well as its economic growth and development. In an examination of the development of immigration policy and immigrants to Canada, Scott (2001) studied the changes in the Canadian cultural landscape.

Scott (2001) highlighted four immigration periods since 1812. The first period 1812-1880 appeared to be guided by commercial and economic development. Canadian immigration policies were directed toward economic expansion. Immigrants from Britain were the main source of immigrants to Canada during this period. The second period was from 1880 to the Second World War. During this period immigration policy shifted from the old immigration policy to the acceptance of two types of immigrants: farmers to settle the land, and unskilled workers to meet growing industrial needs. This policy resulted in large numbers of immigrants from Eastern Europe and Asia entering Canada. From 1946 to 1968,

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Canada's immigration centered on resettling refugees. New immigration regulations erased many of the restrictions based on ethnicity, and established education, training and skill as the main criteria for admitting unsponsored immigrants. Meanwhile, the human rights movement emerged in North America, and called for the recognition of multiculturalism and further multicultural education (Banks & McGee. Banks, 1995). As a result of the elimination of the ethnicity criteria for admission, the proportion of Asians and Blacks entering Canada increased dramatically. The fourth period mentioned by Scott (2001) was from 1968 to 1996. The most significant change was the 1974 requirement that applicants had to receive at least one point for occupational demand or have arranged employment. This policy led to a change in the structure of the groups coming to Canada. The Canadian population has become composed of diverse ethnicities rather than the dominating one. Since the ethnic composition of Canada's population has changed tremendously, multiculturalism has become been emphasized by governments in the country.

### **The Change and Limitation of Education Policy**

Passaris (1989) said, "Public policy must not be etched in stone; it must evolve with the times. It must be progressive, dynamic, and visionary so that we can confront the challenges of the next decade and take advantage of the opportunities of the twenty-first century." (p.3) Therefore, education, as a public policy, has had to adapt itself to multiculturalism. Scott (2001) indicated that, as Canada's population continued to become more culturally diverse, the need for an approach to managing that diversity would become clear. This approach became manifest in 1971 with the adoption of the Canadian Multiculturalism Policy. This policy firmly committed Canada to multiculturalism, where the existence and contribution of



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diverse cultures were acknowledged. Efforts to remove cultural barriers to full participation in discussion was a goal, and the delivery of services needed by visible minorities, and the promotion of cultural understanding were actively pursued. Recognizing the value of Canadian multiculturalism, governments must endorse the principle of multiculturalism within the school curriculum, as well as its promotion through public education and community awareness. As a matter of fact, the political status of multiculturalism appeared to be firmly established in Canada assisted by governmental support and effort ( Magsino,1989). Magsino (1989) stated that multiculturalism included full participation in discussion, cultural respect, sharing and individual freedom within any organization, including schools. Also, Magsino (1989) indicated that societal institutions, particularly schools, may be expected to make their contributions toward the attainment of Canadian multiculturalism. It is no surprise, therefore, that federal and provincial initiatives envisioned a significant role for schools in promoting multicultural education. Multicultural education may be conceived as a consequence of Canadian multiculturalism. In turn, multicultural education will reinforce the status of multiculturalism in Canada.

Albeit the concept of multicultural education has been in existence for many years, the implementation of this policy at the post secondary school level remains a problem. Mallea (1990) pointed out that there had been a widespread neglect of Canadian issues and problems in the universities, including those relating to cultural diversity. Similarly, James (2001) indicated, that the diversity to be found among today's university student population in terms of race, ethnicity and languages posed significant challenges to educators. The diversity in the student population requires educators to examine current pedagogical

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approaches if they were to make university education relevant and equitable to students. Much of this diversity in the student body has been brought about by conscious efforts to remove barriers to university education. As a result, a new population of students entered with the expectation that the principles of equal access and equity would be reflected in the pedagogical approaches to their education, and that their cultural interests and needs would be recognized and supported. Henceforth, the cultural diversity of student population at a post secondary school challenges the roles and teaching strategies of instructors at this level. The focal purpose of this study, therefore, is to explore university instructors' perceptions of their roles when teaching in a culturally diverse class.

### **Rationale**

Holy (1975) and Wright (1987) stated that schools were expected to be institutions whose main mission is to transmit the values and beliefs of society to students. Further, teachers in schools are the direct source of such a transmission. As mentioned earlier, the existence of multiculturalism leads to the rapid development of multicultural education. However, most research focuses on the implementation of multicultural education at elementary and secondary schools. In contrast, at the post secondary or higher education level, little research focuses on the multicultural education.

Additionally, communication between instructors and students as well as among students is of importance in a culturally diverse classroom, which raises several issues: (a) the fostering of rapport among students; (b) offering students an opportunity to get to know unfamiliar cultures beyond their own traditions; and (c) minimizing the limitations of the dominating culture when students perceive an issue. In a short, an instructor can play an

instrumental function in facilitating communication among the above relationships.

Therefore, teaching in a culturally diverse classroom presents numerous challenges for an instructor' role such as an instructor, model, and judge. First, instructors are relators who tend to encourage students to accept and respect students from non-mainstream cultural backgrounds. Secondly, instructors are mediators or facilitators who promote interaction and communication in a culturally diverse classroom. The third role needed in a culturally diverse classroom is that of an administrator whose responsibility is to arrange a classroom with good organization skills.

### **Limitations**

The limitations of the research include the following:

1. The findings of the study may not be generalized to instructors' perceptions in other universities.
2. The findings of the study may not be generalized to instructors' perceptions in all departments in the university.

### **Delimitations**

1. This study is limited to a single university in Northwestern Ontario.
2. Only one university campus was used as the population base for the study.
3. This research is limited to the instructors' perceptions of their roles when teaching in a culturally diverse classroom.
4. This study deals exclusively with instructors who had teaching experience in a culturally diverse classroom.
5. This study is limited to perceptions of instructors in humanities related research

fields.

### **Assumption**

It is assumed that the group of instructors studied can provide insights into the perceptions of their roles when teaching in a culturally diverse classroom at the post secondary level.

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## Chapter II: Literature Review

All new terms emerge and develop within certain social contexts. And *multicultural education* is not an exception to the rule. From a historical perspective, multicultural education is linked directly to the African American scholarship that emerged in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and indirectly to the intergroup education and research movement that was formulated in the 1940s and that had largely vanished when the civil rights movement emerged in the 1960s (Banks & McGee Banks, 1995). Magsino (1989) stated that multicultural education has undoubtedly been one of the most prominent phenomena in Canadian education in the last fifteen years. Diverse theories focusing on multicultural education have been developed progressively both in Canada and the United States. In this chapter, the researcher examined the nature of multicultural education, the role of instructors, and teaching strategies in a culturally diverse classroom.

### The Nature of Multicultural Education

This chapter examines the nature of multicultural education by defining both multicultural education and its dimensions. These two subcategories are explored based on different research perceptions.

### Definitions of Multicultural Education

Numerous definitions of multicultural education have been proposed by scholars, researchers, and organizations over the four decades since the 1960s (Banks & McGee Banks, 1995). Although the diverse definitions listed here are not exhaustive, they can provide a significant platform or background to this inquiry.

*Multiculturalism* is a key term related to multicultural education. Magsino (1989), in

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his article “*Multiculturalism in Schools: Is Multicultural Education Possible and Justifiable?*” , raised concerns about the connection between multiculturalism and multicultural education. Magsino(1989) identified the four elements of Canadian multiculturalism as: (a) cultural retention and development; (b) cultural sharing and respect to promote national unity and a richer life for all; (c) full participation in Canadian society; and (d) individual freedom. Based on these four elements, Magsino (1989) developed the following six characteristics of multicultural education:

1. *Multicultural education, as education of the culturally different.*
2. *Multicultural education, as education for cultural understanding.*
3. *Multicultural education, as education for cultural preservation.*
4. *Multicultural education, as education for an emergent society.*
5. *Multicultural education, as education for cultural accommodation.*
6. *Multicultural education, as education for multicultural adaptation and choice.*

Magsino (1989) assumed that multicultural education could be an effective, appropriate instrument which has provided resources, ability, and commitment to educators. Ultimately, multicultural education would flourish in the Canadian educational landscape only if multiculturalism was widely accepted as an important social value for which to aim.

A review of earlier literature revealed that the first three conceptions mentioned by Magsino were earlier proposed by Gibson (1976). Gibson(1976) identified five approaches to teaching cultural pluralism. The first was *education of culturally different or benevolent multiculturalism*. The focus was helping students to develop skills to assimilate into the mainstream culture and society. The second approach, *education about cultural pluralism*,

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emphasized teaching all students culturally diverse knowledge. Subsequently, Magsino (1989) emphasized the importance of promoting cultural understanding in multicultural education. In a culturally diverse classroom, one of the goals for an instructor is to guide students to learn culturally diverse knowledge and to perceive issues from a broad scope instead of a narrow one. Gibson's third approach concentrated on preserving the cultures and increasing the political power of minority groups. His final two approaches were bicultural education and multicultural education as the normal human experience.

Multicultural education was closely linked with multicultural individuals as well. Johnson (2002) stated that multicultural individuals were significant products of the development of diverse societies. In this study, the term multicultural individuals, refers to those students from diverse cultural backgrounds and multicultural individuals consist of a multicultural group which is the key element in a culturally diverse classroom. Multicultural education, as education for cultural understanding intends to encourage multicultural students to share cultural differences with each other, and to understand and solve problems from a multicultural perspective.

An additional definition of multicultural education was proposed by Banks (1997), in which he observed that "multicultural education consists of at least three things: an idea or concept, an educational reform movement, and a process" (p.3). Multicultural education was viewed as a set of beliefs and explanations that recognized and valued the importance of ethnic and cultural diversity in shaping the lifestyles, social experiences, personal identities, and educational opportunities of individuals, groups, and nations. Banks (1997) also described multicultural education as a reform movement that required systematic changes

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within an education system so that students from all social classes, racial, and cultural groups will have an equal opportunity to learn. In Banks and McGee Banks (1997), they stated that “multicultural education is a process whose goals will never be fully realized” (p.4). It must be viewed as an ongoing process. Banks’ definition of multicultural education omitted to mention education for cultural understanding which focused on teaching students culturally diverse knowledge in a culturally diverse classroom. Nieto’s (1992) definition of multicultural education was endorsed by Banks as being probably the most inclusive and eclectic definition (Banks & McGee Banks, 1995). Nieto (1992) placed multicultural education in a sociopolitical context, which provided more of a macro definition rather than to limit it in a micro-framework such as the field of education. She stated:

Multicultural education is a process of comprehensive school reform and basic education for all students. It challenges and rejects racism and other forms of discrimination in schools and society and accepts and affirms the pluralism (ethnic, racial, linguistic, religious, economic, and gender among others) that students, their communities, and teachers represent. Multicultural education permeates the curriculum and instructional strategies used in schools, as well as the interactions among teachers, students, and parents, and the very way that schools conceptualize the nature of teaching and learning. Because it uses critical pedagogy as its underlying philosophy and focused on knowledge, reflection, and action (praxis) as the basis for social change, multicultural education furthers the democratic principles of social justice. (p.208)



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From Nieto's perspective, multicultural education was the way that schools conceptualized the nature of teaching and learning. In other words, teaching was more practical than multicultural education. The latter set a new goal for teaching, and called for changing roles of instructors and corresponding teaching strategies in a culturally diverse class. In return, the changes in teaching were conceptualized into multicultural education and enriched the contents of multicultural education.

Compared with Nieto's definition, Bennett (1999) defined multicultural education in a relatively brief way and stated that multicultural education was an approach to "teaching and learning that is based upon democratic values and beliefs, and affirms cultural pluralism within culturally diverse societies and an interdependent world" (p.11). She did not examine multicultural education within a broad frame, but her statement implied that multiculturalism was a guiding function in teaching.

### **Dimensions of Multicultural Education**

Gay (1995) explicated the connections between general curriculum theory and the dimensions of multicultural education. He cited Schubert's (1986) three generic types of curriculum theory: descriptive, prescriptive, and critical. *Descriptive theory* used an empirical database to analyze existing realities, assuming that curriculum was a set of recommendations, *Prescriptive theory* sought to establish norms for actions and attempted to clarify and defend those principles upon which these statements were founded. *Critical theory* dealt with practice and perspective, understanding and control, and the dialectical relationship between theory and practice. Based on the triple dimensions of curriculum theory, Gay (1995) stated that three dimensions of multicultural education were: (a)

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descriptive analysis; (b) critical explanations; and (c) prescriptive recommendations. Gay explained these terms in the following manners:

Descriptive analysis of educational systems and conditions that ignore or deny the importance of cultural diversity are frequently used to establish a baseline point of reference for change. Critical explanations are then used to determine why these systems should be changed to be more representative, of and responsive to, cultural pluralism. Prescriptive recommendations suggest “what the changes should embody in order for education to be maximally beneficial to an ever-increasing variety of culturally, ethically, and socially pluralistic individuals, institutions, and communities” (pp.26-27).

In contrast, Banks (1999) conceptualized the dimensions of multicultural education more specifically. He highlighted five dimensions of multicultural education: (a) content integration; (b) the knowledge construction process; (c) prejudice reduction; (d) equity pedagogy; and (e) an empowering school culture and social structure. Content integration dealt with the extent to which teachers used information that was multicultural to illustrate the key concepts and generalizations in their discipline. The knowledge construction process focused on how teachers helped students to understand, investigate, and determine how the implicit cultural assumptions, frames of references, perspectives, and bias within a discipline influenced the way in which knowledge was constructed. Prejudice reduction referred to the characteristics of students’ racial attitudes and how they can be modified by teaching strategies and materials. Equity pedagogy was a teaching method which was applied when teachers used it to facilitate the academic achievement of students from diverse racial, ethnic, and social-class groups. Lastly, an empowering school culture and social structure described

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the process of reorganizing the culture and organization of the school so that students from a variety of cultural backgrounds would experience educational equity and empowerment.

Similar to Banks' dimensions of multicultural education, Bennett (1999) pointed out four interactive dimensions to multicultural education. He stated "Multicultural education was comprised of four interactive dimensions: the movement toward equity, curriculum reform, the process of becoming intercultural competent, and the commitment to combat prejudice and discrimination" (p.11).

The dimensions of multicultural education are closely related to its goals. Each dimension must reflect one or more goals of multicultural education. Davidman (1994) highlighted six interrelated, but distinct goals of multicultural education: (1) educational equity; (2) empowerment of students and their parents; (3) cultural pluralism in society; (4) intercultural/interethnic/intergroup understanding and harmony in the classroom, school, and community; (5) an expanded knowledge of various cultural and ethnic groups; and (6) the development of students, parents, and practitioners whose thoughts and actions are guided by an informed, inquisitive multicultural perspective. The fourth and fifth goals were the primary missions of "the knowledge construction process" and the essential target that instructors were required to pursue. Banks (1999) strengthened the fourth mission by stating that "a key goal of multicultural education was to help individuals gain greater self-understanding by viewing themselves from the perspectives of other cultures" (p.2). Furthermore, he (1997) indicated that to achieve the goals of multicultural education, we must think of the school as a social system in which all of its major variables were closely interrelated. From Banks' (1997) perspective, the total school environment in multicultural

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education was a system consisting of a number of major identifiable variables and factors, such as the formalized curriculum and courses of study, teaching styles and strategies as well as school staff, attitudes, perceptions, beliefs, and actions. It was evident that teaching strategy and style were major variables. And the two variables were specifically reflected in different roles instructors played in a culturally diverse classroom. Banks (1997) pointed out that “any of these factors may be the focus of initial school reform, but changes must take place in each of them to create and sustain an effective multicultural school environment” (p.25).

Bennett (1999) raised three necessary conditions for multicultural schooling: positive teacher expectations, learning environment, and a multicultural curriculum. The three conditions were congruent with some identifiable variables proposed by Banks. Many teachers interact with students differently according to the student’s race and socioeconomic status. Bennett (1999) indicated that if teachers were to have equally positive expectations for students of all races, they must understand the cultural differences that often existed in the desegregated classroom. This point was consistent with one of dimensions of multicultural education stated by Banks, prejudice reduction. Another dimension of multicultural education—a school culture and social structure with empowerment (Banks, 1999), was a welcoming learning environment at the elementary school, secondary school ,and post-secondary levels. A multicultural curriculum was one that attended to the school’s hidden curriculum—for instance, teachers’ values and expectations, student cliques and peer groupings, and school regulations. It also attended to the values, cultural styles, knowledge, and perceptions that all students brought to the school. Bennett (1999) made the

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connection between a multicultural curriculum and school environment by indicating that a multicultural curriculum, in its broader sense, influences the total school environment.

In conclusion, the nature of multicultural education is of importance to this study. As a vehicle of multicultural education, the role instructors are explored in the next section.

### **The Role of Instructors**

In terms of multicultural education, there has been a large body of research focusing on the nature of multicultural education. However, when we transfer the general idea of multicultural education to the topic of roles in a culturally diverse class, there is little literature available to us although there are conferences on this topic held recently. Despite a lack of literature about instructors' roles in a culturally diverse class at the post secondary level, there are many books and journal articles exploring the role of instructors in schools.

Before discussing the role of instructors, it is imperative to understand the concept of *role* which is both significant and complex. Havighurst and Neugarten (1962) defined the concept of role as a coherent pattern of behavior common to all persons who fill the same position or place in society and a pattern of behavior expected by other members of society. This explanation indicated two aspects of the role, a behavior pattern for each individual and a behavior expectation pattern from peers. Another sociological perspective of the role was given by Getzels and Guba (1957). They indicated another dimension which contrasted with role and personality needs. From their standpoint, role referred to the fulfillment of responsibilities within the organization an individual works for. In contrast, personality needs referred to the achievement of individual goals. Both dimensions were closely related to each other. Hoyle (1975) pointed out that when both role and personality were fulfilled in

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the same action, the individual would experience satisfaction. If not, then the individual would experience conflict. Based on the definition and dimension of the role, the role of instructors can be explored in a fixed pattern rather than a random one.

### **The Traditional Roles of Instructors**

The first role of the teacher mentioned by Hoyle (1975) was an instructor which was the most obvious and public of the teacher's roles. A teacher constructed a body of knowledge and skills and offered them to students. And they performed this function through direct teaching and the organization of learning situations of a less formal kind. Wright (1987) stated that the instructional function of being a teacher was one of two important functions. He indicated that the instructional side of a teacher's role was likely to be goal-oriented, task-dependent, and knowledge-based. Light and Cox (2001) stated that the traditional role of the teacher in higher education or post-secondary school was that of "an instructor where he or she may initiate proceedings with a short statement summary and then try to draw out students' thoughts, periodically linking them together and redirecting the content discussion as appropriate". (p.215)

The second traditional role raised by Hoyle (1975) was called the teacher as model. The mission of being a model was to prepare students for participating in the way of life of his/her society. This process involved, for example, the acquisition of literacy skills which can be regarded as an essential part of the socialization process. The values and norms of society can also be transmitted directly to some extent. However, instruction and socialization can not be fully interchangeable as the inculcation of values and norms—the basis of socialization process—can not occur largely through direct and explicit teaching. It

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is often said that values are taught in subtle ways in the process of teacher-student interaction. In other words, being a role model called for more requirements for the teacher than simply being an instructor in that the teacher needed to transmit values and norms of the society to students both by instruction and interaction with students. That is to say, communication between instructors and students is essential in a class. If the teacher was in a culturally diverse classroom, he or she had to cope with the relationship between the values and norms of mainstream and non-mainstream students co-existing in society. Being a model required that the teacher had unbiased attitudes toward cultural difference. Otherwise, students would be misguided to some extent.

The last traditional role proposed by Hoyle (1975) was conceived as the teacher as judge. The teacher differentiated between students on the basis of their intellectual—and often social skills in preparation for the social occupational roles which they would play. The judgments made by the teacher were of the greatest importance because they tended to become self-fulfilling prophecies that limited students' ability to meet the expectations which the teacher held of them. Thus, bright students became brighter while dull students became duller based on the pre-judgments made by the teacher. Bennett (1999) pointed out that research provided data to support the basic assumption that teacher attitudes influenced student achievement. One of the first studies was the controversial study by Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968), who reported their success in influencing student achievement by giving teachers fake data about their students. Approximately 20 percent of the student populations, selected at random, were identified as “bloomers”. Teachers were given the names of these supposedly high potential students, to be held in confidence, and these students did indeed

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achieve at significantly higher levels than their classmates. Although the methodology used in this study has been questioned by some, even its critics accepted that notion that teacher expectations often affected student achievement. For this reason, a role of a judge is not emphasized for the teacher in a culturally diverse classroom.

### **The Changing and Challenging Roles of Instructors**

In order to achieve the goals of multicultural education, instructors face many challenges. Scott (2001) pointed out that the demographic landscape of Canada has changed tremendously over the past 30 years due to the inclusion of people from a variety of cultural backgrounds. Therefore, instructors are assigned diverse and changing roles in the process of educating students.

First of all, Scott (2001) highlighted several roles for teachers in a culturally diverse setting. One of them was to use a diversity of instructional strategies. Therefore, it was evidenced that being an instructor was a key role in both the traditional perspective and the multicultural perspective. The instructional role, as a traditional role, is being challenged in culturally diverse classrooms. The nature of multicultural education calls for cultural integration when teaching in a culturally diverse classroom. Not only does an instructor need to pass knowledge to students, but also needs to motivate students to know and understand culturally diverse knowledge. These two guides towards cultural understanding are of significance to instructors in culturally diverse classrooms.

The two traditional roles of teachers, being a model and being a judge challenge instructors in culturally diverse classrooms as well. Being a role model has become a more challenging task in a culturally diverse classroom than in a regular classroom. Scott (2001)



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pointed out that some key elements in the teacher's behavior, values, attitudes and beliefs influenced the way teachers approached in their classes. If teachers held a bias toward certain student groups in a culturally diverse classroom, students had the potential to "adopt attitudes they see their teacher projecting" (Scott, 2001, p.98). Coelho (1998) stated that the need to provide all students with positive role models was a constant theme in minority education. Students from all ethnocultural backgrounds needed to be presented with role models with whom they could identify. The culturally diverse school had to make a special effort to provide all students with images of, and direct interaction with, models of competence and excellence from many ethnocultural backgrounds, of both genders, and in a variety of roles. Coelho (1998) described the ideal status of role models in United States, that is, the ethnic composition of the school staff was representative of the linguistic, cultural, and racial diversity of the student population and the local community. However, this was seldom the case since most teachers, like other professionals, were members of the dominant cultural group. The fact was that the proportion of minority teachers was declining while that of minority students was increasing in school (Coelho, 1998). Scott (2001) assumed that, if teachers were to develop a multicultural perspective, they must first examine their own behavioral motivators and understand how their knowledge of and respect for the diversity of cultures influences the instructional and evaluative strategies they adopted in their classrooms. They were prone to equitably treat students in a culturally diverse classroom without bias towards certain groups. Moreover, Scott (2001) indicated that teachers with unbiased attitudes were more likely to be positive role models for students, whereas biased attitudes toward subject matter could lead to many classroom conflicts.

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Based on the results of some studies regarding the effects of teachers' pre-judgements of students (Bennett, 1999; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968), the judge role of the teacher was likely to be denied in a culturally diverse classroom in that one of the goals of multicultural education was seeking educational equity which focused on the equivalent judgment of students (Davidman, 1994). In addition to the Holy's three basic or traditional roles of instructor, model and judge, there were many other roles mentioned in the literature regarding teaching in class, such as mentor, learner, and administrator. In terms of the roles of teachers in culturally diverse classrooms, the bottom line was not trying to use alternative roles to replace traditional roles but the harmony in combining different roles and the challenges of roles in such a culturally diverse setting.

#### **The Challenging Roles of Teachers-Four Facets**

According to Seaberg (1974), the nature of the teaching involved relationships, mediation, diagnosis, and choreography. The four roles of teachers in humanizing education has become that of relator, mediator, diagnostician and choreographer. Seen from Seaberg's perspective, the class climate in a culturally diverse classroom has to be considered when conducting research on teaching in culturally diverse classrooms. Further, Seaberg (1974) stated that the educational environment was created to a large degree by the teacher. The teacher has only the school setting in which he/she could hope to make a difference. Seaberg stated that the basic dimensions of the classroom environment must be identified and matched with corresponding teaching roles. The teacher was a creator and arranger of educational environments. At least four educational environments intermingled in the classroom. Seaberg identified these as the interpersonal environment that had political

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overtone, an environment of planned learning experiences that had a technological character, an environment where each individual's perception that was phenomenological in nature, and an environment of affect or feeling that was aesthetic in its nature. Seaberg simplified them into "political", "technological", "phenomenological", and "aesthetic". Within these environments, the teacher functioned in the roles of relator, mediator, diagnostician, and environmental choreographer.

In the political environment, when the four political democracies that are freedom, justice, equity, and respect for the dignity and worth of the individual were considered, teachers established either a dynamic or strict system through their way of relating to students. The school was a micro-society that reflected the values and attitudes of the larger macro-society--the home, community and nation. Therefore, a culturally diverse classroom was a micro-representative of a society. As a relator, the teacher helped the students respect and accept each other. He/she shared in making decisions and in solving problems that pertain both to her/him and to the group. Students learned about each others' linguistic and cultural backgrounds, and had many opportunities for positive interaction with each other. In this way communication among students is better. Coelho (1998) indicated that teachers worked with students to create an inclusive class that welcomed newcomers from different cultures by ensuring that each student was able to air his or her opinions. Through these experiences they learned to respect each other and to value cultural diversity. Although Seaberg (1974) and Coelho (1998) used different terms to express their ideas, these ideas were consistent in that they emphasized the encouraging functions of the teacher in terms of the acceptance and respect for cultural pluralism in multicultural education.

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In Seaberg's view (1974), the teacher's role as mediator was to translate what he/she knew about the students and the nature of learning into viable class practice. As a mediator, the teacher was a "go-between" or an "intervener" between students and curriculum. At first glance, being a mediator seemed to have the same function as being an instructor. However, the mediator role of the teacher paid more attention to the interaction and communication with students during the periods of curriculum learning. Seaberg (1974) pointed out that, as a mediator, the teacher interacted with students to help them develop their thinking power. The teacher listened thoughtfully and drew students out through the interactive process. The teacher helped students develop, examine, elaborate, expand and clarify their ideas and beliefs. The teacher guided discussions in ways that maximized the participation and involvement of the class. Under such conditions, the teacher became a facilitator who encouraged communication among students as well as between instructors and teachers in class. In a culturally diverse setting, Scott (2001) stated that one of roles for the teachers was "facilitating communication between school, parent and students" (p.52). Light and Cox (2001) suggested that being a facilitator was a major role of the teacher in institutions of higher education such as universities or colleges. Through interaction and communication among students, as well as between students and instructors in culturally diverse classrooms, various concepts and ideas were interchanged and shared so that the contents of curriculum were perceived from different cultural perspectives. Therefore, the facilitator was an important role of the teacher in culturally diverse classrooms.

The third environment was the phenomenological environment which was the student's perceived world. Seaberg (1974) explained the perceived world in the following terms: the

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student brought his/her own self, his/her past experience, his/her present feelings, his/her abilities and his/her propensities to act into each emerging situation. In a sense, the student created an environment from his/her own perceptions. The teacher's role as a diagnostician was to interpret what was happening in the student's phenomenal field in order to make changes in the external environment that would have a positive impact on the student. Contrary to the judge role, the diagnostician maintained neutrality, or a non-judgmental attitude, viewing symptoms as neither good nor bad but as growth-facilitating or growth-inhibiting. In a culturally diverse classroom, being a diagnostician could provide valuable help to students from different cultural backgrounds, so the students' needs were given more attention from their instructors. However, in higher education, it was perhaps implemented in a situation of small groups of students where the instructor was in charge and the teacher was not able to observe each individual's perceived world among a large group of students.

As the political, technological, and phenomenological environments blended into the aesthetic—the fourth educational environment, the choreographer role of an instructor was to structure, integrate, and synchronize the events within the three environments, inducing an overall harmonious effect that was felt aesthetically by students. An instructor, as a choreographer, relied heavily on the school atmosphere, and not just on technical know-how, in creating an educational environment. Harmony was the core of the aesthetic environment in Seaberg's view.

The role of the instructor in a class is not simply a single role but a comprehensive and complex one. In a culturally diverse classroom, the teacher is supposed to have cross cultural

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sensitivity (Scott, 2001). Both teaching styles and strategies are impacted by cultural sensitivity. The more cross cultural sensitivity the teacher has, the more empowerment measures the teacher is able to employ. The more empowerment the teacher offers in a culturally diverse classroom, the closer to the ultimate goals of multicultural education. The following discussion part will focus on the teaching strategies in a culturally diverse classroom.

### **Teaching Strategies in a Culturally Diverse Classroom**

Davis (1976) described teaching strategies as being “a plan, method, or series of activities designed to achieve a particular educational goal” (p.12). Davis highlighted four teaching strategies for the college class: (1) employing instructional systems; (2) communicating through lectures; (3) facilitating inquiry; and (4) utilizing group processes. Nicholls (2002) differentiated teaching strategies from teaching styles. Teaching style was the term used to describe the way a learning experience was conducted. Teaching styles were usually associated with a particular approach to students such as experiential, didactic, teacher-directed, student-centered, theoretical, traditional, transmission, content based, processed based and facilitative. Teaching style was derived from the behavior of the teacher and the chosen teaching strategies. Nicholls (2002) stated that teaching strategies referred to the choice and range of teaching methods used during a teaching session and might include group work, problem solving, discussion or practical work. Three teaching strategies: lecture, small group interaction, and cooperative learning will be discussed.

#### **Lecture**

Nicholls (2002) emphasized the implications of the lecture as a teaching strategy in

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higher education. The lecture was the standard method for teaching large classes as well as the traditional way to instruct students. Bligh, cited by Nicholls (2002), concluded that the lecture was as effective as other methods as a means of transmitting information, but not more so. Nicholls also stated that lectures were less effective as a means of promoting thought, critical thinking and changing students' attitudes. Nicholls indicated that the lecture remained the main method of information delivery and teaching strategy employed in higher education. Green (2001) stated that a large lecture was emblematic of university teaching. The large lecture depended much more on the instructor, who had greater control and thus greater responsibility. Green said, "Lecturing can be one of the more theatrical modes of teaching, and not all academics do well on stage" (p.184). Nicholls (2002) pointed out that it was essential to consider the advantages and disadvantages of the lecture as a method of instruction. It was generally agreed that an interrupted fifty-minute lecture was a poor method of learning in that there was usually no student participation, no rehearsal of what was learned and no feedback to the lecturer.

Similarly, Light and Cox (2001) perceived lecturing as the teaching strategy for teaching large groups in higher education particularly in undergraduate study. Biggs, cited by Light and Cox, suggested that the lecturers' unique scholarly mind helped them to integrate their role as teacher and research/scholar. Light and Cox (2001) identified two features of lecturing in higher education. One was that unique combination of incorporating both live and face to face contact with large student numbers. The other one was common to much distance and open learning where technology and media could aid in large scale teaching projects. Moreover, Light and Cox (2001) suggested that "the traditional lecture

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needs to be re-envisaged as a dialogue in which the lecturer is genuinely engaged” (Light & Cox, 2001, p.101). They proposed an engagement model which focused on the lecturer as a person committed to engaging with other people in a dialogue concerning particular topics such as policy, health and movies, which aspired to a deep integration or transmission of both the self and lecture material in terms of students to which both were directed.

Nicholls (2002) stated it was likely that the academic would have a heterogeneous group of students. Therefore, it was essential to understand the underlying principles of differentiated teaching strategies and implications this had for planning and preparation of teaching/learning material. The key to understanding differentiated learning was an appreciation that those who lecture might have different value systems about students’ capabilities and inspirations to learn from the students themselves. Teaching in a culturally diverse classroom required considering the cultural differences among students when lecturing. Otherwise, the lecturer would fail to come down to students’ academic level (Gill, Nicholls, 2002). The engagement model would not be able to take advantage of the tremendous potential of the large group experience (Light & Cox, 2001). Scott (2001) stated that teachers should be sensitive to student differences that might well affect their learning preferences and styles and use both verbal and visual modes of presentation to accommodate different learners. Therefore, it was quite essential to take cultural pluralism into account when lecturing in a culturally diverse classroom.

### **Small Group Interaction**

Another strategy suggested by Nicholls (2002) was the use of small groups. He put forward functions of small group work: lecture-small group interaction, lecturer-student



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interaction, and student-small group interaction. The optimum size of a small group was between ten and twenty students (Nicholls, 2002). The main aim of the student-small group interaction was to enable students to solve problems and learn by working solely with other students. Another teaching strategy in a culturally diverse class was cooperative learning which was an approach to active instruction that groups students into small mixed-ability learning teams. The teacher presented the group with a problem to solve or a task to perform, and the students helped each other within the group. Cooperative learning strategy will be discussed later in the review.

Nicholls (2002) pointed out that to facilitate the development of lecturer-small group interaction both students and lecturer had to appreciate that they had equal rights to participate, and that any of them might initiate discussion and criticism. This might happen in a number of ways including the interruption of the lecturer or discussion by questioning. Each student was actively encouraged to develop critical thinking skills, using his or her own judgment and methods of reasoning. Students should also be enabled to learn from each other and not rely on the expert in the form of lecturer.

The objective of lecturer-student interaction was to promote the application of new principles and to appreciate some of the problems faced by the group in solving the problem. The lecturer took on the role of an interpreter and clarifier of issues being discussed and engaged in within the group. The lecturer's knowledge and experience allowed him or her to ask the right questions to provoke thought or to redirect students in their problem-solving activities.

Specifically, Light and Cox (2001) highlighted four dimensions of small group teaching:

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intellectual, personal, social, and practical. Within the intellectual dimension, there were six points: cognitive understanding, appreciating other perceptions, changing conceptions, questioning assumptions, developing oral skills, and feedback to staff. Most of the six points could be related to the acceptance and respect of cultural diversity in classroom such as the appreciation of others' perceptions. As Saunders (1982) said, differences in people's appearances and in their ways of life should not be judged good or bad, but be accepted as normal examples of the diversity that were present in human beings. Dilg (1999) stated one of the challenges for instructors, when teaching in a culturally diverse classroom, was that they must attempt to be sensitive and responsive to each student's affective and cognitive needs as those needs emerged from multiple cultural factors.

Within the personal dimension, providing opportunities for practice in self-expression, developing self-awareness, and encouraging commitment, weakening defensive attitudes, and improving attitudes to the subject emphasized the importance of self-identity in the class. When applied to a culturally diverse classroom at the post secondary level, self-identity referred to the cultural identity of an individual. Saunders (1982) described self-identity as "a sense of personal continuity that combines all the self-concepts, as well as unconscious identifications and perceptions of one's capacities" (p. 73). Dilg (1999) pointed out that students would also be powerfully affected by where they were in the development of their own identities, where they were in relation to their own history and culture, and how they felt about the histories and cultures of others.

The social dimension embodied three functions: encouraging co-operation and awareness of others, developing a sense of social identity, and developing a sense of

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belonging and community. Light and Cox (2001) wrote that social isolation could still be a problem for graduate students, albeit the situation had improved in recent years. Many universities now recognized the need to help graduate students develop their teamwork skills and their communication skills more widely. This new emphasis on the social dimension of graduate studies could make a valuable contribution to the development of confidence and independence. In terms of multicultural education, the social dimension of small group interaction mainly referred to the integration of identity, respect and accept of diverse beliefs into the culturally diverse classroom, school, and community.

The practical dimension included the development of teamwork skills, solving practical problems, carrying on specific tasks such as creating artifacts and writing reports. Small group interaction is able to accomplish the development of teamwork when directed by instructors in culturally diverse classrooms.

### **Cooperative Learning**

Nicholls (2002) stated that the principle objective of student-small group interaction was for students to become proficient in the art of problem solving, decision making, evaluating and applying principles through free discussion, team work and the creative application of knowledge. Group practical activities in the sciences, problem solving in mathematics or project work in almost any discipline could be served by student-small group interaction. Such a small group interaction could be perceived as cooperative learning in that cooperative learning shared common characteristics with student-small group interaction: group work, responsibility, dependency and a purpose of enhancing learning for all (Scott, 2001).

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Sapon-Shevin and Schniedewind (1991) defined cooperative learning as “a pedagogical approach in which a teacher structured learning so that heterogeneous groups of students work together to achieve a shared learning goal” (p. 166). Scott (2001) stated that cooperative learning was one of teaching strategies that could be employed when teaching in a culturally diverse setting. Furthermore, Scott (2001) proposed that the four purposes of cooperative learning were as follows: helping students improve their academic achievement, developing their social skills, getting students to help each other achieve on the basis of teamwork, getting low-achieving students to benefit from working with high-achieving students, and increasing the motivation of all students through the success experienced by teams. Sapon-Shevin and Schniedewind (1991) viewed the principles of cooperative learning as being implicit and as being similar to those needed for an effective culturally diverse classroom.

First of all, cooperatively-structured learning was democratic. Within a cooperative classroom, democracy was not something which was studied but something which was lived. Teacher time and educational resources were provided equitably to all students regardless of ability, gender, or race. For instance, groups were heterogeneous and mixed by ability, race, or gender. The teacher structured learning carefully so each student in a group had an important task. Secondly, students in cooperative learning activities took responsibility for both themselves and others. An ethic of care pervaded their group as students paid sensitive attention to each other. They provided help when asked for it, and were generous with encouragement and support. Cooperative classrooms created communities of caring in which students saw themselves as having specific responsibilities to one another regardless

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of what kind of cultural background they come from. Thirdly, heterogeneity and diversity were valued in cooperative learning activities. In cooperative classes, heterogeneity and diversity were not simply tolerated but were nourished and valued. Instructors went to great lengths to ensure that all students were aware of the rich diversity in the classroom. Dilg (1999) indicated that “we have to prepare our students to understand conflict in a multicultural society, to negotiate as it emerges and to harness it for good rather than destruction” (p. 59). When conflict around difference emerged in their groups, students learned skills to manage them nonviolently and attempted to find a win/win resolution.

### **Conclusion**

In this section, the three key concepts regarding multicultural education were: the nature of multicultural education, the role of teachers, and teaching strategies in a culturally diverse classroom. In terms of the nature of multicultural education, one of the dimensions of it presented by Banks (1999) was the knowledge construction process, which emphasized teaching strategies of helping students understand a discipline within a cultural framework.

Having analyzed both the traditional roles of instructors and the changing and challenging roles of instructors, the literature suggested that investigating the roles of instructors would contribute to the achievement of the goals of multicultural education. Consequently, what correspondent teaching strategies in culturally diverse classrooms will help an instructor achieve this goal of multicultural education become the focus of my study.

As a whole, the literature review presented established a comprehensive theoretical framework for the research to investigate instructors' perceptions of their roles when teaching in a culturally diverse classroom at the post secondary level.

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## **Chapter III: Research Design and Methodology**

### **Design**

The design of this study employs a qualitative, phenomenological approach to research. Johnson and Christensen (2000) defined phenomenology as the description of one or more individuals' consciousness and experiences of a phenomenon, such as viewing oneself as a teacher or the act of teaching. The purpose of phenomenological research is to obtain an insight into participants' life-worlds and to understand their personal meanings. The primary means of data collection in this study was through the use of the guided interview (Johnson & Christensen, 2000). As well, this research was conducted from an etic perspective (Johnson & Christensen, 2000) as the researcher had not been involved in teaching students in a culturally diverse classroom.

### **Methodology**

#### **Research Questions**

The primary research focus was to investigate instructors' perceptions of their roles when teaching in a culturally diverse classroom at the post secondary level. With this focus in mind, the following research questions emerged:

1. What are the challenges faced by an instructor in a culturally diverse classroom at the post secondary level?
2. What are instructors' perceptions of their roles when teaching in a culturally diverse classroom at the post secondary level?
  - (a) What kind of roles do instructors play in a culturally diverse classroom?

- (b) What teaching strategies are employed in a culturally diverse classroom?
3. What are the influences or effects of teaching strategies for students studying in a culturally diverse classroom?

### **Sampling Strategies**

McMillan and Schumacher (2001) presented two sampling strategies: probabilistic sampling and purposeful sampling. Usually probabilistic sampling (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001) is applied in quantitative research. In contrast, purposeful sampling is “selecting information-rich cases for study in-depth” (Patton, 2002, p. 230), when one wants to gain understanding about those cases without the need or desire for generalization. Participants are chosen because they are likely to be knowledgeable and informative about the phenomena the researcher is investigating.

The researcher used a maximum variation sampling strategy to select the participants in the study. Maximum variation sampling (Patton, 2002) aims at capturing and describing the central themes that cut across a great deal of variation. As such maximum variation sampling may “obtain maximum differences of perceptions about a topic among information-rich informants or groups” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001, p. 402). Patton (2002) pointed out that, when selecting a small sample of great diversity, the data collection and analysis will yield two kinds of findings: (a) high-quality detailed descriptions of each case, which are useful for documenting uniqueness, and (b) important shared patterns that cut across cases and derive their significance from having emerged out of heterogeneity.

Six participants were selected for participation in this study. All participants were selected from a post-secondary institution in a mid-sized city in the province of Ontario. The

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key common characteristic of the six participants was that they were instructors who have had students from different cultural backgrounds in their classrooms.

In order to prevent gender perceptions from dominating the study, the sample was divided into the two gender groups, three males and three females. All participants were chosen from three humanity disciplines. For each discipline, one male and one female were selected in order to attain gender balance.

### **Data Collection**

The means of data collection was the interview. Qualitative interviews are also called in-depth interviews because they can be used to obtain in-depth information about a participant's thoughts, beliefs, knowledge, reasoning, motivations, and feelings about a topic (Johnson & Christensen, 2000). Johnson and Christensen identified three types of qualitative interviews: the informal conversational interview, the guided interview approach, and the open-ended interview. The guided interview approach allows the researcher to enter the interview session with a plan to explore specific topics and to ask specific open-ended questions of the participants.

The researcher interviewed six participants and ensured that the participants understood the purpose of the research, as well as matters of confidentiality, and the participants' rights in the study. Each participant was interviewed for about 40 minutes. The interviews were audio-taped and the contents were transcribed immediately after each interview.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis was ongoing. A constant comparative approach was used to analyze the



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data to determine categories and themes through the use of an inductive method. Bogdan and Biklen (2003) defined the constant comparative method as a research design for multi-data sources which involve constant comparison of identified codes to determine their distinctive characteristics so they can be placed into appropriate categories.

In this study, preliminary codes were developed and revised, and interview transcripts were coded. The example below illustrates how the data were analyzed and coded. This is an excerpt from the response of one participant during the interview:

There're people in the room who know cultural things which I don't know, they have cultural experiences that I haven't had, so that means students can teach each other.  
(Int.2,p.3)

This piece of data was coded as "learning experience" because it indicated that the participant perceived that there would be a learning experience for students in a culturally diverse class. Data with this code were placed into the category of "benefits for students", which covered data that indicated what advantages for students studying in a culturally diverse classroom.

Formal analysis of the data did not take place until data collection was completed (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). After data collection was complete, and the preliminary codes were modified, the codes were grouped into categories. After codes were assigned to categories, these categories were clustered around themes, which corresponded to the research questions.

In a whole, sample strategies, data collection and data analysis employed in this study are based on the qualitative, phenomenological approach.

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## Chapter IV: Research Findings & Interpretation

### The Findings

This chapter begins with a presentation of the research findings derived from the six interviews. Through the process of collecting, transcribing, and coding data, four categories emerged. These included: (a) a summary of instructors' teaching experiences; (b) the instructors' perceptions of culturally diverse classes; (c) the teaching strategies they employed; and (d) instructors' roles in the classroom. The categorized research findings are presented first and then followed by their interpretation.

#### Summary of Instructors' Teaching Experiences

In terms of instructors' teaching experiences, three categories emerged and are briefly described: ethnic composition of students, previous work experience, and training experience.

##### Ethnic Composition of Students

All six participants were instructors who have had teaching experience in a culturally diverse class at the post secondary level. The ethnic composition of students in their classes included First Nations, European, African and Asian students. All of participants had prior experience teaching First Nations students. One participant said: "I have First Nations students" (Int.1, p.1). Another participant indicated that by saying: "When I taught in (name of university), I was getting First Nations students more often" (Int.2, p.1). Three of them (Int.1, Int.2, Int.4) indicated that they had experience with teaching students of European descent. Another participant in an English department

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assumed the existence of a relationship between teaching that subject and the number of European students enrolled in the course: “I think that’s a problem with English as discipline; it tends to attract European students for some strange reason” (Int. 2, pp.2-3). Also, three participants (Int.3, Int.4, Int.5) indicated that there were African students in their classes. One of them stated: “I have some Western African students and I also have black students, you know, their families have been in Canada for a long time” (Int.5, p.1). Four participants (Int.1, Int.3, Int.4, Int.5) indicated that Asian students were another minority student group in their culturally diverse classes. One of the six instructors said: “I had a few Chinese students, for example” (Int.1, p.1). As well, he said: “I have had people from Arabia” (Int.1, p.4).

Although all participants indicated that there were minority students in their classes, they also noted that the number of those students did not dominate classes at the school where they were teaching. One of them mentioned:

The undergraduate course I teach is outdoor education, and it is not very diverse. I would say, probably ninety percent to ninety-five percent are white...My graduate class is critical pedagogy, and is a more diverse than undergraduate program. When I taught in (name of university), I had really diverse classes, but here in (name of university) there haven’t been very much. (Int.3, p.1)

Another participant also indicated:

Not that much, just a little bit (cultural diversity of students at the current school)...in other courses I taught, I had more culturally diverse classrooms, the classes I taught in (name of university), for example. (Int.1, p.1)

### Previous Work Experience

In terms of previous work experience, five participants responded that they have taught in very culturally diverse settings. Some were related to teaching, some were not. Five participants (Int.1, Int.3, Int.4, Int.5, Int.6) talked about their prior teaching experience in culturally diverse environments and how those experiences shaped their ideas about culture. Two of them described their backgrounds in teaching English as Second Language. (Int.1, Int.5) One instructor mentioned the following:

The most culturally diverse classrooms I taught in were in (name of city). I taught at (name of university). And there, there is a French language university and I was teaching in the English department. So nearly all the students are second language students because the majority were people who spoke French as a first language, but also there were immigrants for whom English was taught as a second language.

(Int.1,p.2)

The other instructor described her teaching experience as an ESL (English as a Second Language) instructor in Toronto. She realized that this experience shaped her understanding of cultural issues:

You are going to have people from all over the world; they'll be going to be trained from different cultures. And you know, sometimes, trying to recognize...making sure that cultural things get kind of translated...and not to be judgmental, and to just understand that. (Int. 5, p, 6)

She added some comments later:

Yeah...I think that (teaching ESL in a cultural setting) does (help me understand

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cultural things) because I do remember them. I don't necessarily always consciously...sometimes it shaped me in that experience that I was working with refugees as well, just to understand the challenges. (Int. 5, pp.6-7)

The other three participants (Int.3, Int.4, Int.6) mentioned their teaching experience in non-ESL classes. One instructor described her teaching background as follows:

Most of my teaching before that (1997) was in a non-formal setting, like parks that sort of thing. When I joined (name of university), the sorts of courses I was teaching were quite culturally diverse. (Int. 3, p.2)

Another instructor presented his first teaching experience in the following manner:

I taught in a small place on an island, and almost all of my students are Inuit...So my first experience was with a cultural group that was not European Canadian. That made me very interested in learning styles. (Int. 4, p.2)

Two out of the six participants described their experience in another country. (Int.4, Int.6) One of these two instructors noted that his lecturing experience was in Australia, for example. (Int.6) He also mentioned that he had more research experience with culturally diverse groups than actual teaching. The other instructor talked a lot about his work experience in Denmark. He commented that the work helped him to understand different cultures:

I worked in Denmark, but...I didn't work in school, it's like daycare...I didn't know Danish too well, so I was learning Danish as a result of interaction with kids, and I think, that helped me to understand that different cultures have different ways of thinking. (Int.4, pp.6-7)

### Training Experience

Only one participant (Int.3) indicated explicitly that she had specific training in teaching in a culturally diverse class. The other five participants (Int.1, Int.2, Int.4, Int.5, Int.6) indicated that they had no specific training in this field, but they all mentioned that relevant learning experiences had helped them to understand cultural concepts and ideas.

The participant who had specific training received that experience from first being a social worker:

First of all, I was a social worker, that was my first job after university. So being a social worker, we get experience with anti-racist stuff...I worked in a culturally diverse community center in (name of city)...so I had professional training in that way. (Int.3, p.4)

In addition, she pointed out the significance of specific training in teaching in a culturally diverse class:

I think it (training) should be a requirement. It's disappointing to me that here, for example, there is to be a program that is multicultural education and it is an elective course, but I think it should be a requirement. I think we need to have all sorts of really important social issues as required parts because you can not really deal with these issues. I think, that's a part of their lack of training, so I think, it should be required, it's really really important. (Int.3, p.5)

Four participants reported learning experiences regarding cultural issues. (Int.1, Int.3, Int.4, Int.5) As one participant described his learning environment at a university:

When I was doing my doctorate at (name of university), which is a very multicultural

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university. So sometimes I've just been put into a classroom that is a very multicultural environment...So there is a connection between the way in which I just lived normally and what I did in the classroom. (Int.1, p.10)

Also, he talked about class discussions on second language topics:

Occasionally we had a topic, we talked about problems, dealing with issues that arise to do with second language, not so much to do with culturally diverse classrooms but more to do with a second language. (Int.1, p.10)

Another participant responded, "In terms of education, I took a course in critical pedagogy. I did lots of readings in anti-racist in education...I got information that way" (Int.3, p.5).

Another instructor perceived his education in the following manner:

I guess, Contemporary Issues in Native Education, would be considered background for that (specific training). I also did English as a Second Language...and as you talk about English as Second Language, you talk about different cultures, so that helps as well.

The only other thing, it wasn't specifically to set me up to teach, but my whole Masters's work focused on components of different learning styles, talking about curriculum, appropriate curriculum for different cultures, as well as broad ideas as to what the aims of education are. (Int.4, p.7)

### **The Instructors' Perceptions of Culturally Diverse Classes**

Within the instructors' perceptions of culturally diverse classes, three concepts were perceived by all participants as being important: benefits for students, challenges faced by students, and challenges faced by instructors.

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### **Benefits for Students**

Six participants indicated that positive learning experiences were one of benefits for students in a culturally diverse class. One of the instructors mentioned that she told her students:

So I said, you don't have to be afraid that you'll be judged based on the colour of your skin, think about that as a learning experience. (Int.2, p.3)

In addition, she viewed a culturally diverse class as a productive space:

There're people in the room who know cultural things which I don't know, they have cultural experiences that I haven't had, so that means students can teach each other. A lot of what I teach are cross cultural understandings, because Native literature written in English is often drafted outside of the First Nations community. It often deals with how the two communities interact, so we have what happens in the classroom during what happens in the book, that's a really, really productive space. (Int.2, p.3)

Another instructor pointed to that how students in his class reacted to the cultural knowledge other minority students experienced and how that reaction could motivate students to be eager to learn more:

Positively, I had lots and lots of students when they were doing the reading about residential schools, they reacted with outrage. They can't believe that happened in Canada, they can't believe they didn't know about it, they want to make sure they don't do things that are bad for their First Nations students. When people suddenly see what has happened, I feel very positive that they will think about it, they are interested in...they feel like they had a blind spot. (Int.4, p.5)



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When asked about negative experiences, one participant responded that she would like to see it as a learning experience:

I wouldn't call them (students' different perspectives) negative; I would call them more like learning experiences. I don't think I have had really negative experiences, people seem pretty open. (Int.5, p.4)

In terms of cultural experiences, all participants agreed that students' different cultural experiences will contribute to a class. One of them talked about the First Nations students in his class:

I also have some very strong First Nations students who have told a little piece of their stories to the class about how they feel about their backgrounds, also around the readings. (Int.4, p.5)

Another instructor noted that students would feel confident if their experiences are considered by others:

I mean the positive is always when you have individuals who have broad experiences, who are prepared to share their experiences with other students in a class. I think, for many individuals who come from different cultural backgrounds, simply feeling confident that their points of view will be welcomed. (Int.6, p.3)

One participant who is teaching Native Literature described how cultural experience sharing helped students to understand literature better:

It's absolutely sensible to have the First Nations people if they want to tell their own stories and contribute them. And that helps everyone see the way the literature fits into the community, and helps Native students to recognize the literature in terms of their

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own community, it helps the white students see the literature not just as literature, it isn't just a text going out of community. (Int.2, p.10)

When talking about benefits for students, all participants expressed their positive feelings about culturally diverse classes. One participant experienced more fun in a culturally diverse class than in a homogeneous classroom:

I found that sometimes it (a non-culturally diverse class) was not very effective because everybody was very similar and had similar reactions to things, so just wasn't very interesting...I found a lot more fun because...just as a teacher, if there are people from different backgrounds, they won't be the same...so I found that sometimes with more culturally diverse classrooms, that (forming new friendships) was possible. (Int.1,p.7-8)

Another participant felt delighted about having an open atmosphere in a culturally diverse class:

I'm really delighted when my classes come together and people are feeling safe with one another and they think and raise difficult issues, and are not worrying about what they're saying to one another, worrying about offending each other...I'm really happy when my classes can be a place where we can talk about these issues openly. (Int.3, p.3)

### **Challenges Faced by Students**

From all participants' perspectives, although there were so many benefits derived from a culturally diverse classroom for students, there were still some challenges facing them.

Four of them found that unfamiliarity with the Canadian educational system was a big problem for students from other cultures. (Int.1, Int.3, Int.4, Int.5) One instructor mentioned the challenges encountered by students who were used to a teacher-centered approach in

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class:

People from different cultures may have different understandings of those things (relationship between instructors and students)...People from some cultures, for example, are used to not participating or basically professors' lectures. I am teaching composition...it tends not to be a teacher-centered approach. There are all sorts of group discussions. So those students who were from more teacher-focused classrooms have trouble sometimes participating in group work. (Int.1, p.3)

Similar to the above comment, another instructor noted this difficulty in detail:

So I also have recognized what their background is. Some of this (educational system) may be very new for them, therefore, they might be a little frightened, you know, they may not even have skills...maybe not know how to do group work well because they may not have done very much group work, they don't know how to be an effective group member or how to deal with unavoidable conflicts that might come up in a group. (Int.3, p.14)

Another instructor indicated the same point:

I know in some African countries, and I think, in some parts of India too, the student teacher relationship, even in Europe, the student teacher relationship is a lot more formal than here (Canada). So I think, they perceive that a teacher is supposed to tell them all these things and they are not necessarily supposed to ask too many questions. I do try to encourage questioning but I do notice that it might be difficult for those students to do because they have different undergraduate or educational experiences.(Int.5, p.11)

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In addition, she emphasized the importance of recognizing the different educational backgrounds experienced by students:

I think it's important to recognize that if someone is educated in a different country, there are really different systems in education, and becoming comfortable with a more informal approach might take some time. (Int.5, p.13)

One participant mentioned the difficulties faced by students who are not used to the grading system in Canada:

I know from reading about grading, it tends to privilege people who are Canadian, people who are used to the system, people that know how things work, and know what to do to please people. (Int.4, p.18)

Also, he indicated the disadvantages of the grading system:

The grading system (in Canada) and traditional exams generally punished certain students who aren't white Euro Canadian...it's really punishing people who are from that certain background. (Int.4, p.19)

Two participants (Int.1, Int.2) presented the lack of specific knowledge about Canada as a problem which students from other cultures encountered. One instructor explained this situation as follows:

For example, I teach Canadian literature in general, and so obviously when teaching nineteenth century Canadian literature, it tends to assume your students have the understanding of a few basic facts about Canadian history...if the students come from somewhere else, they may not have this knowledge, they may not know much about Canada, or they may not know very much about the particular issue or topic addressed

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in a story. (Int.1, p.9)

Another instructor mentioned the difficulties encountered by First Nation students in her literature class:

A lot of First Nations students don't have the background in studying in English literature so it needs to be brought up to speed from very, very basic of how to analyze the texts. (Int.2, p.5)

In addition, the ESL ( English as Second Language) problem has become one of the challenges faced by foreign students in a culturally diverse class. Two of the six participants mentioned it. (Int.1, Int.5) One respondent perceived it as a big problem:

How to deal with the fact that when somebody has really a good idea that is very interactively sophisticated but because their English is quite poor, the knowledge and grammar, spelling that sorts of things are very weak. They are not able to articulate their ideas in writing or sometimes even when speaking. (Int. 1, p.11)

On the other hand, he added:

The problem is that the courses are not designed to help them to improve their English.

The students in the course, they are already speaking English, writing English. (Int.1, p.12)

Four participants (Int.1, Int.3, Int.5, Int.6) indicated the difficulty for students to understand cultural issues. One mentioned it as follows:

Sometimes it's very difficult for students...they may know these facts...they don't really understand them, they don't understand how they affect people a lot because they come from different cultures. (Int.1, p.29)

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As well, another instructor described that situation in her law course:

There are students who don't understand cultural diversity but they are generally open to hearing more about it, so they might ask a question that just reflects that they are not understanding it well, even more so in my law classes...it's easier to understand that a family is a part of culture, to find that law is a part of culture, it's just a little more difficult. (Int.5, p.3)

All participants noted negative feelings among students in a culturally diverse class.

One mentioned students' uncomfortable feelings about language by recalling his own experience:

If I was put on the spot, I got a little nervous...I got really anxious about if I was making sense that sort of thing. I can also understand a lecture but if there was an interactive discussion, I would get lost. So I know, for me, the fact that I wasn't comfortable with the language is true for other students. (Int.1, p.24)

Two participants (Int.2, Int.3) mentioned the concerns of white students in a culturally diverse class. One instructor observed:

The first time I taught Native literature, I was surprised by how many of the white students would come to my office and said "I'm afraid to talk, I'm afraid that I'm going to be judged if I say something wrong". (Int.2, p.3)

The other instructor noted that white students felt guilty when talking about race in a class.(Int.3)

Four participants (Int.2, Int.3, Int.4, Int.6) mentioned students' negative emotions caused by other students in the same class. One of them indicated that there could be animosity

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developing between students when some students just don't understand their points of view.

One instructor described one incident that happened in his class:

I have a student who, from my way of thinking, really hadn't understood anything about what the reading was about, put up her hand and said, "I think, it's wrong that First Nations students get free tuition to come to university. I work hard and my parents work hard, we have to pay to come here, and they shouldn't get a free ride. It's not fair". And that created huge contention in the class, and I tried to facilitate through that...it wasn't feeling too bad at the end, but I had feedback from students afterwards, both of Canadian and First Nation students, they felt very uncomfortable. (Int.4, p.4)

### **Challenges Faced By Instructors**

One participant indicated that another challenge was encountered by students' different levels in their command of English:

It can be a challenge when you have people who have a wide range of familiarity with English, for example. You have to...you don't want to speak over the heads of those people whose English isn't so good, but at the same time, you don't want to be annoying people who speak fluent English. (Int.1, p.3)

Two participants (Int.1, Int.2) stated that students' lack of specific knowledge was another challenge for the teacher. One instructor reported that:

That (knowledge about Canada) could be a challenge again to inform those students who don't have that knowledge. Given the knowledge, they need to know and understand the literature we are looking at without going over stuff that everybody automatically already knows and bores them. (Int.1, p.9)

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All participants found out that a common challenge for an instructor, whether in an ethnically diverse class or not, was students' different learning styles. Students' learning styles were often linked to their different cultural backgrounds. One of them mentioned how they balanced the different needs of students:

One of challenges I found is that of balancing ...I tried to make sure that by providing enough lectures for those students that's what they really want, but I also tried to incorporate enough discussions for students who don't get much out of lectures. (Int.1, p.19)

Another instructor suggested having different teaching styles in order to satisfy diverse needs:

In a culturally diverse classroom, you are going to have culturally diverse learning styles, so it's a really good idea to have many different teaching styles to make sure that you can get everybody. (Int.2, p.12)

Three participants (Int.1, Int.2, Int.3) mentioned cultural challenges for an instructor. One participant (Int.1) perceived the biggest challenge for him was to get students to think about cultural differences. On the other hand, the other two participants (Int.2, Int.3) talked about the challenges faced by an instructor who was lacking of cultural experience and knowledge. One instructor described her limitations in Native literature class:

I also have difficulties as a white instructor...I know Native literature in English very well, but I don't have the cultural background. Sometimes, some points you can't just get from books. So I'm aware of those limitations, and that sometimes makes me uncomfortable as a teacher. (Int.2, p.5)

Another instructor suggested:



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In outdoor rec (recreation), some of our activities require actually physically touching one another...we are trying to build something, we have to touch each other, and that may not be appropriate in other cultures or may not be appropriate for male students do touch female students, for example, in Muslim cultures. So you have to be really attentive to that sort of thing. (Int.3, p.13)

### **The Teaching Strategies They Employed**

Participants responses related to teaching strategies are organized into three categories: description of teaching strategies, the advantages and disadvantages of various teaching strategies, and student feedback.

#### **Description of Teaching Strategies**

All six participants employed lectures as a teaching strategy. Two of them (Int.3, Int.4) indicated that they usually gave students a short lecture. An additional two participants (Int.2, Int.6) indicated that they had transformed the traditional lecture into a questioning lecture. One instructor described it as follows:

I give traditional lectures but they are always happening with questions. Part of that is my own interest, and I don't like the banking model. I like the idea of acting. I don't think students will listen to me for an hour and fifty minutes if I don't stop talking.  
(Int.2, p.9)

Another teaching strategy mentioned by five participants (Int.1, Int.2, Int.3, Int.4, Int.5) was small group discussion. The only participant who did not mention it was a teacher who had to teach a class with more than one hundred people. One participant indicated: "I try to send a small group to discuss things that we need to talk about coming from a reading"

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(Int.4, p.11). As well, he mentioned the two types of discussion he employed in a class: general discussion and specific discussion.

Five participants (Int.1, Int.2, Int.3, Int.4, Int.5) indicated that they utilized group work as a strategy. One instructor stated:

They work on the group presentation, presentations on a certain topic or debate on an issue. In my third year class, I used group work on a number of occasions. (Int.1, p.17)

The last teaching strategy that was mentioned by one instructor (Int.4), was called topic choice. As he explained:

The other thing I try to do in my classes is to give a lot of choices. One of the major projects is something that students have to define for themselves, so generally my First Nations students have defined a project that they are looking at legislation related to Indian education. I feel really good about giving choices, and say “You’re professional, you are becoming a teacher, you need to be able to identify your own interests and strengths and weakness, and address them”. (Int.4, pp.12-13)

All the six participants agreed that teaching strategies should be mixed and combined together rather than being separated in a culturally diverse class. One participant noted:

I try to mix all sorts of different strategies, I think, it is not only good for culturally diverse classes, I think, it’s good for a regular class, because you know you could have a whole class with white kids but they learn in different ways, so I think that it is just a good teaching and half of that is to benefit other cultures too. (Int.3 p.6)

Four participants (Int.1, Int.2, Int.3, Int.6) mentioned a combination of lectures

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and small group discussions. One participant explained different learning styles as one of the reasons to combine them:

I found that students like different things, there are some students...they want sit down and copy all the notes. That's what they want, they want professors to lecture, and copy the notes they need to know for exams. They don't want to discuss, they don't want to think on their own, they want to be taught this is what this means and that's what they need to know for exams. And other students who really don't like, who hate lectures, who hate to listen to the professor say what's going on, and what they want is to sit down with a poem or a story whatever, and debate and talk about it...I tried to make sure that by providing enough lectures for those students but I also tried to incorporate enough discussions for students who don't get much of lectures. (Int.1 p.19)

Another participant strengthened his point by stating "no strategy is going to work for every student, so that's why you have to mix them up" (Int.3, p.14).

All participants indicated that different learning styles are not only based on individual personalities, but also dependent on their cultural backgrounds and different educational backgrounds. One representative statement provided is as follows:

I think, you should use many different teaching tools as possible in most classrooms but it is even more important in a culturally diverse classroom because sometimes learning styles are based in culture. (Int.2, p.12)

### **The Advantages and Disadvantages of Various Teaching Strategies**

Instructors employed different teaching strategies which had certain advantages for students, however, as one participant commented "all of those techniques have dangers".

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(Int.3, p.14)

Lectures, for example, as one participant mentioned, have an academic effect on students. He noted:

A lecture is probably the best to produce knowledge that can be written down for an exam. If you want students to basically to know the facts, to know a lot of terms, a lecture would be a better way to get it. (Int.1, p.21)

However, in terms of teaching in a culturally diverse class, it has some disadvantages. Two participants (Int.1, Int.2) indicated extra explanations are needed in a big class when lecturing. One instructor noted:

It became an issue when there was a particular topic that you needed to explain a little bit more when not everybody in the class was born in Canada. (Int.1, p.13)

In terms of small group discussion, five participants (Int.1, Int.2, Int.3, Int.4, Int.5) presented two advantages. Two participants (Int.1, Int.2) pointed to its effect on students. One explained this in detail, "I would say, in general, that having smaller discussion groups are better for getting people to understand a particular work of literature". (Int.1, p.21)

Four participants (Int.2, Int.3, Int.4, Int.5) found that participation is expected in a small group discussion. One of them described this in the following manner:

I also have small group discussions, so people whether they are from different backgrounds or just shy people, are able to have their voices heard and participate in a small forum without feeling like they have to say something to the whole group. (Int.4, p.9)

One participant talked about the time limitations of small group discussion in a big class:

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When I get fifty or sixty students or bigger, that's too many students for me to be hands on all the time, because I have eight groups or something in an hour class. I don't spend too many minutes with each group because there are eight groups I have to spend the same amount of time with each one, so makes it difficult. (Int.1, pp.15-16)

With regard to group work, two participants (Int.3, Int.4) identified one advantage which can encourage all students to participate in a class. One instructor indicated:

I try to do group work and experiential things, so everybody can participate because I recognize that in a big class discussion, some students are too shy to speak in front of thirty people. I don't assume somebody is stupid because they are shy...Frankly, I found that quite often students really know what's going on because you see their written work, it's brilliant. (Int.3, p.7)

In addition, three participants (Int.1, Int.2, Int.3) mentioned another advantage of group work. One of them observed the following positive effect on students when students work in a culturally diverse group:

In terms of Canadian born students, they may not work with those students who are immigrant students or foreign students, but once they start working with each other, they start realizing: ok, well, we may have some differences but we also have a lot of similarities, so we put them together. So sometimes, you just force them to work together, they resolve the problems themselves. That can be one of the positive outcomes out of multicultural classrooms. (Int.1, p.7)

In terms of the disadvantages of group work, the only problem presented was class.size. One participant (Int.6) stated that there was no feasibility for group work in a large class.

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This participant usually teaches a large class with more than one hundred people. Another participant (Int.3) who usually teaches small classes with less than thirty people indicated that she was able to do group work and small group discussion in a class without difficulty.

With regard to the utilization of the mentioned teaching strategies, three participants (Int.3, Int.4, Int.5) talked about further examining teaching strategies in order to identify which ones are appropriate and which ones are not. One participant described his method in the following manner:

At the end of my class every year, I debrief the class and I ask people to comment on the way we've done things, the structures of the course, and I've really listened to that feedback as well what they write, and I change the class. (Int.4, p.15)

Also, he talked about one transformation of a strategy:

Like the first year, I think I did much more whole group discussions and I found that at the end of the year, when I got some major projects, there were people who I didn't know, because they haven't ever said anything, but they've done brilliant work in projects. I think maybe the big group can silence some people, there are many people that don't speak, so I move more towards small group. (Int.4, pp.15-16)

### **Student Feedback**

Another common method of evaluating a strategy is course evaluation which takes place every year. (Int.1, Int.2, Int.3, Int.4, Int.5, Int.6). There is diverse feedback from students. Five participants (Int.2, Int.3, Int.4, Int.5, Int.6) indicated that they received positive feedback from students. One participant indicated that her students had provided really positive feedback about her teaching:

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They (students) love it (teaching style), they really really like it. I always had really positive feedback on my course evaluations in person. It's just, I think, that they know I care about them, and I'm trying to do things differently. They recognize that there is room for people being mean to each other or races or sexes, people seem to react very well. So it's wonderful, the Dean tells me that my course evaluations are among one of the best in the faculty. (Int.3, p.9)

Another instructor talked about students' positive reactions to multicultural items discussed in class:

In terms of specific responses to multicultural stuff, I say, from the feedback, people admitted that they didn't know about issues, and "thank for making us aware of that". (Int.4, p.15)

Overall, all participants received positive responses from students about their teaching, but four participants (Int.1, Int.2, Int.3, Int.4) mentioned negative feedback from students. One participant talked about her negative experience as a white instructor who is teaching Native literature, "I quite often get cold because students say: "why should you be teaching this class", which could be difficult" (Int.2, p.5). She added: "I always have a couple of people who absolutely hate me sometimes because I am white" (Int.2, p.10). Also, she stated:

I also have some students who find me to apologize, because they think I should be the voice of the authority, and I should shut up people who are talking too much" (Int.2, p.10).

As well, another participant mentioned students' criticisms of his teaching: "There

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are always a few voices on course evaluations at the end of the year, they say things like they didn't learn anything in my class"(Int.4, p.15).

### **Instructors' Roles in the Class**

In terms of instructor's role in a culturally diverse class, three participants (Int.1, Int.3,Int.6) indicated that an instructor has to be aware of the various cultures in a class. As one stated:

Not to pretend the races, and sexes and all those sorts of things don't exist. We have acknowledged that there is a problem. I know it's easier to pretend that it is not there, because a lot of people are afraid to deal with it, they don't want go anywhere near something that controversial. But I think, we have to name it, and we have to address it.

We need to make it explicit. (Int.3, p.11)

Another participant indicated that instructors play a role in the promotion of cultural understanding:

I think, simply encouraging and acknowledging the value of culture introducing appropriate information from other cultural experiences with the issues being discussed, so introducing that into the classroom, into the curriculum, and always acknowledging the validity of other cultural experiences. (Int.6, p.9)

The following section introduces six types of roles of an instructor in a culturally diverse class.

#### **Instructor as a Lecturer**

All six participants mentioned their role as a lecturer, however, participants indicated that the lecturer role could be challenged under certain conditions. One participant (Int.1)



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stated that different levels of English among the students was a challenge for a lecturer because he/she had to balance that situation to make sure everyone could follow the material he or she gave in class.

Three participants (Int.1, Int.3, Int.4) provided different opinions regarding students who were educated in different cultures. Some students liked, or were used to, lectures because they were from an educational system which is formal and conservative (Int.1, Int.3, Int.4); others disliked lectures because they had been educated in an informal environment so that they were more comfortable with a discussion format. One instructor gave an example:

Canadian born students who have gone to high school in Canada, for example, or who were educated in Canada do not like a strict lecture format. Some of them tend to be more open to a more interactive classroom. But sometimes, I found, for example, I taught Chinese students, they tend to prefer a lecturer. I think, it's to do with the educational system they are used to. I think, a lot of students from outside of Canada often tend to prefer a lecture format. (Int.1, pp.22-23)

Also, a lecturer usually provides basic and general knowledge to students. (Int.1)  
However, in a culturally diverse class, students from other cultures often have no specific knowledge about Canada. In this situation, a lecturer needs to provide more explanation to those students.

(Int.1, Int.2)

### **Instructor as a Role Model**

Two participants (Int.3, Int.4) indicated that being a role model tends to indicate to the

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students the importance of cultural ideas in a class. As one instructor described it:

If you choose to never address any of these cultural issues, that is essentially telling students that they are not important and it doesn't matter, so the students learn that even if we didn't mean to teach that to them or not. So I think, we need to set an example, and we need to, especially in a teacher's college, to demonstrate the way in which we can address our classrooms, so these students can go out and do it by themselves when they're teaching kids. So I think, we should be taking a leadership role and acting as role models, we should be leading the way. (Int.3, p.12)

The other instructor strengthened the idea of being a role model:

I think, we shouldn't underestimate how powerful modeling is, so when a teacher comes in and suggest that acknowledging different cultures has nothing in a course. It sends the wrong message to students. (Int.4, p.25)

He added the significance of modeling:

I think, modeling is really important and that's the reason why I'd like to continue to learn. If I can really model, if I can really approach, if I have a group of First Nations students, and model how I might adapt things, how I might adjust them to...engage them in a discussion of what special needs might they have, I think, that would also be powerful. (Int.4, p.26)

Moreover, three participants (Int.2, Int.3, Int.4) stated that they did not want to be a judge in class. One instructor identified the difference between a role model and judge:

I'm trying to make sure that students also take responsibility for their actions, so it's not just me, I don't want to be a police officer, I'd rather be an example. (Int.3,

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p.10)

### **Instructor as a Learner**

All six participants expressed the idea of learning from students in class. One instructor expressed this in the following manner: “I learn from them. It’s a mainly positive thing. It’s absolutely fantastic in that way. And it can be really, really productive” (Int.2, p.4). Another instructor confirmed this learning experience:

I do try to share that power (being a professor) and I know I learn a lot from other students. So I am a learner there too, and I do often learn from the things students tell me. (Int.3, pp.8-9)

Similarly, another participant stated: “There has to be a dialogue, there has to be willingness on the part of some instructors to learn from students’ experiences” (Int.6,p.7).

### **Instructor as a Facilitator**

Six participants mentioned the role of facilitator. Three participants explained their facilitating behaviors in detail, especially in small group discussions, (Int.1, Int.3, Int.4) As one participant described his behavior:

I try to interact with members of the group in a way that can help them to understand each other and maybe sort of explain, why they have different ways of understanding what a professor is supposed to be doing, and trying to get them to explain it to each other. (Int.1, p.6)

Further, he explained how he facilitated different needs between groups:

I found, in discussion groups, I am a facilitator more than a lecturer, but it’s different

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from group to group. Some groups could be very knowledgeable about the topic, and there are other groups that really haven't any clue as to the topic, they don't know much about the poem or whatever, so they need a lot more help. When you are teaching in a group situation, it is more flexible adapting to individual group needs. (Int.1, p.18)

Another participant described her facilitating role as follows:

I do see myself as more of a facilitator. I provide the space for people to explore whatever issues we're talking about, whatever outdoor or critical stuff, that's my job to facilitate that. (Int.3, p.10)

Similarly, another instructor defined the role of a facilitator in small groups in this way:

That's a facilitator more, providing less information and making sure everybody gets a turn when they want to talk about something that everybody has an opinion about. (Int.5, p.9)

Five participants (Int.1, Int.2, Int.3, Int.4, Int.5) stated that it was the main goal for a facilitator to help students to think critically in a culturally diverse class. One instructor noted:

A ( practical )focus is also trying to teach students or help students to think critically, to analyze or just to certainly accept, like seeing a picture. You actually take the time, look at the picture, think about what types of messages it's giving us that sort of thing. These are elements of critical thinking which I think is crucial in all teaching. It can help people think more about the world around them, to think about issues that we're facing

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everyday, to think about who we are, what we want. (Int.1, p.25)

Another participant expressed the idea of motivating and broadening students' thinking:

I would see myself as someone inspiring people to want to do well, to want to learn a lot, to want to see teaching as much, much broader than taking some subject knowledge and putting it into people's heads. I want them to think of things they haven't thought before, I want them to go out of here, thinking about whatever is happening in their classes, whatever somebody tells them, whatever somebody reads. (Int.4, p.23)

He added: "I have the job to push people to think about their own backgrounds and the way of power works, and the way the society is structured" (Int.4, p.20). Another instructor mentioned that she tried to "teach people how to be able to understand their own opinions, and articulate their opinions and also interrogate their own opinions" (Int.2, p.13).

Cultural conflict between instructors and students, as well as among students, could take place in a culturally diverse class. All participants provided solutions to such a controversial situation. One such solution is to give students freedom to choose their group members to avoid potential controversy due to diverse cultures. (Int.1, Int.2, Int.3, Int.4, Int.5) Another solution is to be honest when conflicts arise in a class. (Int.2, Int.3) One instructor indicated that: "Be honest, be as open as you can, and do your best to change the negative things to positive" (Int.2, p.13).

Three participants (Int.2, Int.3, Int.4) suggested behaviors to resolve controversial situations regarding cultural things. One of them described how to be honest to students as a white instructor:

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I'm actually quite honest, I explained the problems politically and pedagogically with having the white instructor teaching Native literature, and I also talked about quite openly things like the finances of the university...I also talked about what I do know and what I bring to course. This is what I do, this is what I know, this is how I can help you, there are the limitations of what I can't do. (Int.2, pp.7-8)

Another participant pointed out that she conducted a class in a respectful way, which allowed students have different opinions without fighting each other. (Int.5)

All participants held a consistent opinion that it was crucial to provide students with a good atmosphere in a culturally diverse class and make them feel comfortable. One of them indicated: "my role is to create an open space to value cross cultural, multicultural perspectives" (Int.5, p.12). Another participant noted that she tried to create a safe space where people would feel comfortable talking and there is room for different opinions. (Int.3)

### **Instructor as a Diagnostician**

All participants mentioned the importance of considering students' individual needs. As one instructor indicated:

I'm very aware that I want to be supportive and helpful and willing to sit down with the person to help work on the work. Most of things I do is to give people a chance to resubmit them (their work)...they have a chance to improve their work, which I think works well for multicultural strategies giving that opportunity to improve. (Int.4, p.9)

Another feature of the diagnostician is to be open to all perspectives. (Int.1, Int.2, Int.3, Int.4, Int.5, Int.6) One participant stated;

That's important to be open to all those perspectives. People usually ask a

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question, and I just try to see where the perspective is coming from and look at it more as a question about information than an opinion. (Int.5, p.5)

Another participant responded:

I think, there has to be openness and you must make sure that students understand that you do welcome their opinions and you respect them and you do treat what students have to say with the consideration and respect, but I don't think that's unique to culturally diverse (classes), in any class, you must convey the students our openness to others' views. (Int.6, p.8)

### **Instructor as a Moderator**

Three participants (Int.1, Int.4, Int.6) mentioned the role of a moderator. One participant described it in the following manner:

I'm trying to guide the discussions, trying to keep them (students) on topic, to answer questions, not to telling them what structures they should take to expressions, trying to keep the discussions in order, trying to (keep) focus on what is supposed to be discussed.(Int.1, p.17)

Another participant indicated that the role of a moderator in a group discussion in the following terms: "Their (students) comments have to be directed through me" (Int.6, p.5). The other participant (Int.4) expressed the view of being seen as a guide, helper or coach.

### **Self Evaluation**

Four participants (Int.2, Int.3, Int.4, Int.5) evaluated their own roles as an instructor. Two of them admitted that they haven't done enough work. One instructor indicated that she

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was still not completely convinced that she was doing a good enough job yet. (Int.2) Another instructor stated that he felt that he had made improvements in his teaching:

I say, this year, in the third year, I did much better job. I felt much better about the multicultural component I put into the class in terms of making people think. I'm feeling more relaxed with differences in a classroom. (Int.4, p.20)

Further, he expressed his expectations about his future job:

I still feel like I need to know more, I need to keep learning myself and be able to have some ways of approaching people who are from different backgrounds, and really get their feedback about what they need. I don't think that I 'm successful in doing that yet. (Int.4, p.20)

### **Interpretation**

This study explored instructors' perceptions of their roles in a culturally diverse class at the post secondary level. Four categories emerged from instructors' perceptions of their roles. The following is an analysis of those findings: (a) summary of instructors' teaching experiences; (b) instructors' perceptions of culturally diverse classes; (c) the teaching strategies they employed; and (d) instructors' roles in the classroom.

#### **Summary of Instructors' Teaching Experiences**

Within the first category of this study three subcategories are summarized: the ethnic composition of students, prior work experience, and training experience. All participants mentioned four kinds of minority students in their classes: First Nations, Asian, European, and African. All of them were part of culturally diverse classes.



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In terms of prior work experience, five participants mentioned their previous work experience as well as how those experiences shaped their conceptions of culture. Two participants, who had taught English as a Second Language before, demonstrated that these experiences helped them to think about the language and cultural problems that people who were immigrants or refugees might encounter. The other two participants reflected upon their work experiences outside of Canada and how these experiences helped them to understand cultural differences existing in the school system.

All participants suggested that more training was needed for teaching in a culturally diverse class. All of the participants, except for one, indicated that they had no such specific training. Mallea (1990) pointed out that there had been a neglect of issues and problems in Canadian universities, including those relating to cultural diversity. Specific training for instructors who teach culturally diverse classes was one of the neglected areas. The participant who described her specific training pointed out the importance of training and recommended that a course related to teaching in a multicultural setting should be compulsory rather than an elective. This would appear to indicate that more courses relating to multicultural education may be needed to promote an instructor's teaching skills in a culturally diverse class.

### **Instructors' Perceptions of Culturally Diverse Classes**

Within the second category of instructors' perceptions of culturally diverse classes, three subcategories emerged: benefits for students, challenges faced by students, and challenges for instructors. All participants expressed positive feelings about benefits for students, including learning experience and cultural sharing. This was consistent with

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Seaberg (1974) who demonstrated that students learned about each others' linguistic and cultural backgrounds and had many opportunities for positive interaction with each other. This implies that it was a goal for instructors in culturally diverse classes to encourage students to learn from each other's cultural knowledge and experiences.

Furthermore, four participants found that unfamiliarity with the Canadian educational system was a significant problem for students from other cultures. Two participants stated that students from outside of Canada were lacking in specific knowledge about Canada. As well, the other participants perceived ESL (English as a Second Language) problems were the source of other difficulties for minority students. Additionally, four participants mentioned the difficulties with cultural issues for students in their classes. All these difficulties bring corresponding challenges to an instructor. As James (2001) indicated, the diversity to be found among today's university student population in terms of race, ethnicity, and language posed significant challenges to educators, requiring educators to examine current pedagogical approaches if they were to make university education relevant and equitable for students.

### **The Teaching Strategies They Employed**

Within the third category about teaching strategies employed, three subcategories were found. These were descriptions of teaching strategies, the advantages and disadvantages of various teaching strategies and student feedback.

First, all of the participants indicated that they employed lectures as a teaching strategy in a class. Two of them noted that they usually gave a short lecture instead of a long one while the other two participants mentioned that they used a questioning lecture to avoiding

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boring students. Those findings resolved the problem identified by Nicholl (2002) who stated that it was generally agreed that a fifty-minute lecture was a poor method of teaching and learning. One participant observed that lecturing was a traditional teaching method employed to introduce general ideas to students. However, students from outside of Canada may have trouble understanding general ideas and acquiring basic knowledge in a lecture class. Therefore, the lecture format was in need of revising to resolve this problem. As Nicholl (2002) pointed out, it was essential to consider the advantages and disadvantages of the lecture as a method of instruction. Light and Cox (2001) suggested that “the traditional lecture needs to be re-envisioned as a dialogue in which the lecturer is genuinely engaged” (p.101). This would appear to indicate that giving a less formal lecture would benefit students who are not familiar with or lack of basic knowledge, such as definitions of certain terms.

Secondly, all participants, except for one, indicated that they often employed small group discussion. Nicholl (2002) stated that small group work included lecture-small group interaction, lecturer-student interaction, and student-small group interaction. In this study, the small group discussion mentioned by participants was limited to the lecture-small group and lecturer-student interaction. In terms of small group discussion, four participants found that more participation was expected in a small group discussion as all members of the group had a chance to express an opinion. This was similar to Light and Cox’s (2001) portrayal of the functions of small group teaching. Light and Cox highlighted four functions of small group teaching, and one of which was related to the personal dimension which provided opportunities for practice in self-expression. This would appear to indicate that

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small group discussion as a teaching strategy could provide students with more chances to share their opinions on cultural issues and may help students to perceive things from multi-cultural perspectives.

A third teaching strategy, group work, was mentioned by five participants. Respondents indicated that this strategy was technically called cooperative learning in multicultural education (Sapon-Shevin & Schniedewind, 1991; Scott, 2001; Nicholl, 2001). Scott (2001) proposed that the four purposes of cooperative learning were as follows: helping students improve their academic achievement and developing their social skills, getting students to help each other achieve on basis of teamwork, and increasing the motivation of all students through the success experienced by the teams. One participant who didn't use group work stated that it was not feasible to do it in a large class with more than one hundred people. That is to say, the size of a class limits the utilization of group work which has positive academic effects on students in a culturally diverse class.

All of these teaching strategies were not unique to culturally diverse classes, but there were unique challenges when they were employed in that environment. Therefore, they needed to be examined and revised. One such method of examination was to review student feedback. In this study, five participants indicated that they received positive feedback from students. Four participants mentioned negative feedback from students.

### **Instructors' Roles in the Class**

Within the last category, six roles emerged from the data: lecturer, role model, learner, facilitator, diagnostician, and moderator. Regarding lecturing as a teaching strategy, all of the six participants indicated that they played the lecturer role in a class. They talked

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about three existing challenges for a lecturer in a culturally diverse class: (a) different levels of English fluency among students; (b) diverse opinions on lecturing caused by cultural backgrounds; and (c) lack of specific knowledge about Canada. These findings suggested that it is essential for a lecturer to consider cultural diversity in order to satisfy individual needs. As Nicholl (2002) stated, teaching in a culturally diverse classroom required the consideration of the cultural differences among students when lecturing. Similarly, Scott (2001) stated, it was essential to take cultural pluralism into account when lecturing in a culturally diverse classroom.

Two participants mentioned role modeling as one of traditional functions of instruction (Holy, 1975). Similarly, two participants indicated that it was the main task of being a role model to convey cultural knowledge and concepts to students through instructors' unbiased behaviors. They observed that an instructor should set a good example for students, demonstrate their sensitivity to culture, and motivate students to think about culture differences. This was consistent with the position of Scott (2001) who pointed out that if the teacher held a bias towards certain student groups in a culturally diverse classroom, students could potentially "adopt attitudes they see their teacher projecting" (p.98).

Although there was little previous literature regarding the role of a learner, all participants in this study indicated that, as learners, they learned from students, acquired cultural knowledge they might not know, and listened to cultural experiences they might not have experienced. It implied that it could be a win/win learning format in culturally diverse classes.

All of the six participants acknowledged the role of facilitator. Three described how to

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interact with students in groups as well as how to help students communicate with each other in groups. This was similar to the findings of Light and Cox (2001). They perceived the facilitator as an increasingly popular role which encouraged interaction without dominating the group. Through interaction and communication among students, as well as between students and instructors, various concepts and ideas were shared so that the contents were perceived from different cultural perspectives. As mentioned by five participants, it was crucial for a facilitator to help students to think critically. They all commented that they tried to encourage and motivate students to examine issues from multi-cultural perspectives , tried to help students connect the curriculum with their real life, and attempted to teach students how to reflect on their own views through self-examination. All those behaviors were consistent with Seaberg's (1974) position. Seaberg (1974) pointed out that the teacher listened thoughtfully and draws students out through the interactive process. The teacher helped students develop, examine, elaborate, expand, and clarify their ideas and beliefs. Under such conditions, the teacher became a facilitator in a culturally diverse class. All participants mentioned that cultural conflict might take place during teaching in culturally diverse class. As a result, how to facilitate different points of views, even resolve a huge contention, was important for a facilitator. Therefore, being a facilitator was an important role of an instructor in a culturally diverse classroom.

Seaberg (1974) elaborated on the characteristics of a diagnostician. Contrary to the judge role, the diagnostician maintained neutrality, or a non-judgmental attitude. In a culturally diverse classroom, being a diagnostician could provide valuable help to students from different cultural backgrounds, so the students' needs were given more attention by

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their instructors. In this study, two participants indicated that they identified students' needs on a one-one basis. All participants agreed that an instructor should be open to all perspectives, and students' needs should be considered during teaching. Therefore, their behaviors could be perceived as the behaviors of a diagnostician.

Finally, three participants mentioned the role of a moderator. In group discussion, a moderator was supposed to keep the group on track without dominating the group. Although Nicholl (2002) did not give a definition of a moderator, he described an instructor's behavior in lecturer-student interaction as asking the right questions in order to provoke thought or to redirect students in their problem-solving activities. This would appear to indicate that it would be necessary for an instructor to possess leadership skills.

Within this theme of instructor's roles in the classroom, four participants evaluated their own roles as an instructor. Two of them admitted that they haven't done enough work. One participant indicated that he needed to find ways to "approach people who are from different backgrounds and really get feedback about what they need". (Int.4, p.20). This would appear to indicate that instructors would like to pursue more teaching strategies and roles to promote their teaching skills in culturally diverse classrooms, and to maximize the benefits students would acquire in a culturally diverse setting.

All participants recognized the challenges faced by instructors teaching in a culturally diverse classroom at the post secondary level. Furthermore, the instructors perceived that part of their roles was to make students learn and share cultural understandings with each other in an open atmosphere. They suggested that it was crucial to provide the instructor with specific training regarding teaching in a multicultural setting in the future. All the

perspectives of the instructors offered insights into the teaching in culturally diverse classrooms at the post secondary level.



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## Chapter V: Conclusions and Recommendations

### Summary of Findings

The purpose of this study was to investigate instructors' perceptions of their roles in culturally diverse classrooms at the post secondary level. The categories which emerged from the data included: a summary of instructors' teaching experiences, instructors' perceptions of culturally diverse classes, the teaching strategies they employed, and instructors' roles in the classroom. All these categories were derived from three research questions: (a) what are the challenges faced by an instructor in a culturally diverse classroom at the post secondary level? (b) what are instructors' perceptions of their roles when teaching in a culturally diverse classroom at the post secondary level? and (c) what are the influences or effects of teaching strategies for students studying in a culturally diverse classroom?

In terms of the first research question, it was found that four types of challenges were mentioned by participants. First, since students' levels of English vary in culturally diverse classes, instructors need to repeat or explain some words so that students who speak English as second language encounter fewer problems understanding the content of the course. However, instructors also need to avoid boring students who speak fluent English. One participant indicated that he tried to achieve a degree of balance in the course. Second, two participants mentioned students' lack of specific knowledge of literature analysis or Canadian history posed an additional challenge for instructors. They indicated that, in a culturally diverse class, some students may not be familiar with the methods for analyzing

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literature. Additionally some had little knowledge of Canadian history while others may know little about the cultural experiences of other cultural communities. The participants stated that what they try to do is to fill in those blank spots for the students. Third, all participants indicated that students' learning styles were a common challenge existing in their classes. Finding a balance between the different needs of students was a problem for some instructors. They suggested that employing diverse teaching styles would help to meet the different requirements of students and help to resolve this problem. Last, participants mentioned the challenge of cultural differences faced by an instructor. It is a big challenge for an instructor to encourage students to think about cultural differences. In addition, an instructor may lack cultural experiences and knowledge. Six participants indicated that it was important to be sensitive to cultural issues, to be aware of them, to acknowledge them, and to understand them.

In this study, six instructors demonstrated six variations on the instructor's role in a culturally diverse classroom: lecturer, role model, learner, facilitator, diagnostician, and moderator. All participants acknowledged the importance of being a lecturer. They acknowledged the challenges stemming from cultural differences in a culturally diverse setting and recommended giving short lectures or using a questioning lecture as a way of transforming a traditional lecture into a less formal one.

Participants indicated that being a role model tends to set a good example for students and to further inform students through the instructors' modeling behavior in a class. In a culturally diverse classroom, one of the most important things is to indicate to the students the importance of cultural ideas. Inappropriate modeling behavior, like ignoring the cultural

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issues in a class, would transmit the wrong message that cultural issues are not very important to students.

All participants agreed that as learners, they learned a lot from their students and perceived this learning experience as being both positive and productive. In culturally diverse classes, instructors could learn more cultural ideas from students and get to acquire more cultural experiences they may not have encountered.

According to the comments of the six participations, the role of facilitator is to encourage interaction and communication through small group discussion, facilitate different needs between groups, motivate students' critical thinking skills about culture, and avoid and solve cultural conflict in a culturally diverse class. This study indicated that most facilitating behavior takes place in small group discussions which both provides instructors and students with opportunities to interact with each other at the same level. However, they indicated that there were some weaknesses inherent to small group works in a big class because it is difficult to reach each group during relatively limited time.

As a diagnostician, the participants indicated that they focused on individual differences and the need to take a neutral attitude towards students' opinions. They provided extra help on a one to one basis to students who had difficulty in studying. Also, instructors were open to all perspectives and respected various opinions when discussions took place in classes.

The last role mentioned in this study was the role of moderator. This role is to guide students, keep discussions in order, and discuss things students may not know. Specifically speaking, the role of moderator is trying to guide discussions, trying to keep students on

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topic, but not dominating a group.

In this study, three teaching strategies were investigated: lecture, small group discussion, and group work. Lectures were utilized to provide general ideas to students. The participants realized that a long lecture was an ineffective teaching strategy in that no one is able to pay full attention to a fifty-minute lecture. Therefore, they preferred to give a short lecture or a questioning lecture without overwhelming the class.

Small group discussion was employed by most of the participants. They perceived this strategy to be effective in culturally diverse classes. The students are assigned into groups to sit down around the table and discuss specific issues. The role of an instructor is that of a facilitator more than anything else. It provided students with more opportunities to share opinions on cultural issues and may help students to conceive things from a multi-cultural perspective.

Group work is also named cooperative learning in multicultural education. The students are divided into groups and cooperate with each other to resolve a problem or complete a project. This teaching strategy requires harmony, teamwork and cooperation among group members.

The respondents indicated that it was necessary to combine different teaching strategies because of the variety of students found in a culturally diverse class. Also, they discussed the advantages and disadvantages of the teaching strategies employed in culturally diverse classes and evaluated the effectiveness of each strategy.

With regard to the third research question, the influences or effects of teaching strategies for students studying in a culturally diverse classroom, the six instructors pointed

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to two influences on students in culturally diverse classes. In terms of benefits to students, they mentioned two main benefits: learning experience and cultural sharing. They indicated that students could learn a lot from their peers. Cultural sharing is also beneficial for students, which could help students understand other cultures better and provide students with a sense of having contributed to the class.

In terms of challenges faced by students, participants mentioned four key areas: (a) unfamiliarity with the Canadian educational system, (b) lack of specific knowledge of literature analysis or Canadian history, (c) ESL problems, and (d) understanding cultural issues. As far as the first difficulty is concerned, participants discussed the challenges faced by students who have different educational backgrounds from Canadians as well as the challenges for students who are not used to the grading system in Canada. Lack of specific knowledge regarding Canada made students encounter difficulties in understanding the content of lectures and discussions about literature. ESL problems had the potential to affect students' understanding of the content of a course. Difficulties in understanding cultural issues could also result in cultural conflict in a culturally diverse class.

The main tasks for an instructor in a culturally diverse class are to face a variety of challenges, resolve the difficulties students are experiencing, and maximize the benefits students are receiving. In this study, participants indicated that they received positive feedback from students, but they didn't think they had been successful as instructors. Therefore, they indicated that they needed to find ways to "approach people who are from different backgrounds and really get feedback about what they need" (Int.4, p.20) through trying a variety of roles and teaching strategies.

This study investigated three questions of teaching in a culturally diverse classroom at the post secondary level: what are challenges faced by an instructor, what are instructors' perceptions of their roles when they are teaching, and what are the influences or effects of teaching strategies for students studying in a culturally diverse classroom. Since the challenges encountered by six participants teaching in a culturally diverse classroom, they indicated the six variations on instructors' roles: lecturer, role model, learner, facilitator, diagnostician, and moderator. Further, six participants presented three teaching strategies: lecture, small group discussion, and cooperative learning and the responsive feedback from students. In conclusion, the research examined the instructors' perceptions of their roles in a culturally diverse classroom at the post secondary school and recommendations are as follows.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this research, there are seven recommendations for instructors teaching in a culturally diverse classroom as follows:

#### **Practical Experience**

Instructors indicated that their previous work experience in culturally diverse settings helped to shape their perceptions of cultural issues in that context. Therefore, it is recommended that instructors make an effort to increase their own practical experience in a multicultural setting before teaching students from different cultural backgrounds.

#### **Specific Training**

It was found that there was little in the way of specific training regarding teaching in culturally diverse classrooms for instructors. The respondents expressed their concerns

regarding the necessity of receiving specific training regarding teaching such classes. It is recommended that teaching in a multicultural setting should be a required rather than an elective course for undergraduates and graduates in post secondary schools, including both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

### **Cultural Knowledge**

The respondents indicated that the lack of relevant cultural knowledge might cause cultural conflict in a classroom. For instance, some Canadian instructors might not know much about other cultural traditions, which could lead to conflict between an instructor and students from other cultures. It is recommended that instructors broaden their cultural knowledge through reading stories about other communities, and interacting with people who have been involved in other cultures.

### **Less Lecture, More Groups**

Lecturing is a traditional strategy used to disseminate basic knowledge in a class. In culturally diverse classrooms, it was found that it was very important to pay attention to individual students' needs. To accomplish this, it is recommended that instructors should interact and communicate with students face to face instead of lecturing on a stage in front of the class. When lecturing, an instructor should utilize a short lecture or questioning lecture to avoid giving a long speech. Small group discussion may give students who are too shy to speak in a large class an opportunity to participate in discussion with other students. Small group work may foster friendship among students who come from different cultures. Also, small groups may provide a chance for instructors to get to know students' needs, personalities, and interests.

### **Combining Teaching Strategies**

It is recommended that teaching strategies should be combined in culturally diverse classrooms. There are two main reasons: students with different learning styles require this in order to find a balance among their learning styles; lecturing tends to transmit concepts to students.

### **Creating an Open Atmosphere**

All six instructors emphasized that there was a need to create an open atmosphere where students could express their ideas freely and comfortably in a culturally diverse classroom. It is recommended that instructors play the role of a diagnostician, which requires instructors to be open to all perspectives and respect students' different even controversial opinions. Setting a good example in a culturally diverse class is quite important in that instructors' behavior will have a significant effect on students' behavior. As long as instructors demonstrate that they are open to various perspectives, students are likely to follow that model.

### **Sensitivity to Culture**

There is a need for instructors in teaching culturally diverse classes to be culturally sensitive. The instructors in this study stated that this could be accomplished by: (a) recognizing the cultural make up of the class; (b) paying attention to a variety of cultural-based learning styles; (c) recognizing the learning challenges faced by students from outside of Canada.



### **Suggestions for Further Research**

The purpose of this study was to investigate instructors' perceptions of their roles in a culturally diverse classroom at the post secondary level. There are several suggestions that might be explored as potential topics for further research.

This study revealed that instructors needed more specific training about teaching in a culturally diverse classroom. Further research is recommended to explore what format of training might be needed to improve instructors' skills and knowledge

While this study explored instructors' perceptions of their roles in a culturally diverse classroom at the post secondary level, but it did not investigate the relationships among these roles. Further research may provide additional information regarding the nature of these relationships.

Finally, in this study, the researcher targeted instructors' perceptions of their roles. Further research is recommended to investigate students' perceptions of instructor's roles from the students' perspectives. There may be different views of teaching, and those views could provide more valuable information to both teachers and researchers alike.

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Appendix A:

**Interview Guide Question**

1. What is the composition of students you teach in a culturally diverse class?
  - description of different cultural backgrounds of students
  
2. What about are your background experiences being an instructor?
  - do you have any experiences in a culturally diverse classroom? If have, how about it?
  - do you have any experiences with other cultures in teaching in other countries? If have, how about it?
  - do you have specific training in teaching a culturally diverse classroom? If have, how long is it?
  
3. How about are your teaching experiences in a culturally diverse classroom?
  - Would you describe some positive or negative experiences?
  - What are your emotions and feelings about these experiences
  
4. What kind of teaching strategies you employ in a culturally diverse classroom
  - Would you explain the teaching strategies you apply? How is it employed?
  - How you perceive influences or effects of these teaching strategies (e.g., academic effects, students' reactions)

5. What are your perceptions of roles of instructors in a culturally diverse classroom

-How would you describe and evaluate your roles?

-What are your recommendations of roles of instructors?

-What are your perceptions of influence of roles (e.g., promotion of cultural understanding)

-What are your perceptions of functional relationship among roles of instructors?

## Cover Letter

Dear Participant:

I am a graduate student in the Masters of Education Program at Lakehead University. I am conducting a research project that seeks to investigate the instructors' perceptions of their roles when teaching in a culturally diverse classroom at the post secondary level. My work is being supervised by Dr. Patrick Brady, who may be contacted at 343-8682.

The basic intent of this research is to (a) investigate instructors' perceptions of their roles when teaching in a culturally diverse classroom, (b) explore the challenges faced by an instructor in a culturally diverse classroom, and (c) identify influences or effects of different roles and teaching strategies in a culturally diverse classroom. To accomplish these goals, I invite you to participate in an interview with me. Each interview will take approximately thirty- five minutes of your time and will take place at a time of your convenience. I may request a second, shorter interview with you for follow up or clarification purposes. These interviews will be tape recorded and transcribed. You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without explanation.

There are no risks or benefits in your participation. The materials are anonymous, and the information you provide will remain confidential. The data and results will only be shared among the researcher, her supervisor and other reviewers. After the investigation, all data, all tapes and transcriptions will be stored securely for seven years since this study is finished. Thank you for your cooperation. The findings of this study will be made available to you at your request upon the completion of the study.

Sincerely,

Yajing Xie

Telephone Number: 766-5873

E-Mail: [yxie@lakeheadu.ca](mailto:yxie@lakeheadu.ca)





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Appendix C:

### Consent Form

The purpose of this study as well as the potential risks and benefits has been explained to me. My signature on this form indicates that I consent to participate in the study by Yajing Xie on investigating instructors' perceptions of their roles when teaching in a culturally diverse classroom at the post secondary level.

I have read the cover letter about the nature of the study, its purpose, and procedures.

I understand the following:

1. I am a volunteer and can withdraw at any time from the study.
2. The data I provide will be confidential and no individual will be identified in any of the transcriptions or report of the results
3. All data I provide will be destroyed after seven years since the study is finished. The report will be read only by the researcher, her supervisor and other reviewers. Copies of the completed thesis will be deposited in the university library and the educational library. A summary of the research findings will be made available to you upon request.
4. There is no risk involved in this study.

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Signature of Participant

Date