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Transcultural Competence as Transformative Learning for Building an Inclusive Society

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Transcultural Competence as Transformative Learning for Building an Inclusive Society

by

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A THESIS

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Abstract

This qualitative research examines the process of acquiring transcultural competence by adult learners and how transcultural skills and knowledge empower personal growth and foster societal inclusion. The theoretical concept links transculturalism with transformative learning as a continuous process of recognizing different world views and multiple identities, adaptation and interaction in our culturally dynamic reality and transnational mobility. I contend that transculture can be perceived as encompassing and creating space for individual's transformative learning and for developing transcultural competence.

Based on findings from 21 face-to-face interviews, two focus groups, observation, and document analysis, my investigation unfolds around four areas of learning and constructing the path of transcultural competence. The first is related to developing the qualities of transcultural person. I outlined cognitive, affective, and social dimensions through which individuals develop transcultural competence.

The second area reveals intrinsic and extrinsic factors that motivate learning engagement. I found the dominance of internal motivation which relates to the need of personal growth, family relationships, and adaptation to a new society and working environment. Moreover, the concept of motivation for learning on personal and organizational levels refers to a complex system recognizing individual experience, personal emotions, cognitive knowledge, and engagement in relationships.

The third area is about constructing transcultural learning as a holistic transformative process that involves inquiry, framing, positionality, and progressing to dialogue, reflection, and competent action. As such, the process relates to multiple forces

that connect local to global, challenging taken-for-granted frames of reference, expanding world views, integrating new practices, and transforming individuals.

The fourth area reveals that individuals empowered with transcultural knowledge transfer this knowledge and act as agent of change for fostering inclusion in workplace and in society. My participants identified a deficiency in transcultural knowledge in education, organizational professional development, in government policies of integration, where the implications of this study will be valuable.

This research offers a theoretical perspective and a vision aimed at dissolving cultural and ethnic binaries, the notion of belonging from culturally specific and nationally exclusive to transcultural and interspatial connections. As such transcultural learning model could have multiple implications in policies and practices in adult and higher education, immigrant integration, personal and organizational growth, for facilitating sociocultural adaptation and inclusion in the global age of transnational migration.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

1.1. Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of my research, which explores how adults acquire transcultural competence. Transcultural competence is a learning process of understanding and transcending cultural differences. It requires mutual participation and interaction from both members of mainstream society and newcomers in the dynamic social context of different cultural learning activities, which foster an integrative and inclusive society. The knowledge generated from this inquiry will afford new insights and inform new practices in creating and sustaining an inclusive society. The research employs a qualitative methodology, using semi-structured interviews, focus groups, observation, and document analysis to understand, analyze, and construct the transcultural competence process. Participants in this study include two purposefully selected adult groups of 10 immigrants and 11 Canadian-born who have participated in cultural-competence learning activities. Examining two different groups adds a comparative element in the research design, providing an understanding as to how Canadian-born and immigrants learn transcultural competence. Comparisons will allow me to identify and understand different learning paths that may lead to mutual engagement in the learning process. Moreover, cognizing differences in learning among different cultures and reaching across these differences is a significant issue in transculturalism, which serves as the theoretical framework for my study. I believe a better understanding of this phenomenon—transcultural competence as transformative learning and transcultural process—will allow educators and practitioners to proceed to a better informed perspective in facilitating programs of cultural diversity awareness and immigrant integration that are intended to foster inclusive society.

The impact of transnational migration and globalization on human society, along with emerging multiple identities, calls for reconceptualization of the meaning of cultural competence and a shift toward transcultural competence—a mode of being and learning in which humans interact among cultures in a very diverse and dynamic environment.

This chapter begins with an overview of the research background and the need to reconceptualize cultural competence in the context of transculturalism, globalization, and transnationalism. Following this is the identification of the research problem, accompanying research questions, and the research design. The chapter then concludes with a discussion of the significance of the study and the researcher's motivation.

1.2. Research Background

In the age of globalization and super-diversity, our daily lives depend more and more on multiple interconnections across borders. Almost every country is involved in migration, which refers to multiple, circular, transnational movements across geographical spaces (Guo, 2015a). As a result, many countries are becoming increasingly ethnoculturally diverse. Recognizing these global processes of migration and transnational flow opens space for reconstructing the concept of intercultural competence. I propose using a transcultural competence model that will focus on examining and promoting paths for successful interaction and active participation in the global transnational environment. Transcultural competence as a learning activity can facilitate individuals' economic, sociocultural, and political adaptation to his/her host society for a vital and purposeful life for the society. Furthermore, its goal is to promote voluntary pluralism, global citizenship, and belonging by integrating different identities that relate to more than one ethnicity and culture.

Scholars supporting intercultural competence (Bennett, 2008; Deardorff, 2006; Lustig & Koester, 2006; McPhatter & Ganaway, 2003; Taylor, 1994b) define the term in relation to four dimensions: knowledge, attitude, skills, and behaviours, which together allow participants in society to interact on the basis of their inclusive and integrative worldview. In her critical approach toward intercultural competence, Sorrells (2012, 2014) claims that it will take four new actions: (1) to reconceptualize and expand the meaning of culture; (2) to emphasize the multifocal and mutual vision of cultural heritages and production of centres and peripheries; (3) to link local and global cultures; and (4) to stress critical engagement and social justice. Sorrells further indicates that these actions warrant the

actualization of intercultural praxis, through which cultural awareness and critical analysis can be increased and, therefore, intercultural competence can be reached.

The dialectic approach toward intercultural competence (Chen & An, 2009; Martin & Nakayama, 2010) is an extension of the critical approach. It highlights the forces that may constrain communication in larger social and cultural contexts, including power relations, privileges and disadvantages of interactants. As such, it reflects the holistic nature of dialectical intercultural communication through the manifestation of a synthetic unity (Bakhtin, 1981).

The evolution in intercultural competence research corresponds to the importance of developing skills and knowledge in order to behave and interact competently in a diverse society and workforce. Professionals in every area are recognizing the need to relate effectively to those who work with them and those they serve. Whether in educational institutions, corporations, health care, counseling, military, social services, government or nongovernment organizations, the increasing need to develop intercultural competence have been addressed (Bennett, J., 2009). Not surprisingly, educational institutions and nongovernment organizations providing services for immigrant integration are leading in initiatives focusing on preparing learners for a job in a culturally diverse environment, for appreciating diversity, and for building inclusive communities.

For a half century, Canada has been an attractive destination for many ethnocultural groups. Although the foreign-born population in Canada was only 10% in the 1960s, it is now over 20% of Canada's population (Statistics Canada, 2016). With 286,000 immigrants arriving in Canada in 2017, and 330,000 to be welcomed in 2019, according to the Ministry of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, the number of newly arrived immigrants, representing over 250 ethnic groups, is expected to be nearly 1% of the Canadian population in 2021.

In Calgary, immigrants comprise nearly 30% of the city's population (Statistics Canada, 2016). The number of immigrants living in the Calgary metropolitan area doubled between 2001 and 2016, reaching over 404,700, which is estimated to reach a half million by 2020. The Alberta government

acknowledges the benefits from the steady immigrant flow for economic growth. For the first time, the province has attracted more immigrants than British Columbia, taking 17% of the country's immigrants in 2016 and ranking as the third most attractive destination for immigrants, after Toronto and Montreal.

In addition to this, Canadian universities and colleges are more ethnoculturally diverse than ever. The number of international students enrolled in all levels of study at Canadian postsecondary institutions in 2017 was 494,525, which represents a 17% increase over the previous year and a near tripling over the last decade (CBIE, 2018). In higher education, Canada is ranked the fourth top destination worldwide (after U.S., U.K., and China), hosting international students from 186 nations (CBIE, 2018).

The growing number of immigrants and international students results in their growing contribution to the Canadian economy. For the core working ages of 25 to 54, the majority (60%) of the employment gains in 2017 were by landed immigrants. Most of the growth in immigrant employment was in professional, scientific, and technical services, finance, insurance, real estate and leasing services, and manufacturing, as well as health care and social assistance (Statistics Canada, 2018). While revenue from international students is important (over \$15 billion every year), there is more to the story (IRCC, 2019). International minds in Canada enrich the learning experience on our campuses, provide students and faculties with international and cultural perspectives, and strengthen Canadian sociocultural and economic ties with the world. Considering these trends and mobility patterns, our society should commit to theories, policies, and practices that are attuned to contemporary reality and complex demands in governing immigrant integration, education, businesses, and personal interconnectedness.

Reviewing existing diversity models in education, Guo and Jamal (2007) address challenges such as “color-blind,” “whiteness as a norm,” “difference as deficit,” and fear of diversity resulting from a lack of knowledge and readiness to approach diversity and build an inclusive education. The authors call for creating environments in education and changing institutional strategies that recognize cultural diversity and worldviews that students bring, different ways of learning and communicating, different

values of achievement. The reality of today's classrooms, which are cosmopolitan in terms of students' backgrounds (Naqvi, 2015), must be considered to incorporate cultural concepts that will allow learners and educators to make educated decisions about how they will react to new and changing cultural dynamics within their classrooms, communities, and country. Central to Naqvi's concern is the need for transcultural practices that will allow students to understand how cultural, ethnic, racial, and ideological differences enhance the possibility for dialogue, trust, belonging, and inclusion.

Two globalization tendencies—universal standardization of the world and the provision of room for cultural diversity as a process—reflect the mission of education as transcultural, where learners and educators are encouraged to develop heterological thinking and transcultural competence in dealing with the foreign, the other, alterity (Wulf, 2010). Additionally, Palmer and Zajonc (2010) suggest an integrative way of teaching and learning that responds to diversity in education by connecting heart, mind and spirit, and creating a community, a hospitable space where everyone is seen and heard, learns, and transforms.

In the corporate arena, attention to cultural differences has traditionally taken two paths: one is focused on an international global mindset and the other on domestic diversity. From the international perspective, it is widely known that global joint ventures may collapse due to intercultural conflicts, and in many cases the profit is connected to the cultural competence of the expatriates (Adler & Gundersen, 2007; Graf, 2004). Nevertheless, until the end of the twentieth century, few organizations prepared their employees and managers for the global interface (Bennett, J., 2009). Global companies struggle to identify global talents and understand why some people can function more effectively in intercultural contexts than others (EIU, 2011). Now, however, organizational research is focusing on global leadership and the competencies necessary for the new world, managing across cultures whether overseas or in the home country, and providing programs on domestic diversity and inclusion (Osland et al., 2006). The growth of diverse markets and a progressively diverse workforce as a valuable source of creativity and innovation are among the top motivators for executives and CEOs to build culturally

intelligent approaches in their corporations. Employers are prioritizing essential skills related to international collaboration that is, communicating, interacting, and navigating in a highly diverse and rapidly changing workplace. These social/human skills are recognized (Kachulis & McKeen, 2018) as equally important as technical and digital skills. Online publications in *Harvard Business Review* (Groysberg & Connolly, 2013) and *Management Issues* (Livermore, 2015) highlight cultural competence as a strategic tool, and a moral and business imperative in the world business agenda. These publications point out that cultural awareness and sensitivity are not enough; therefore, business and society leaders from wide range of industries, communities and regions should demonstrate a long-term commitment to diversity and inclusion, implementing cultural competence programs at professional, educational, and community levels.

The overviewed trends and multiple interactions across the borders call for a dynamic perspective of understanding cultures. Unfortunately, there is very little research in adult education recognizing the need for studying cultural flows in relation to societal cohesion. I propose transculturalism as a new model in the study of cultures that no longer isolates cultures from each other but rather opens up perspectives of self-differentiation and mutual involvement, openness to each other and humility (Bakhtin, 1981; Cuccioletta, 2001/2002; Epstein, 2012; Kraidy, 2005; Naqvi, 2015).

1.3. Transculturalism as a Theoretical Frame

The philosophical concept that informs the theoretical context of this research is transculturalism as a mode of being in the twenty-first century. Transculturalism is not a new concept in Canada. It has been discussed by scholars (Koehn & Rosenau, 2002; Kraidy, 2005; Lewis, 2002; Slimbach, 2005; Wong, 2007/2008) in relation to transnationalism, cosmopolitanism, and hybrid identity. Derived from Bakhtin (1981) and Epstein (1999, 2009, 2012), a transcultural approach offers new experience and intellectual generosity, where ethics is at the crossroad of possibilities in human relations. Transculturalism opens a peaceful meandering trail between the past, the present, and the future and

permits individuals to see a multitude of alternative paths crossed during their experiences in different times and places.

Epstein (2012) defines this stage of civilization as “proteism,” the movement “from retrospectivism to prospectivism,” which combines “the archival sense of our time as the remote past in relation to the distant future” (p.32). The term “proto” defines more positively our new epoch, the new cultural paradigm, humanity, interdisciplinary collaboration, and community. “Proto-” also indicates possibility rather than a necessity. “Proto-” simply means “having the potential to become” or “starting to move in a certain direction” (Epstein, 2012, p. 26). The prefix “proto-,” which Epstein proposes reflects a radical Bakhtinian transition from finality to initiation as a model of thinking, denotes a first draft of a new cultural formation.

I adopt this proteic characterization of personality, “a multividual that cannot be confined to a single self, rich in roles, connected by invisible ties of integral personality” (Epstein, 2012, p. 35), as a useful approach to analyze transformation in our century. An individual could spread and manifest itself across continents, performing various identities, social and professional roles, while simultaneously remaining conscious of his or her own uniqueness and moral responsibility and culture. In this transformative process, the past is inseparable from the future.

According to the “proto” concept, culture is coming to be understood as only one set of possibilities, no longer locked in a single cultural reality of birth and background, each of us stands at a crossroads of different ethnic, historical, and professional cultures. Thus, each has a possibility for overcoming the obsessional complexes of the “given” (native) culture. An additional significant point in Bakhtin’s work, and accordingly in Epstein’s theory, focuses on dialogue as a path for cognition of human being. The two structuralist-cultural thinkers recognize dialogical cognition as different from ideological and logical cognition. Human beings and their creative endeavours can be attained only through dialogue, dialogue among cultures and between humanities through self-awareness and discovery of otherness. These dialogue perspectives carry a special relevance for our proto-global age

(Epstein, 2012), with its pluralism of self-enclosed cultures, each valuable in itself. It reflects on the perception of dialogue as a medium through which transformation is promoted in transformative learning and the role of dialogue on the boundaries between cultures. If in transformative learning, dialogue helps identify the learner's "edge of meaning," a transitional zone of knowing and meaning making (Taylor, 2009), similarly, in intercultural praxis, dialogue is a critical point of entry to cognize differences, to reach across and engage creatively with points of view, ways of thinking, being and doing (Sorrells, 2014). Transformative process indeed is a complex discourse in which individuals reconstruct basic assumptions and expectations that frame their thinking, feeling and acting. They develop concepts of the world and their selves based on perceptions that are contingent on various perspectives and interpretation. Meaning is seen not only as a cognitive event, but also as a social construct that is produced and changed in social interactions (Mezirow, Taylor, & Associates, 2009).

1.4. Central Purpose and Research Questions

The study's central purpose is to explore: 1) how adults acquire transcultural competence through participation in different learning activities; and 2) the extent to which transcultural competence leads to an integrative and inclusive society. This is a qualitative study using the theoretical model of transculturalism. With this conceptual framework, the study aims to elaborate the understanding and practices of transcultural competence in order to develop sustainable educational programs intended to foster an inclusive society.

Existing research in immigrant integration (Frideres, 2008; Guo, 2013; Reitz, 2007; Sweetman & Warman, 2008) addresses challenges in workplace integration related to a lack of communication skills, undervalued work experience, and unrecognized education leading to discriminative practices. The role of cultural competence in overcoming these challenges and creating a more inclusive society has been underestimated.

Very often, Canadian employers require "soft skills" from immigrants—learning the Canadian way of thinking, behaving, and acting in the workplace. Various immigrant-serving employment and

training agencies include in their training programs for recent immigrants a list of soft skills comprising interpersonal, communication, behavioural, and organizational skills. The rationale for these programs is that immigrants need to acquire these “Canadian ways” to be hired and adapt to the workplace culture. Such practice is generally one-sided, targeting only immigrants and not required for Canadian-born. This implies the notion that there is no need for native-born individuals to learn about culturally diverse values, behaviours, and practices that are represented and emerging in the Canadian workplace. Instead of integrating newcomers, the outcome of this approach polarizes immigrants and native-born, and further creates a sense of exclusion, discrimination, and racialization (Guo, 2015b). In addition, newcomers encounter a lack of appreciation toward their home cultures and feel excluded from the mainstream society. Here, I see the need of my study to explore activities and practices for engaging both immigrants and Canadian-born in developing cultural skills and knowledge that will transform their attitudes and behaviours and will move them away from a focus on fitting in to a focus on mutual learning, transcending a single culture, and becoming transculturally competent.

The study, therefore, addresses the following central question:

How do immigrants and Canadian-born individuals understand and acquire transcultural competence?

The following sub-questions will further guide my research:

1. What kind of qualities, knowledge, skills, and attitudes do participants identify as necessary for their transcultural competence?
2. What factors, learning activities and practices motivate such individuals to engage in developing their transcultural competence and why?
3. How do participants develop their transcultural learning and how does transcultural competence transform them?

4. What is the impact of transcultural competence on the personal and professional life of participants and how do they transfer transcultural skills and knowledge for fostering inclusion in the workplace and in society?

1.5. Research Design

I investigated the experiences of 21 adults (11 Canadian-born and 10 immigrants) in acquiring transcultural competence. The participants were selected through purposeful sampling, setting specific criteria for recruiting: participants must have attended cultural competence learning sessions and at least one session from CCIS (Calgary Catholic Immigration Society) Cultural Competence Program. Participants represented different demographic groups by age, ethnicity, education, and professional experience. The research utilized a basic qualitative study. Interpretive and constructive, this qualitative inquiry best suited the purpose of my investigation, understanding how people make sense of their transcultural learning experience, which refers to transformative learning as epistemology. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were the primary method for data collection and addressing the research questions. The data collected based on these questions were divided into several themes: for example, knowledge, values, experience, examining the way of learning, motivation, and impact of learning. The information obtained through 21 face-to-face interviews subsequently formed the foundational basis for the overall findings. Each participant was identified by a pseudonym and all interviews were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim. Secondary methods, including unstructured observation, two focus groups, and document analysis ensured crystallization of the study. Coding categories were developed and refined on an ongoing basis, guided by the study's conceptual framework. Additionally, cross-checking, verifying my interpretation, and feedback from colleagues and my research supervisor diminished potential biases. Creating an honest environment and presenting the research agenda to participants encouraged open dialogue and critical self-reflection, which contributed to the meaningful interpretation and thorough analysis of the study.

1.6. Significance of the Study

This study will be of significant value for the development of new theory, policy, and practice, reaching a broad range of groups such as educators, scholars, immigrant service providers, newcomers, and “mainstream” Canadians. For the past decade, research on intercultural competence has revolved around communication models (Bennett, 2008; Deardorff, 2006; Gudikinst, 2005), recipes for successful communication, and inventories for assessing intercultural competence. This study has explored how transcultural competence has been constructed, negotiated, and developed as a learning process, engaging members and society in different activities. Connecting existing theories and philosophies in adult learning and transculturalism with our new reality of super diversity and global movement across the world will open new horizons for understanding the process in our society and will open space for new policies and practices for learning and transforming members of our society. This transformation can be achieved by developing capacities and knowledge that will permit both immigrants and Canadian-born individuals to engage mutually in effective and productive interactions that create space for inclusion in all levels of life—social, cultural, and economic. The findings are expected to contribute to the renewal of adult learning and advanced teaching models of cultural competence, as well as policy development that facilitates processes involved in immigrant integration.

The significance of the study is a dialectic interconnection of practice and theory. Practice is not simply a way to verify theory. Practice creates something new altogether that was not previously explored or explained by theory. As Epstein (2012) notes, when we apply theory to the existing world, the world becomes something different as it embraces new facts created by the practical application of theory itself. Thus, practice, especially transcultural competence praxis, even when it is based on a particular theory, cannot simply be reduced to that theory. The culture is broad and dynamic and, as such, creates the possibility for new theories that in turn create possibilities for new practices.

Understanding cultural dynamics and transformative learning activities in depth, which is one of the aims of this research, is significant for developing adequate knowledge and skills for competent and

effective interaction among members of our very diverse society. Led by my academic curiosity and research experience, relying on the significance of the methodological and conceptual framework for collecting and analyzing the data allowed me to conduct this study, and the results of it will be presented further in this dissertation.

1.7. Researcher's Background, Motivation, and Transformation

Exploring transcultural competence as transformative learning is a research topic that reflects my personal journey of transformation while living in a transcultural web. My personal journey as an immigrant is a starting point that motivated me to take this academic project as an opportunity to explore, link, and interpret how learning from personal and social situations transforms individuals to interact competently in a transcultural environment. The transition from my home country and culture of origin to a new cultural context disrupted my inherited frames of reference and accumulated repertoire of knowledge. Occurring in disorienting dilemma (Mezirow, 1994), or what Jarvis (2012) called disjuncture between biography and experience, made me feel anxious and sometimes desperate, but also encouraged me to search for answers to many “whys” to transform my meaning schemes and perspectives. In this particular context of time, place, and conditions, I found stories from other immigrants and my mentors helpful, providing a meaning and coherence (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006), to both re-establishing harmony and self-confidence in my new role and relationships and stimulating my learning.

In Balkan culture, stories, folklore, myths, and legends are an inseparable part of people's life, transforming, lifting, and motivating people's life journeys. As Estes (2003) describes, “if courage and bravery are the muscles of the spiritual drive that help a person to become whole, then the stories are the bones” (p. xxx). Indeed, stories are those that drive my curiosity and genuine interest in my academic endeavour; they play a central role in my professional work as a cultural-competence educator. We learn about different cultures through sharing and negotiating our stories. Shared stories prove that we have more in common with others than we thought; thus, stories create community and a sense of belonging

and inclusion. In our transcultural web, stories can be a proteistic epistemological tool that bridges our different traits constructed across shores of cultures we live with, connecting our past with our present. I argue stories are embedded in our transcultural identity. They are not just a bridge; rather they also open space up, allowing for a new way of looking at things and transforming. According to one Balkan legend, the shadow of a young woman embedded in the foundation of bridges and buildings made them sustainable. Referring to this folk legend, stories have similar function in transformative learning of transcultural competence, and I will examine this in my research.

Further, my professional career broadened my intellectual interests. Being a learner and educator empowered with knowledge enables me to focus on the processes and outcomes in learning in order to discover the complexity, paradoxes, and contradictions that are important for individual and societal transformations that foster inclusion. Coordinating a cultural-competence program in one of the largest immigrant-serving organizations in Canada, I observed, listened, and discussed with immigrants and Canadians challenges in communication, adaptation in the workplace and community due to a lack of knowledge about cultures and how they affect our daily life. Participants' feedback reveals that sharing stories and dialogue are the most beneficial approach and a source for learning and understanding cultures. Moreover, they demonstrated a willingness for deeper inquiry in their personal values and beliefs. Although participants generally acknowledged the importance of cultural knowledge through systematic reading, they preferred interaction, dialogue, and shared personal stories to help them learn and solve practical problems in their workplace and in personal relationships. Therefore, I found that presenting culture as a narrative was an effective approach in my learning sessions, emphasizing learners' experiences and practical problem-solving methods.

A second aspect in my transformative journey involved my dual role as a researcher and a practitioner, travelling back and forth through the research and professional practice portals. Engaging in a doctoral study transformed my knowledge and skills and enabled my participation in a broader professional role and in new practices. This research has transformed my understanding about human

experience, my personal and professional growth, self-awareness, self-development, and intellectual curiosity. Investigating the phenomenon of cultural competence reflects my knowledge, seeking to know more about myself as a person, facilitator, and researcher and my interactions and relationships with stakeholders and participants in different contexts and places. Thus, this transformation and integration of different knowledge and experience can be described as a journey that merges the fundamental types of learning: being, knowing, doing, and becoming of myself as a researcher and practitioner.

Supporting my observations with existing scholarly literature in the field of transcultural competence, perspective transformation, and immigrant integration, I have written and published several articles and have presented at many international academic conferences and learning sessions. In addition, my professional and community work, combined with my research for my master's degree in communication and culture and the courses taken during my doctoral study, enabled me to accomplish this research project.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

This chapter explores some conceptualizations of culture, differentiates intercultural from transcultural competence, and elaborates on transformative theory. Ideally, the process of gaining transcultural competence results in a perspective transformation for both the newcomers and the host society. For immigrants, movements across social spaces are moments of intense learning and modifying of the structure of meaning and inherited frames of reference, as well as adapting to new values types of social organization. Likewise, for members of mainstream society, this is a revision of frames of reference, learning and developing awareness about unfamiliar cultural contexts, accepting and negotiating different values and behaviours in order to communicate and interact competently in a diverse environment. This is not an easy and natural process but one that “entails negotiation, compromise, stalling, backsliding, self-deception, and failure” (Mezirow, 1991, p. 171).

Culture is a lens through which we communicate, interact, learn individually, and position ourselves in sociocultural context; therefore, first, I will review some conceptualizations of culture. The second part of the chapter draws attention to transculturalism as a further advance from existing intercultural competence models. The third section outlines phases of transformative theory resulting in individual and social changes; the hero’s journey toward transcultural competence. Finally, I will link the core elements in theoretical approaches of culture, transcultural competence, and transformative learning in the context of our global reality in the twenty-first century, a century of motion and super diversity, with micro, meso, and macro dimensions.

2.2. Culture

Culture is a central concept in understanding cultural competence and transformative learning, where individuals learn who they are, how they construct meaning, and how they grow and develop through interactions with other socially and culturally situated individuals. As a theoretical term, culture involves intergenerational attitude, values, beliefs, rituals/customs, and behavioral patterns into which

people are born but that is also created and maintained by people's ongoing actions. For centuries, scholars and philosophers have captured the essence of culture, identifying characteristics from different perspectives that shape this elusive phenomenon. Here, I will outline the very dynamic cultural perspectives of Milton Bennett (2009), Geertz (1973), and Trice and Beyer (1993), which interpret culture as a context and a system of meaning. This is also a central perspective in developing cultural competence and transformative learning.

Understanding culture as a context in which perception and behaviour occur, Bennett (2009) distinguishes between *objective or "big-C" Culture* and *"little-c" subjective culture*. Learning about Culture includes institutional, political, and historical circumstances that emerge from and are maintained by a group of interacting people. Subjective culture is the worldview of people who interact in a specific context: "It is their unique perspective on how to discriminate phenomena in the world, how to organize and coordinate communication, and how to assign goodness and badness to ways of being" (Bennett, M., 2009, p. 3).

According to Bennett, a cultural worldview does not prescribe or determine the behaviour of individuals who share the culture but rather constitutes the context in which perception and behaviour occur. Thus, these cultural patterns ought not to be treated as stereotypical categories into which every member of a group fits, but rather as generalizations about group tendencies and as clues for interpreting the behaviour of individual group members.

Years before Bennett, Geertz (1973) saw the need to seek and discover the meanings at play in human social life, the symbolic mediation of meaning embodied in ideas, attitudes, judgments, or beliefs. Proposing an interpretive approach to the study of culture, Geertz speaks about culture variously as "a pattern of meanings, a system of conceptions" (1973, p. 144), a "web of significance" (p. 5), a set, a vast geometry, a cosmos, a stratified hierarchy, a structure, and a frame. In terms of Geertz's definition of culture, meanings are the inherited conception that symbolic forms express knowledge about and attitudes toward life. His holistic approach to culture is not a simple unity, and if it is a web, it is not a

“seamless web” (1973, p. 407); each culture contains within it the elements of its own negation. He sees culture as neither an “exhaustively interconnected” system nor as “unabridged discontinuities”; cultural discontinuity or cultural integration are realistic results even in highly stable societies. In spelling out the kind of system he sees culture to be, Geertz uses the image of an octopus:

Culture moves rather like an octopus too—not all at once in a smoothly coordinated synergy of parts, a massive co-action of the whole, but by disjointed movements of this part, then that, and not the other which somehow cumulate to directional change. (p. 408)

Thus, Geertz’s definition does not narrow culture to geographical borders. Rather, as a system of patterns, different levels of interaction between cultures are possible, driven by range of forces: mass-media; the movement of cuisines, dress, and people; translation of languages; and art elements and themes. Different cultures thus live within the same geographical area, next door to each other, or in the same house (Geertz, 2000). There is no such thing as a pure, unique culture; we are of all the cultures, intersecting languages, nationalities, and sexes. In our contemporary society, each person is a mosaic. But in all of this diversity of intersecting cultures, Geertz is still concerned for the study of “frames of meaning” (2000, p. 246), for issues of development and change. In his view, meaning remains a central focus, and struggles and tensions within a culture are the result of different individuals and groups seeking meaning in symbols they consider important. Culture is about what you need to know or believe to function successfully in a society, or, according to Bennett, knowing culture is needed for learning and developing intercultural competence. This is what relates to values—social, cultural, and personal values; values enshrined in family, customs, society, religion, state of law, education, and economy. Geertz recognizes the need to see cultural, social, and psychological approaches as influencing each other. He sees the role of culture in mediating between the social and the psychological, culture as a process of dialogue bringing people together or, sometimes, into confrontation.

Similarly, a pluralistic view of culture and of an individual as a product of multiple cultural realities is further developed by Trice and Beyer (1993). They note cultures as collective, emotional,

historical, symbolic, dynamic, and fuzzy. As collective, culture originates in individual's interactions with each other. Individuals may develop specific ways of managing the fundamental securities of life, but until these specific ways become collectively accepted and put into practice, they are not part of a culture. Thus, belonging to a culture involves believing what others believe and doing as others do, at least part of the time.

Cultures are emotionally charged because they help to manage anxieties, and forms are infused with emotions as well as rational thoughts. People's allegiance to their beliefs, values, and cultural practices develops primarily from their emotional needs (Trice & Beyer, 1993). Accordingly, members of a culture rarely question their core beliefs and values, but if they do, their reaction is emotional. Cultures are historically based because they cannot be divorced from their histories and they do not arise overnight. To develop a culture, people need to spend time together to interact and share with one another common uncertainties and some ways of coping with them. Thus, a culture is based on the unique history of a particular group of people coping with unique set of physical, social, political, and economic circumstances. These historical practices might be buried or hidden under current preoccupations, but they can still affect current behaviour. Symbolism plays an important role in cultural communication and expression. Cultural symbols facilitate and emphasize the expressive rather than technical and practical side of human behaviour (Trice & Beyer, 1993, pp. 5-8).

Although cultures are historical and persist across generations, they do not remain static. They continuously change because individuals bring their own understanding and interpretation, create their own behaviour, and, over time, these variations become embedded in the culture. The dynamics of culture are connected to the fuzziness of cultures. Cultures are not monolithic, single sets of ideas; they incorporate contradictions, ambiguities, paradoxes that result from interaction and multiple subcultures.

I embrace these three notions of culture (Bennett, M., 2009; Geertz, 1973; Trice & Beyer, 1993) as plural and dynamic, meaning that an individual does not represent one single culture but multiple realities of cultures and embedded layers notions of culture. The commonality between these scholars is

in their symbolic interpretation of culture. They see culture as a set of socially established symbols—a source of information through shared meaning, produced, perceived, and interpreted by members of a culture. This fabric of meaning guides individuals' actions and behaviours, and creates social structure (Geertz, 1973), systems of shared meaning and symbols (Trice & Beyer, 1993), and the context in which behaviour occurs (Bennett, M., 2009). Here, I would like to draw a conceptual parallel with Goffman's (1974) frame of meaning and symbolic interaction, relevant to the discussion above. The Canadian-American sociologist argues that cultures generate frameworks full of meaningful symbols or objects, that humans place a meaning on all things through interaction, in order to understand, compare and create a social structure (Goffman, 1974). What unites Bennet's, Geertz's, Trice and Beyer's views with that of Goffman is that culture is understood as a set of symbols and meanings constructed, understood, and interpreted through social interaction. The viewpoint of accepting culture as an open system of meaning and as a discourse provides different approaches toward analyzing cultural competence. One of these approaches that I am particularly interested in and found important for understanding, learning, and practicing cultural competence is transculturalism.

2.3. Transculturalism

Transculturalism is a new way of seeing the world, and thus, of understanding ourselves (Slimbach, 2005). It expands the interdisciplinary field of study as new cultural and ethnic boundaries have emerged in our era of globalization, fostering multiple cultural interactions, attitudes, meaning making endeavours, and power formations (Brooks, 2007; Cuccioletta, 2001/02; Kraidy, 2005; Lewis, 2002). The notion of transculturalism came forth in Cuba and Brazil in the mid-1930s and 1940s as a variation of *mestizaje*. Cuban scholar Fernando Ortiz (1940/1995) used the term and developed the concept of transculturalism to explain Cuba's experience with racial and cultural encounters as an exchange, a give-and-take process in developing a new common culture. With the growing and speedy flow of travel and borderless communications, socio-psychological and cognitive outcomes in transnational life experiences gradually became recognized sources of knowledge for social adaptation,

experiential knowledge, professional competencies, and adult transformative learning (Benet-Martinez & Hong, 2014). In the last decade of the twentieth century and the first decade of twenty-first century, the human phenomenon of transculturality became more apparent and thus emphasized the importance of re-examining human life experience in a contemporary light (Benessaieh, 2010; Epstein, 2009; Graem & Hui, 1996; Imbert, 2014; Schultze-Engler et al., 2009; Welsch, 1999). Transculturalism was appropriated to denote cultural mixture in literature and music (Dagnino, 2015; Pratt, 1992; Wallis & Malm, 1990). For example, Dagnino (2015) used a “transcultural conceptual and analytical reference frame (namely, ‘transcultural comparativism’)” (p. 20) to explore this century’s growing transcultural literature. In practice, the fields of nursing (Purnell, 2013), communication (Dai & Chen, 2014; Kim, 2012; Sparrow, 2000; Spitzberg & Changon, 2009), international business and management (Glover & Friedman, 2015; Solomon & Shell, 2009). Trompenaas and Hampden-Turner (2006) also have explored the space at the crossroads of cultures. Berry and Epstein (1999) used the concept in an attempt to provide employees with the means to learn and adapt to the inherent complexities of international workplaces and organizations to survive global competition. Parallel with progressive emergence of the concept of transculturalism and in conjunction with the Russian culturalist school, a circle of humanities scholars studied cultural interaction following Mikhail Bakhtin (1981), who used the term transculture to understand “the Western postmodern condition” by resolving the contradiction between “multiculturalism’s push for communal identities and deconstruction’s imperative to excavate internal differences in identity” (Berry & Epstein, 1999, p. 79).

Further, Slimbach (2005) described transculturalism as a pursuit to define shared interests and common values across cultural and national borders. According to him, transculturalism can be tested by means of thinking “outside the box of one’s motherland” and by “seeing many sides of every question without abandoning conviction and allowing for chameleon sense of self without losing one’s cultural center” (p. 211).

Likewise, Epstein (2012) sees transculturalism as a new space for cultural development that transcends the borders of traditional cultures (ethnic, national, racial, religious, gender, sexual, and professional). Transculture overcomes the isolation of symbolic systems and value determinations and broadens the field of cultural creativity. In this way, a person acquires transculture at the boundaries of one's own culture and at the crossroads with other cultures. The mode of being located at the crossroads of cultures is the next step in the ongoing human quest for freedom from the language and culture in which one was born and educated; it is a new emerging sphere in which humans position themselves outside their primary cultures, interacting between cultures and integrating them. This is what we can observe in Canada and in many countries in the era of transnational migration—more individuals find themselves outside of their native ethnic, racial, sexual, ideological, and other cultural limitations without abandoning their inborn culture, traditions, and customs. According to Epstein (2012), the elements of transculture are freely chosen by people rather than dictated by rules and prescriptions within their given culture. He further compares the process of transculturalism with the way artists choose colours to combine them creatively in their paintings: “transculture offers a universal palette on which any individual can blend colours to produce an expressive self-portrait” (p. 62). Thus, a transcultural person can adhere to any ethnic or confessional tradition and decide the degree to which this becomes part of one's own identity. To describe this transcultural condition that gives a new meaning to all elements of existing cultures, Epstein builds upon Bakhtin's concept of “outsidedness” (in Russian, *vnenakhodimost'*) or “being located beyond.”

This principle suggests that we can understand and describe a certain culture only if we distance ourselves from it. Bakhtin (cited in Epstein, 2009) suggests that the essence of a given culture may be penetrated from the viewpoint of another foreign culture rather than from its own inner perspective. Additionally, according to the concept of “outsideness,” a human cannot fully visualize his or her own face—only others can see a person's real appearance from their location beyond those personal boundaries. This is what happens with immigrants in Canada—they see their own culture through

different lenses and start understanding some traditions that they never questioned before. In addition, they describe Canadian culture in more detail compared to native-born Canadians. Consciously cognized transcultural differences develop cultural awareness, self-confidence, and recognition, an understanding of a new positionality, and a reintegration of new perspectives and roles, which are those different stages of transformative learning described by Mezirow (2009), which will be outlined further in this chapter.

Moreover, transculture can be perceived as encompassing and creating space for an individual's transformative learning and for developing transcultural competence, that is, the attitudes and abilities that facilitate open and ethical interaction between people across cultures (Slimbach, 2005). The following section will overview some concepts of intercultural competence interrelated to the notion of transcultural development as a dynamic continuum.

2.4. From Intercultural to Transcultural

Exploring the meaning of the two prefixes *inter-* and *trans-* illustrates semantic differences. According to dictionary definitions, *inter-* means between, among, mutually, reciprocally, together, versus *trans-*, meaning across, beyond, through. The prefix *inter-* suggests more static and restricted space where individuals with different cultural backgrounds interact between each other, mixing, adapting, excluding, or integrating in a dominant cultural environment. In contrast, *trans-* brings the notion of dynamics, moving through space across the border (Kraidy, 2005) and expanding the limits beyond a single identity, switching between cultures and languages as a mode of being, having a sense of continuum, discourse, and transformation (Berry & Epstein, 1999; Epstein, 2012). In that sense, transcultural includes stabilizing or destabilizing effects, social conjunctions, historical conditions, and integration or disintegration of groups, cultures, and power.

Unlike transculturalism, interculturalism explains the existence of cultures as distinct spheres that will always clash unless ways are sought for them to exist together (Welsch, 1999). Therefore, in order to prevent possible cultural clashes, empirical studies of interculturality (Hofstede, 1991; Hammer,

2012; Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003; Bennet, M., 2009) developed inventories for coaching and consulting practices, predominantly for employee training programs.

Exploring the transcultural paradigm and differentiating it from multiculturalism and interculturalism, Benessaieh (2010) disagrees that “current views of cultures” remain “fixed frames or separate islands neatly distanced and differentiated from one another” (p. 10). Transculturality, as an abstraction, “offers a conceptual landscape for considering cultures as relational webs and flows of significance in active interaction with one another (Benessaieh, 2010, p. 11). Another scholar, Wolfgang Welsch (1999), adds to this when he argues that intercultural and multicultural concepts “seek ways in which cultures could nevertheless get on with, understand and recognize one another” (p. 196). The transcultural concept “proceeds from the existence of clearly distinguished, in themselves homogenous cultures—the only difference now being that these differences exist within one and the same state community” (Welsch, 1999, p. 196). On an ideological level, *multiculturalism* represents the concept of a cultural mosaic and the positive sociopolitical stance in Canada, although it may induce segregation and alienation, undermine, trivialize and reinforce cultural and ethnic differences, according to Wilson (2012). The author refers *transculturalism* as an ideological perspective calling for cooperation, interaction, and exchange between communities and thus flexibility and an open mind on the part of individuals (Wilson, 2012),

In exploring the evolution of terminology and concepts, it is important to note, neither interculturalism nor multiculturalism explains the impact of globalization on creating flow and connections that transcend territorial boundaries, countries, and civilizations. Mikhail Epstein (1999, 2009, 2012) offers a philosophical perspective on transculturalism, an innovative syncretic approach that integrates many cultural traditions and representations that moves away from cultural determinism. For example, he illustrates transcultural diffusion of initial cultural identities as individuals cross the borders of different cultures and assimilate them, comparing this with multiculturalism, which emphasizes faithfulness to one’s native soil and insists on the individual belonging to a certain natural culture that is

biologically, geographically, or biographically predetermined, for example, “black culture,” “women’s culture,” “youth culture,” or “gay culture.” Although culture may preserve many natural, ethnic, geographical, psychophysical, and socioeconomic features that determine individuals as “white” or “black,” “Canadian” or “Bulgarian,” “male” or “female,” “transculture is the freedom of every person to live on the border of one’s inborn culture or beyond it” (Epstein, 2009, p. 334). Thus, Epstein sees transculturalism as “a next stage of multiculturalism without determinism and representation,” as “positive constructive deconstruction” (p. 342.), expanding the limits of our identities, integrating, but not opposing many cultural traditions.

Drawing from this dynamic and dialectic notion of transculture, I will outline the dimensions of transcultural competence conceptualized in the literature. Some intercultural models, such as developmental models (Bennett, 1993; Hammer et al., 2003; King & Baxter Magolda, 2005), Deardorff’s (2008) dynamic process model, and the dialectic approach of Martin and Nakayama (2015), recognize characteristics proposed by the proponents of transculturalism. Although the sense of being beyond cultures in the space of ultimate diversity is missing in these models, they encompass elements from the map of transculturalism.

2.4.1. Models of intercultural competence.

According to developmental models, competence evolves over time, individually, relationally, or both. Relationships can become more competent through ongoing interaction that produces greater learning and incorporation of cultural perspectives (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009). Bennett (2004, 2009), Hammer et al. (2003), and King and Baxter Magolda (2005) provide progressive competence models that argue over time, competence progresses from an ethnocentric understanding of other cultures to ethno-relative comprehension and appreciation.

Bennett (2004, 2009) defines *ethnocentrism* as a concept in which the worldview of one’s own culture is central to all reality. To be ethnocentric means that you make life choices and behave on the assumption that your worldview is superior. *Ethno-relativism*, in contrast, assumes that cultures can only

be understood relative to one another and that behaviour can only be understood within a cultural context. For Bennett, the state of ethno-relativism implies neither an ethical agreement with all difference nor a rejection of a preference for one worldview over another. As we become more interculturally sensitive and forge intercultural communication skills, we move from the ethnocentric stages (denial, defense, and minimization) and progress toward more ethno-relativist stages (acceptance, adaptation, and integration) (Bennett, 2004).

In constructing the dynamic process model of intercultural competence, Deardorff (2008) identifies three key sets of elements: 1) knowledge and comprehension; 2) skills; and 3) attitudes. Knowledge and comprehension consist of “cultural self-awareness, deep cultural knowledge, and sociolinguistic awareness” (p. 36). The skills relevant to intercultural competence include the ability “to listen, observe, evaluate. To analyze, interpret and relate” (p. 36). The requisite attitudes include “respect (valuing other cultures); openness (withdrawing judgment); curiosity and discovery (tolerating ambiguity and uncertainty)” (p. 36). These interact in such a way as to support what Deardorff (2008) refers to as the desired internal and external outcomes. The central internal outcome is having “a frame of reference shift in which adaptability and flexibility play a central role” (p. 38). The external outcome of intercultural competence is “effective and appropriate communication and behaviour in intercultural situations” (p. 39). To summarize, Deardorff’s model has concepts that refer to transformative learning theory in terms of changing the frame of reference and to the developmental model of Bennett (1993). In addition, Deardorff’s work presents intercultural competence as a learning process that should be incorporated into educational programs.

Although these intercultural competence models have approaches, stages, and explanations that might correspond to transculturalism, they focus mainly on the individual human as the unit of analysis and the rational categorization of people. These two points ignore and undervalue the importance of other factors, such as the specific situation, social position and power, gender, sexuality, and race, which are addressed in most recent scholarship (Block, 2013; Hoskins & Sallah, 2011; Martin & Nakayama,

2015; Phipps, 2014). For example, Martin and Nakayama (2015) call for a dialectic view that places individual competence traits in tension with the motivations, knowledge, and skills of the organization, other workers, and the larger cultural context of the society. Their approach gives an alternative way to think about intercultural competence, avoiding reliance on stereotypes and fixed notions of cultures, which coincides with the dynamic discourse of culture described by Geertz (1993), Trice and Beyer (1993), and it is a step toward transculturalism.

2.4.2. Transcultural competence.

In his essay “The Transcultural Journey,” Slimbach (2005) proposes a cognitive “map” for developing transcultural competence, including six broad categories: perspective consciousness, ethnographic skills, global awareness, world learning, foreign language proficiency, and affective development. His approach to transcultural learning borrows heavily from existing research in intercultural communication, social anthropology, and international education. Slimbach identifies the following dimensions of transculturalism, which are similar to interculturalism: knowledge, skills, attitude, and behaviour encompassed by important considerations. The innovative part of Slimbach’s model is the suggestion to learners and educators to move beyond traditional classrooms and structured presentations to the community to engage in fieldwork, in a real space that is immersed, immediate, and emotional. Slimbach claims that this model of education will invite learners to bring their knowledge of their own culture to the process of creating and cultivating relationships and interactions across cultures. The experience of doing so creates opportunities for acquiring a set of personal attitudes, social sensitivities, and intellectual skills—all the elements of intercultural and transcultural competence that rarely can be attained in a regular classroom.

The first proposition in Slimbach’s map is recognizing universal human nature and potential as a prime identity for transcultural development. From this fundamental egalitarian acknowledgment, individuals start to discover and expand the range of alternative values, visions, and ways that others make sense of the world. This universal proposition does not dismiss the boundaries of self-identity and

the fact that “we exist as part of multiple intersecting microcultures” (Silmbach, 2005, p. 211).

Transculturally competent learners can see themselves and be able to move in and out of daily contexts where nationalities, gender, classes, languages, races, religions, and ideologies coexist in our era of intense economic, political, and cultural change. Demonstrating knowledge and awareness of one’s own cultural reactions, behaviour, language, and that of the host society are needed competencies to succeed in a transcultural journey. It also requires readiness to recognize the true, the good, and the beautiful in each culture that can nourish more universal virtues and values. For this proposition, learners have to demonstrate humility, respect, and a genuine interest and sincerity towards diverse others. In doing so, learners should understand that movement “outside the box” is not natural, ethnocentrism is an existential condition. Instead, this is a primary goal of the transcultural journey—to open the reality outside ourselves, to discover that others exist, to dare question our own prejudices, to accept others without comparing or judging them against ourselves, to progress from ethnocentrism to ethno-relativism (Bennett, M., 2009; Slimbach, 2005).

History suggests that conflicts between groups result, to a large extent, from social and cultural disregard. Myriad examples illustrate conflicts in our society because of a given group identity ascribed by birth, for example, ethnicity, religion, or race, that marginalizes minority groups within the national culture and create unequal power and representation. To prevent such clashes, Slimbach (2005) suggests educators and learners articulate historical conditions in which particular groups have become underrepresented in society and demonstrate both an awareness of resistance to oppression and an ability to reflect on others’ culture, history, and present-day circumstances.

However, this egalitarian and humanistic universal approach cannot dismiss social and economic polarization and inequality. This is what Slimbach calls the capacity to “put oneself in another’s shoes,” to apprehend their point of view, taking responsibility as transcultural citizens of the global community. Then, such transcultural citizens should be able to articulate and identify alternative beliefs, sources, and solutions that address these issues and balance cultural, national, and global commitments. Here is the

challenge of transculturalism: to move from local to global, from national to transnational, not trying to change or “turn away” the other culture, but “to cross over,” enlarging one’s self in relation to both one’s own culture “and that third culture that eventually forms on the boundary between two” (Slimbach, 2005, p. 220).

Studying the third culture, described as a combination of an individual’s home culture and host culture (or cultures), Graen and Hui (1996) offer a five-stage guideline to becoming transcultural. Their empirical study emphasizes the creation of a third culture within organizations for training business partners. Describing transcultural transformation in a cooperative and harmonious manner, first, the authors recommend that the individual should become a “cultural adventurer” (p. 67), developing an interest in cultures other than their own. Second, the individual becomes a “cultural sensitizer,” capable of attuning their behaviours and attitudes in relation to the other culture of interest. Third, the transcultural individual must “transcend” their own cultural biases. To achieve this step, a person must immerse themselves in a completely different culture, since the authors believe that the more “discrepant” the other culture is, the better it is to become conscious of one’s own. Fourth, to attain transculturality, the individual has to have knowledge of the other culture involved and master the capacity to transcend judgement beyond one’s own cultural background. Individuals then have the capacity “to conceptually differentiate and conciliate similarities and differences between the varieties of phenomena presented to them in different cultures to make valid and meaningful comparisons” (p. 68). Seeing the world altered and widened and having the capacity to combine socializing processes from both “the home culture” and “the second culture” at this point, at the fifth stage, the transcultural individual can “create a third culture.”

Although this view has a transformative element in personal and organizational development, I argue that “the third culture” is rather fixed, presumes even blending of different forms, and does not consider the dynamics of multiple cultural perspectives that may influence an individual’s identity. What if someone combines values or has experience from more than just two cultures? On this point, Graen

and Hui's vision is far from Bakhtin's and Epstein's idea of transculturalism. While they have a common theme in terms of being outside their own culture to widen and deepen cultural perspectives, they differ in how they describe the process of transculturality. If for Graen and Hui (1996) transculturality is a linear process resulting in a fixed third culture, for Bakhtin and Epstein, it is a dynamic flow of learning and identity formation characterized by a plurality of symbolic cultural representations that juxtapose, overlap, and blend. Bakhtin and Epstein's transculturalism is a liberating process of human development and transformation, lived and experienced through an individual's choices. On the other hand, Slimbach's last three propositions are related to a transcultural journey, transforming the learner into a new self, and herein lies the linkage to the archetypal "hero's journey" (Campbell, 2004). Transcultural learning with transformative guidelines, such as Graen and Hui's, echoes transformative theory in describing personal empowerment and an awakening experience (Freire, 1972), learning and transforming through critical consciousness and reflection on experience (Mezirow, 2000, 2009), and a holistic perspective that includes cognitive, social, emotional, and spiritual aspects of learning.

2.5. Transformative Learning Theory

In 1991, Mezirow introduced the "first comprehensive presentation of transformation theory" (Cranton & Taylor, 2012, p. 5), based on his grounded 1978 findings on perspective transformation. Building on the work of Habermas (1971), who delineated learning into three domains (technical, practical, and emancipatory), Mezirow also used Freire's (1970) concept of conscientization to inform his theory. It is Freire's highest stage of *critical transivity*—demonstrated by individuals who can think globally, critically assess perceived contradictions, and engage as agents of change—that most influenced Mezirow's transformative elements of disorienting dilemma and critical reflection (Kitchenham, 2008). Built on the foundational concepts of constructivist assumptions, humanism, and critical social theory, Mezirow (2012) defined transformative learning as a process "by which we transform our taken-for-granted frames of reference ... to make them more inclusive, discriminating,

open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so that they may generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action” (p. 75). He identifies the following ten phases of learning that become clarified in the transformative process (Mezirow, 2009, p. 19):

1. disorienting dilemma;
2. self-examination;
3. a critical assessment of assumptions;
4. recognition of a connection between one’s discontent and the process of transformation;
5. exploration of opinions for new roles, relationships and action;
6. planning a course of action;
7. acquiring knowledge and skills for interpreting one’s plan;
8. provisional trying of new roles;
9. building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships;
10. a reintegration into one’s life based on conditions dictated by one’s new perspective.

Drawing from the ten phases above, the elements of critical reflection and dialogue lead to a transformed frame of reference, resulting in individual and social change. Frames of reference are structures of assumptions and expectations that frame an individual’s tacit points of view and influence their thinking, beliefs, and actions. It is the revision of frames of reference that is addressed by the theory of perspective transformation. A perspective transformation leads to a “more fully developed (more functional) frame of reference ... one that is more (a) inclusive, (b) differentiating, (c) permeable, (d) critically reflective, and (e) integrative of experience” (Mezirow, 1996, p. 163). A perspective transformation often occurs either through a series of cumulative transformed meaning schemes or as the result of an acute personal or social crisis. Learning occurs in one of four ways, by elaborating existing meaning schemes, learning new meaning schemes, transforming meaning schemes, or transforming meaning perspectives (Mezirow, 2009).

Due to the cyclical nature of the transformative process, there is little agreement about the order of the phases (MacKeracher, 2012). From a cultural-spiritual perspective, Charaniya (2012) describes the transformative process as “a spiraling, creative, collaborative, and intertwining journey of discovery” (p. 235). Critique and debate have focused on tensions between seemingly dichotomous aspects of transformative learning theory, such as cognitive versus affective, individual versus cultural, and personal change versus emancipatory (Boyd & Myers, 1988; Dirkx, 2006; Johnson-Bailey, 2012; Kucukaydin & Cranton, 2012; Merriam & Kim, 2012). Cranton and Taylor (2012) suggest that these multiple perspectives need not be labeled as “antithetical but can coexist in a holistic theory—experienced differently based on the individual and context, these perspectives may simply be the result of scholars examining different facets of the whole elephant” (p. 9). Mezirow’s original theory has expanded as a result of the shaping influence of multiple perspectives and voices (Baumgartner, 2012) and will be discussed below.

Multiple theoretical orientations to transformative learning exist beyond Mezirow’s original conception. These fall into two major theoretical frameworks (Taylor, 2008, 2009). The first one, supported by Jack Mezirow (1994, 2000, 2003, 2009), John Dirkx (2006, 2008, 2012), Edmund O’Sullivan (1999, 2001, 2012), and Edward Taylor and Patricia Cranton (2012), among others, worked towards integrative, holistic, and integral perspectives. Their theoretical orientations emphasize personal transformation and growth where the unit of analysis is primarily the individual, with little attention given to the role of context and social change in the transformative experience. For example, Dirkx (2012) sees transformative learning as emotional “soul work.” He examines the powerful role that emotions, images, and feelings can play in transformative learning to construct meaning, make sense of day-to-day events, refer to the self and other, and mediate dialogue and relationships. Dirkx (2012) also states that “soul work” is not meant to replace the analytical, rational, and reflective processes of transformative learning. “Rather it is intended to provide a more holistic and integrated way of framing the meaning-making that occurs in contemporary contexts for adult learning” (p. 127). Another theorist,

Charaniya (2012), draws from spirituality and culture and explores what it means to engage in cultural-spiritual transformations. She sees a three-part process of transformation that begins when someone's cultural or spiritual experience is challenged by a contradiction of beliefs and practice. This challenge is then expanded through engagement with experiences that are intellectual, relational, and reflective and finally, culminates with better understanding of the self. According to Charaniya, the process is not limited to rational discourse but relies heavily on engaging dialogue, sharing stories, exploring symbols, and learning from each other, resulting in changing one's cultural and spiritual identity, how one sees the world and his or her role in it. The core elements of this orientation emphasize self-critique of deeply held assumptions that lead to greater personal awareness in relationship to others.

The second framework, espoused for example by Paulo Freire (1970, 1998), Elizabeth Tisdell (2012), and Juanita Johnson-Bailey and Mary Alfred (2006), connects transformative learning with social change, where individual and social transformation are inherently linked. Critical reflection on this social orientation of transformative learning is more about ideological change, where learners develop an awareness of power and consciousness to transform society and their own reality.

In the context of transcultural-competence learning, both perspectives on transformative learning have merits. A transcultural person develops individual self-reflection through interactions with other members of society, and, at the same time, become critically conscious about dynamic social space, positionality, and power. Considering these two facets in transformative learning as a dialectical, coexisting framework will make learners capable of switching between cultures in our era of intensive economic, political, and cultural change (Epstein, 2012; Martin & Nakayama, 2015).

Focusing on cognitive processes of learning, Taylor (1994a) suggests Mezirow's transformative learning theory fills the gap in intercultural-competence theory to illustrate what happens during the process of cross-cultural encounters that leads to learning and transformation. Taylor (1994b) discusses the process of perspective transformation in the context of learning to become culturally competent. He explains how, through transformative learning, expectations, framed by cultural assumptions and

presuppositions, directly influence the meaning of experiences and change the meaning structure. In his comparative analysis, three shared dimensions (precondition to change or disoriented dilemma, the process, and outcome) are discussed in terms of the relationship between the process of intercultural communication competence and perspective transformation.

A precondition to change, acting as a catalyst for transformation, is a factor found in all the cultural transformation studies. Taylor (1994b) find that the stage of “culture shock” in the intercultural competence literature is what often triggers learning and leads to the development of new learning. He suggests that Mezirow’s 10 stages of perspective transformation correspond to the movement from lower to higher levels of cultural competence and is analogical to Bennett’s (1993) developmental model. Taylor (1994b) highlights the similarities between outcomes and the intercultural competence literature’s emphasis on higher levels of integration and adaptation, or what Bennett (1993) refers to as ethno-relativism.

A more expansive vision of transformative learning is presented by O’Sullivan (1999, 2001, 2012). His idea of integral human development must be understood as a dynamic wholeness that encompasses dialectical movement of both harmony and disharmony. O’Sullivan’s model is generative and open-ended, and includes personal, community, and planetary development, connecting local to global. He encourages the need for diversity within and between communities, and inclusion is an imperative for transformative education. Although the preceding models interpret transformative learning differently, all highlight the need for transformative narratives in broader contexts and approaches, beyond the limitations of singular culture, and thus, they coincide with the concept of transculturalism described earlier.

Separately and far from this scholarship circle, in 1949, the American scholar Joseph Campbell, in his book *The Hero with Thousand Faces*, developed the transformative model of the archetypal hero’s journey. Campbell found a common pattern for a hero’s journey: a hero with special power is called to adventure, receives a supernatural aid, crosses a threshold, travels a road of trials, encounters a goddess,

experiences an apotheosis, and returns with an elixir, being transformed by and with power to transform the world. Campbell argues that all myths deal with transformations of consciousness: “you have been thinking one way; you now have to think a different way” (Campbell & Moyers, 1988, p. 127). The stories shared by sojourners and transcultural learners are stories of adventures full of trials that lead to a new way of thinking. Therefore, storytelling is a valuable approach for discovering transcultural experience across the lives of individuals and recontextualizing perspectives (Dagnino, 2015; Imbert, 2014; Schulze-Engler et al., 2009). Through sharing their stories, transcultural learners reflect on their journeys and learn from them.

The journey, according to Campbell (2004), requires a separation from the familiar, known world, an initiation into a new level of awareness, skills, and responsibilities, and a return home matured, enriched with new experience, achieved goals, and mastered skills. Drawing from mythology, Campbell (2004) describes the first stage of the hero’s journey as “a call to adventure,” transferring the spiritual centre of gravity from within society to a zone of unknown, a zone where the transcultural learner adequately understands and describes a certain culture as an outsider, beyond personal boundaries (Epstein, 2009). Furthermore, this is the disorienting dilemma, for the transformation to start (Mezirow, 2009), it requires losing oneself and giving oneself to some higher end. Campbell offers hope that the consciousness of the individual entering and transforming one’s personal life and “psyche,” one’s surrounding culture, the life of one’s family, one’s relational work, and other matters of life can be transformed too. This supports the dialectic notion of transcultural competence (Slimbach, 2005), in which the individual’s transformation is interconnected also social, as a journey through the personal, cosmological, and equally vast spiritual realities in relation to society (Campbell, 2004).

The result of the miraculous passage and return of the hero is the freedom to live consciously and peacefully, “having reconciled individual consciousness with the universal will” (Campbell, 2004, p. 221). In transculturalism, this is when an individual is reaching the level of liberation, self-deconstruction, self-transformation, “the transcendental realm that relates to all existing cultures as they

relate to nature” (Epstein, 2009, p. 335). In the context of transformative theory, it rests upon the last two phases defined by Mezirow (2009): self-confidence in new roles and relationships and transformed meaning perspective. For Slimbach (2005), when learners continue to engage in the transcultural journey, expand their horizons with new relationships and contexts, they are open to “the good, the true, the beautiful in each person and cultural tradition,” having “a universal attitude capable of gathering up any trait, any truth, any teaching—in any culture—and then of assimilating that into a more global character” (p. 224). In the next section, I will explore how the core elements of transcultural competence and perspective transformation link in a global context characterized by dynamic movements across social spaces.

2.6. Culture, Transcultural Competence, and Transformative Learning: Links and Interpretations in a Global Context

Culture today is inextricably linked to community, national, international, and transnational economies and politics. Culture is this multidimensional and dynamic context driven by different forces (Geertz, 1973) that incorporate contradictions (Trice & Beyer, 1993). American scholar George Yudice (2003) defines culture in the age of globalization as a resource, a resource that we need to learn, know, and consider (Bennett, M., 2009). In the twenty-first century, culture is a resource for economic and political exploration, agency, and power that is mobilized and instrumentalized for a wide range of purposes and ends (Sorrells, 2014). In the context of globalization, culture is also utilized as a resource to address and solve social problems such as literacy, addiction, crime, and conflict. Culture is used today distinctively, socially, and politically as a resource for collective and individual empowerment, agency, and resistance. Understanding culture as a resource provides a foundation for broadening and deepening the conception of transcultural competence as transformative learning.

The process and conditions of globalization require that we consider the continuity and ties of multiple global communities, positions, and interpretations, the connections and disjuncture between the

local and the global. Sorrells (2014) proposes a multidimensional framework that emphasizes the interrelationships between micro, meso, and macro frames of experience and analysis as follows:

(1)The micro frame focuses on the individual-based interactional dimensions highlighting cultural communication styles and conflict orientations; (2) the meso or intermediate frame broadens our view to address group-based issues such as prejudices, ethnocentrism, cultural histories, cultural identities and systematic inequalities; (3) the macro or geopolitical frame expands our viewpoints to include the impact of media and discourse, political and economic factors as well as geopolitical power asymmetries. (p. 151)

Thus, an ability to connect the local with the global and shift among micro, meso, and macro frames is critical for transcultural competence in our century. Moreover, it reflects on dynamics of transformative learning that involve individual as well as social transformation, recognizing individual experience, critical reflection, and dialogue (Taylor, 2009). For example, without individual experience, there is nothing to engage in critical reflection. As the study of transformative learning has evolved, other elements have emerged as equally significant: a holistic orientation, awareness of context, and an authentic practice (Taylor, 2009). Authentic practice provides a safe and inclusive environment to build trusting relationships, to engage in a dialogue and in critical reflection, ultimately allowing transformative learning to take place.

These core elements of transformative learning can be recognized in intercultural praxis that Sorrells (2014) outlines as “a process of critical, reflective, engaged thinking and acting that enables us to navigate the complex, contradictory, and challenging intercultural space we inhabit interpersonally, communally, and globally” (p. 153). Although she calls the process intercultural praxis, I argue the meaning of it and its six entry points (inquiry, framing, positionality, dialogue, reflection, and action) are analogous to the precepts of transculturalism and transformative learning, discussed earlier.

Inquiry, according to Sorrells (2014), is a desire and willingness to know, to ask, to find out, and to learn. In a more pragmatic sense, inquiry is about wanting to know more about those who are

different from ourselves. The practice of inquiry leads us to engagement with others. Inquiry also means that we ask and listen not simply with an expectation to reinforce our preconceived ideas, worldviews, and perspectives; rather we must recognize that we deeply need the perspectives and points of view of others to complete and complement our own. When we engage in inquiry, we seek to understand the point of view and experience of the other, even if or especially if it challenges our own worldview. In transculturalism, inquiry is exploring universal and unique human nature, experiences, and potential, discovering the ways that others make sense of the world (Slimabch, 2005). Likewise, this is the notion of experience in transformative learning—prior learners’ experiences and what they learn about themselves and the world when they participate in learning activities. It is important to consider the prior life experience of learners because, very often, this past experience, or what Mezirow calls disorienting dilemma, fosters transformative learning (Taylor, 2009). For example, mentor-mentee engagement between a newcomer and a local professional can be described as a form of inquiry to discover and understand different views and behaviours, different experiences. It is an activating event “that typically exposes a discrepancy between what a person has always assumed to be true and what has just been experienced, heard or read” (Cranton, 2002, p. 65). Prior individual and group experience is also important for educators to consider in transformative learning (Jarvis, 2003; Taylor, 2009), for example, intense experiential activities and narrative stories can be catalysts for critical reflection, promoting transformative learning. These activities challenge existing meaning perspectives of participants at personal and sociocultural levels and provoke new meaning. Whereas participants engage in such activities and interact, sharing their experiences also make them aware of the frame of reference from which they see the world. In Sorrells’ conceptualization, this is framing, how we see things through individual, cultural, national, and regional frames or lenses that include some participants or exclude others.

Framing is a knowledge construction across cultural dimensions, time, and space, which fosters transformative learning. Consequently, in transculturalism, framing is distancing from one culture in

order to understand it, transcend its boundaries; it is taking another look through different lenses (Epstein, 2009). An additional aspect of framing is the capacity of flexibly and consciously shifted perspectives from the particular, situated dimensions to the broader and global dimensions and from global to particular dimensions, while maintaining awareness of and attention to both sets of frames (Sorrells, 2014).

Positionality, as the third standpoint in intercultural praxis, is a place from which to view and make sense of the world around us. It assumes that socially constructed hierarchies based on race, class, gender, nationality, religion, age, and physical abilities, among others, position us socially, geographically, politically, symbolically, and materially in relation to each other, to structures and configurations of power. Positionality may shift, change, and vary, sometime even drastically. For example, immigrants—doctors, lawyers or internationally educated professionals—with a high social status in their home country may find themselves positioned according to their minority group rather than training or recognized degree and are often forced into manual labour or part-time study.

Positioning ourselves, others, and our knowledge allows us as everyday actors and community members to see the relationship between power and knowledge, to question our knowledge, to question how cultural categories (e.g., race, gender, class, religion, and ethnicity) socially and hierarchically construct and produce our knowledge in relation to power. This corresponds to awareness of context as a core value of transformative learning (Taylor, 2009). Developing an awareness of context when fostering transformative learning allows for a deeper appreciation and understanding of the sociocultural factors (i.e., poverty, gender, material conditions, refugees' trauma and war experience, global conflicts) that affect the process of learning. Some scholars draw attention to the lack of research into sociocultural factors, power, and politics that shape the transformative experience (Fenwick, 2008; Merriam, 2008; Mojab & Carpenter, 2011; Morise, 2013; Taylor, 2007). Instead, much of the empirical research has focused on the individual, while tending to ignore contextual factors outside of the individual, such as previous life experience and the social space in which individuals are living and learning. A contextual

perspective can also explain the lack of or resistance to change, for example in cases of a culture of resistance to technology (Whitelaw, Sears, & Campbell, 2004), rules imposed on welfare women returning to work in a family empowerment project, and workplace rules, space, and recognition (Fenwick, 2008). Recognizing social context or positionality for an inclusive safe environment is a core element in both transformative learning and transcultural competence that Epstein (2009) and Slimbach (2005) address independently from each other.

Differences in power and positionality are evident when one engages in a dialogue from the transformative or transcultural perspective. The process of dialogue invites participants to imagine, experience, and engage creatively with points of view, ways of thinking, being, doing, and beliefs, different from one's own, and accept that they may not fully understand or may not come to a common agreement or position (Sorrells, 2014). From a transcultural perspective, in dialogue, participants gain knowledge and skills, stretching across differences and allowing for creative and new understandings of self and others, which is the most valuable outcome. In transformative learning, dialogue is used "when we have reason to question the comprehensibility, truth, appropriateness (in relation to norms) or authenticity (in relation to feelings) of what is being asserted, or to question the credibility of the person making the statement" (Mezirow, 1991, p. 77). Hence dialogue becomes the medium for critical reflection to be put into action where experience is reflected on, assumptions and beliefs are questioned, and habits of mind are ultimately transformed (Taylor, 2009).

Mezirow (2000) outlines the ideal conditions for participants to engage in reflective dialogue: "encouraging openness to alternative point of view"; demonstrating "empathy and concern about how others think and feel developing an ability to weigh evidence and assess argument objectively"; developing "greater awareness of the context of ideas and more critically reflective assumptions"; ensuring "equal opportunity to participate in various roles of the discourse"; and "encouraging willingness to seek understanding and agreement to accept a resulting best judgment as a test of validity until new perspectives, evidences or arguments are encountered and validated through discourse as

yielding a better judgment” (pp. 81-82). Taylor (2009) adds that it is important not only to create positive conditions for productive dialogue but to pay mind to the nature of the dialogue, what participants are discussing, in order to identify “the learner’s ‘edge of meaning’, a transitional zone of knowledge and making meaning” (p. 10) that expands learner’s knowledge.

In order to initiate, maintain, and sustain dialogue in transcultural and transformative learning domains, reflection is a key feature. Taylor (2009) emphasizes the significance of reflection for developing an appreciation of both one’s own and others’ cultures and the associated privileges and power, and thus in turn links learners and educators outside of the institution to a broader cultural environment. Across micro and macro levels considering unique cultural frames of reference and recognizing our own and others’ positioning, reflection enables us to act in the world in meaningful, effective, and socially responsive ways. Paulo Freire (1998) notes in his book *Pedagogy of Freedom* that critical praxis “involves a dynamic and dialectic movement between ‘doing’ and ‘reflecting on doing’” (p. 43). He also recognizes the reflective dialogue as an essential component of both learning and knowing. As he observes, by disengaging from the taken-for-granted and nonreflexive flow of everyday action, knowledge systems, and value commitments, reflection allows one to reposition and to reframe what may well be oppressive conditions or relations to power. As a result, an individual is acting on revised and justified assumptions, behaving, talking, and thinking in a way of transformed perspectives, being critically reflective for collective social action and practices.

2.7. Summary

The common ground between transculturalism and transformative learning is the idea of continuum: an on-going process of thinking, reflecting, and acting; a process of dissolving differences and evolving collective identity in order to create a more social, just, equitable, inclusive, and peaceful world. A world where each person takes multiple and varied actions—individually and collectively— informed by inquiry, framing, positioning, dialogue, and reflection that can be the catalyst for transformation and inclusion. While someone may argue that this stage of inclusion is very idealistic, it

is nonetheless worth trying. Acquiring transcultural competence as transformative learning is an innovative perspective of human development that allows individuals located at the crossroads of cultures, which is our reality, to switch between cultures as a mode of being in the world, as a quest for inclusion while considering common values, oppositions, tensions, and power in interactions.

The literature reviewed in this chapter offers a conceptual framework for studying the process of cultural transformation and learning in a transcultural context. This approach is applicable to the global transnational context of our society, engaging migrants and native-born in mutual learning and praxis for cultural understanding, sensitivity, and competence as a continuous long-term process. Conceptualizing culture, transcultural competence, and transformative learning provides information about their dialectic and dynamics, as well as their multidimensionality in analyzing the process of becoming transculturally competent.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1. Introduction

The purpose of this basic qualitative study is to explore, describe, interpret and analyze: 1) how adults understand transcultural competence; and, 2) how adults become transculturally competent by participating in different types of learning activities. In seeking to understand this phenomenon, the study will answer the research questions presented in the first chapter of my dissertation. This chapter describes the study's research design and includes discussions of the following areas: rationale for qualitative research approach, researcher's role, description of sample selection, overview of research design and data collection methods, process of analysis, ethical considerations, issues of trustworthiness, and limitations of the study.

3.2. Rationale for Qualitative Study Research Design

Qualitative research studies are most common in the fields of education and social and cultural studies, and they vary by approaches, theoretical traditions, and strategies. Although qualitative inquiry is the umbrella term, there is no consensus among theorists about different qualitative designs and classifications. For example, Tesch (1990) lists 45 approaches divided into designs, data analysis techniques, and disciplinary orientations; Wolcott (2009) identifies 22 types; Patton (2002) discusses 16 theoretical traditions, some of which (e.g., ethnography and grounded theory) are common, though others (e.g., semiotics and chaos theory) are less familiar. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) narrow the classification to six research strategies: case study, ethnography, grounded theory, life and narrative approaches, participatory research, and critical research. Similarly, Creswell (2014) presents five approaches: narrative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study. From this overview of variations, my study comprises dimensions that relate to phenomenology, by seeking to understand the phenomenon of transcultural competence; and narrative analysis, by interpreting participants' stories for understanding of their experiences. It also has case study elements as a study of the complexity of the process of acquiring transcultural competence, but my research is not bounded to

one specific case or program. However, none of these identified approaches applies exactly to my aim, which is to explore how individuals understand and construct their transcultural competence, or to my primary goal, which is to uncover and interpret these understanding and meaning.

Nevertheless, I found Merriam's (2014) classification most applicable to position my research as a basic qualitative study, interpretive and constructive, using interviews, observations, and document analysis for data collection and analyzing inductively to address the research questions. Using a basic interpretive qualitative study has as its goal understanding how people make sense of their experience. Merriam (2014) positions basic qualitative research at the centre of her classification scheme, connected to six common types: phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, narrative analysis, critical qualitative research, and case study, where all share a common characteristic, but each has a unique dimension. The central characteristic of the basic interpretive qualitative study, according to Merriam (2014), is constructivism: "the researcher is interested in understanding the meaning a phenomenon has for those involved" (p. 23). This also supports Crotty's (1998) position that the understanding of meaning is constructed by human beings as they engage with the world they are interpreting. As well, Merriam and Kim (2012) connect transformative learning with qualitative or constructivist research because the researcher is interested in understanding the meaning of the experience for the participants involved. Research from this perspective relies heavily on interviews in order to access participants' understanding of their experience of transformative learning.

Seeking to understand human life experience and how cultural knowledge impacts people's lives, interactions, and relationships, my study is connected to constructivism as ontology and to interpretivism as epistemology. The ontological question addresses what individuals learn and experience while acquiring transcultural competence. Thus, the ontological aspect of my study relates to transcultural theory: what knowledge and skills does a person need in order to become transculturally competent and what does a person experience, encounter, feel in the process of transcultural-competence development. Then, the epistemological question addresses how a person learns and become competent. My epistemological position

is that by interviewing, collecting and analyzing data from research participants, I construct and interpret how participants developed their transcultural competence. Thus, the epistemological aspect of this study refers to transformative theory as a way of learning and developing. Paying attention to ontology and epistemology in qualitative research is equally important, and as a researcher, I am concerned about both epistemology and ontology: what I know, how I know it, how I generate new knowledge and human improvement while being respectful of the power balance in interactions and relationships with participants. I explored how participants have transformed through learning and interactions and how they made meaning about the phenomenon. Higgs and Titchen (2011) link the interpretive paradigm to a transformative concept that corresponds to my idea of interpreting transcultural competence from a transformative learning perspective.

3.3. Transformation as a Concept in the Interpretive Paradigm

The journey of “meaning making” in the critical and interpretive paradigms, involves transformation, illumination, shared action, and liberation (Higgs & Titchen, 2011). Meaning making changes the researcher, as well as the participants and the phenomenon through critical and creative dialogues and shared actions that further transform and liberate people in life, research, and practice. Transformation occurs within the research process when the researcher and fellow participants acquire new knowledge through personal development, enhanced capability, and new ideas for more research, change structures, policies, and practices. The result of this process, described by Higgs and Titchen (2011) as spiral, can be ever-increasing and deepening illumination of the phenomenon, as well as transformation and liberation of individuals, organizations, communities.

In my research, participants described and reflected on their journey of transcultural competence and how they enriched knowledge about the phenomenon of transculture. The research became a catalyst to explore their individual transformations of cultural views and ways of communication and interaction by appreciating differences. Illuminated with transcultural knowledge, participants

acknowledged their role in promoting changes in organizations and in the community, taking mentoring role and empowering other members in their team or society.

For me, transformation occurred by engaging in the research process. Through different research episodes (e.g., literature review, collecting and analyzing the data, and interaction with participants), I gained deeper knowledge and understanding of the topic and became illuminated and liberated. Along with acquired knowledge and enhanced research capabilities, I generated new ideas for more research and practices that can be used by practitioners for changing organizational strategies and learning approaches. Herein, the spiral process occurs “imbued by authentic, person-centric relationships and moral agency and interweaving of people and ideas” (Higgs & Titchen, 2011, p. 301). Then, the process of meaning making will result in transformation on multiple levels—individual, interpersonal, organizational, and societal—that can enable change and prompt illuminative practices and further research.

Indeed, my research is about meaning making and illumination in terms of developing transcultural competence as a vital aspect of human interaction. It is about transformation and liberation and pursuing informed shared action that will enable change. The core features of transcultural meaning making and transformation—thinking, reflecting, dialogue, and action—correlate with Higgs and Titchen’s (2011) model of meaning making. Dialogue is the medium for critical reflection that leads to action; it is where experience is reflected on, assumptions and beliefs are questioned, and habits of mind are ultimately transformed (Taylor, 2009). Through dialogue, the researcher and participants gain knowledge and skills, understand more deeply themselves and the phenomenon. Thus, the relationship between illumination, transformation, shared action, and liberation transcends the interpretive and constructive paradigms that are epistemological and ontological foundations of my research. Following this model, the meaning making in my research involves seeking to understand, interpret, and analyze personal experience and learning practices of transcultural competence and theorizing from this

knowledge, considering my role, the interactions between me and my participants, as well as our transformation through this qualitative reflective journey.

3.4. Researcher's Role

As noted earlier, although there is no consistency in the classification of qualitative study, most theorists agree about the key characteristics of qualitative inquiry: the focus is on process, understanding and meaning making; the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2014; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Merriam, 2014). Acknowledging the researcher's role as a primary human instrument, rather than trying to eliminate the researcher's biases and subjectivity, it is important to identify and monitor how the researcher will shape data collection and interpretation. Peshkin (1988) sees the researcher's biases in qualitative research as a virtue, a distinctive contribution resulting in a unique configuration of personal quality joined to the collected data.

Considering my position with respect to the research, I situate myself somewhere between an insider and an outsider (Merriam et al., 2010). Given that I have coordinated the Diversity Program at Calgary Catholic Immigration Society (CCIS) and facilitated cultural competence workshops for the past six years, I could be considered an insider. As an outsider, I have different learning experiences than the participants in the program, as well as a different professional and cultural background. Merriam et al. (2001) wrote of the fluidity of the insider/outsider status and said that, while in the past researchers were considered either insider or outsider, "recent discussions of insider/outsider status have unveiled the complexity inherent in either status and have acknowledged that the boundaries between the two positions are not all that clearly delineated ... there is a good bit of slippage and fluidity" (p. 405).

As alluded to earlier, an important part in my research is self-development, the enhancement of me and my participants' being, doing, and becoming, through a rich knowing of ourselves along with the phenomenon I investigate. Taking the role of researcher as a primary instrument of the research, I recognized the needs of being self-aware, reflexive, curious, imaginative, creative, sensitive, mature,

wise, and knowledgeable (Higgs & Titchen, 2011) and incorporated in my research. I always seek to know myself and my place in the research, understand my relationship with the participants, as well as having theoretical, philosophical, and methodological knowledge. In addition, it is my responsibility to create and present an epistemology and ontology to produce rigorous, ethical, and trustworthy research, achieved through the interplay of different aspects of myself as a person, program facilitator, and researcher who is respectful of the power balance in relationships and possesses different dimensions of research intelligence.

Several scholars (Cowan, 2007; Gardner, 1993; Higgs & Titchen, 2011; Zohar & Marshal, 2000) recognized multiple intelligences blended in the qualitative researcher. Higgs and Titchen (2011) outlined four research intelligences for facilitating different ways of knowing: embodied, emotional, artistic, and spiritual. (1) Embodied intelligence is the wisdom of the body that enables a researcher to engage in reflexive analysis and practice; it is the capacity to gain understanding of precognitive knowledge of myself and others. This is particularly true in my research achieved by investigating transcultural competence. It involves precognitive cultural values, traditions, and behaviours, gestures and physical expressions, and positionality in certain cultures and societies. I demonstrated embodied intelligence in my interaction with participants, as well as when I reflected on my previous knowledge and assumptions, on my personal transformation. (2) Emotional intelligence is an awareness of others' feelings, facilitating empathy, compassion, taking us out of our comfort zone. These are qualities that are required for understanding and developing transcultural competence and transformation. I consider this kind of intelligence to be a strength of mine, developed through my professional experience. It has helped me to act with respect and integrity when I listened to participants, observed how they learn and interact. (3) Artistic intelligence is the capacity to create and perform artistic expression, more relevant to using art forms to articulate the unknown and unconscious. As such, artistic intelligence does not apply specifically to this research. However, I apply my artistic capacity in my professional work to engage learners in critical and creative conversations or to explore their unconscious biases and

predetermined stereotypes. (4) Spiritual intelligence addresses problems of meaning and values, leads to actions, and shapes pathways of transformation. Spiritual intelligence is invoked when the individual is at the boundaries, out of their comfort zone, using an intuitive sense of meaning making and values to guide. I described and analyzed such moments when participants in my research recognized and reflected on their life experiences, struggling to navigate or to be accepted by society because of their different views, beliefs, communication style and expression, language, race, and ethnicity.

Drawing from the concepts outlined above, I can conclude that incorporating embodied, emotional, spiritual, and artistic intelligences in my research facilitated the process of meaning making through transformation, illumination, shared action, and liberation from stereotypes, biases, and limitations of inborn culture. Moreover, taking the role of researcher was not only about developing an understanding about the phenomenon being studied. Immersing myself in my study was also an opportunity for self-knowing and enjoying the moments of self-reflexivity and the collaborative discussions with my fellow participants, colleagues, and mentors, which made my research journey memorable and fulfilling.

3.5. Participants Selection

Nonprobability sampling, and particularly purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002), was the most logical procedure for this research, as I explored a research question that has little empirical information regarding what occurs, how it occurs, and the implications and relationships among occurrences. Purposeful sampling is defined as deliberately selecting persons, events, or settings for the important information they provide (Martela et al., 2013; Maxwell, 2005; Patton, 2002). A more specific type of purposeful sampling is criterion sampling, defined by Patton (2002) among others, and this is the procedure I used. Criterion sampling involves setting criteria for participants and those who meet the criteria are included in the sample. The basic criteria for recruiting my participants were: Canadian-born adults (age 20+) or foreign-born adult (age 20+) immigrants living in Calgary, who have attended at least one general session of the CCIS cultural-competence program. I obtained the list of participants in

the monthly public sessions of CCIS cultural-competence program, which allowed me access to a broad sample. I sent an e-mail to each individual from this list with the following questions:

1. Are you Canadian-born?
2. If not, what is your country of origin and how many years have you been in Canada?
3. To what age group do you belong: 20-30, 31-40, 41-50, and 51+?
4. What is your educational level?
5. What is your occupational field: a) corporative company; b) not-for-profit organization; c) unemployed; d) other (please specify)
6. How many cultural-competence programs/workshops have you attended and where (please specify the provider)?

The information collected from 27 respondents provided me with prospective participants with a diverse background by ethnicity, age, profession, and education who met the criteria. Overviewing the data from these initial e-mail interviews, I found 27 respondents suitable to participate in face-to-face interviews. Three people selected had extensive experience in cultural-competence development as learners and educators; therefore, I invited them to participate in the first focus group that I planned to conduct. This focus group was intended to outline approaches in transcultural development, set up the context for some interpretation, and discuss the interview questions. Another three people cancelled their initial acceptance due to personal reasons that occurred later, but it happened before scheduling interviews. I decided to not replace them before conducting all the interviews and ensure the saturation point was reached. Having a balanced demographic representation, I invited 21 people (10 immigrants and 11 Canadian born) altogether to participate in personal interviews and they accepted. Table 1 provides detailed description of the participants.

Table 1: *Demographic Characteristics of the Participants*

#	Participant (using <i>pseudonyms</i>)	Country of Origin (years in CA)	Age	Education	Occupation	Attended CCT (how many?)
1	Agata	Poland (30)	51+	MA	Municipality	10+ trainings
2	Alicia	China (10)	41-50	MA	Media	2-3
3	Anaya	India (5)	51+	MA	Non-profit	5
4	Gonzales	Mexico (13)	31-40	PhD student	Ed. Institution.	Many trainings
5	Lindsey	UK (10)	51+	MEd	Non-profit, Ed Institution	About 4-5, 2 with CCIS
6	Lucila	Philippines (10)	31-40	Nurse	Non-profit	About 10
7	Nadia	Ukrainian from Latvia (11)	20-30	University, BSW	Non-profit	3
8	Okeo West	Kenya (2 in Canada, 5 in USA)	51+	PhD	Non-profit	10+ , in US & Canada
9	Shan	Taiwan (14)	31-40	University Degree	Unemployed	1
10	Valerie	France (10)	41-50	MA	Non-Profit; Government.	3
11	Arthur	Canadian born	41-50	BA & BEd	Municipality	5
12	Celine	Canadian born	51+	University	Government	10+
13	Jim	Canadian born	51+	College	Municipality	8-10
14	Jordan	Canadian born	41-50	Bachelor's degree	Ed. Institution	10 +
15	Marie	Canadian born	20-30	University	Non-profit	1, CCIS
16	Margaret	Canadian born	51+	BSc	Government	"1-Sadly!"
17	Ron	Canadian born	51+	MA	Private Consultant	10+
18	Rose	Canadian born	41-50	University	Education, non-profit	2-3
19	Sana	Canadian born	21-30	BA	Non-profit	2-3
20	Sophie	Canadian born	31-40	2 BA degrees	Non-profit	10+: mental, religious & cult differences, Aboriginal, Elderly
21	Vince	Canadian born	51+	Criminology	Government,	About 5 workshops, courses at MRU & U of C

Although the study includes both Canadian-born and immigrant participants, it was not designed to compare those two groups. Rather, the inclusion of participants from these two groups was necessary

to broadly understand the process of acquiring transcultural competence. However, any differences between the two groups will be discussed. Further in the study, I discuss how different demographic characteristics (e.g., ethnic background, age, education) impact and distinguish the process of acquiring transcultural competence. Defining transcultural competence as a continuing learning process was the reason for selecting individuals who participated in one or more learning activities. This was an opportunity for participants to describe how different learning activities have impacted their transcultural competence.

I considered the Diversity Program that I coordinate at CCIS to be an appropriate setting to recruit participants from because the program explores different concepts of cultural awareness and competency; educates staff, volunteers, and community stakeholders; promotes cultural competence; and fosters engagement in integrative practices. Through a variety of modules and interactive workshops, program participants examined their own cultural values, beliefs, and attitudes, as well as their culturally diverse work environments and transcultural practices. They also learned about different communication styles and how to react consciously in their daily interactions with others (CCIS, 2015a).

3.5.1. The learning forum.

A free public session is conducted every month at different venues throughout the city of Calgary, exploring overall concepts of transcultural competence. This program brings together a relatively small group (up to 25 people), suitable to facilitate group discussions and critical dialogues and to share participants' experiences and practices across cultures. In addition to these public sessions, the program provides cultural-competence workshops and learning activities by request, discussing specific topics based on clients' needs. The clients are service providers, government, nongovernment, and business organizations, as well as educational institutions, employers, staff, and newcomers. The program is provided free, funded by the Ministry of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. Taking into consideration the continuity of cultural-competence learning and my position of insider opened space to include other programs identified and discussed by participants as learning resource for

developing their competence, which allowed for a better understanding of the complexity of the phenomenon and reduced potential biases in data analysis.

3.6. Data Collection Methods

The data for this research was collected through multiple methods. The primary method was semi-structured face-to-face interviews (21 interviews, one interview per person). The secondary methods used were focus groups, unstructured observation, and document analysis. I conducted two focus groups, one that preceded the interviews and a second one after the observation of a learning forum. Collecting data from the first focus group and then personal interviews allowed me to identify key information and pursue the research with an observation of one cultural-competence workshop followed by a second focus group with four participants who attended the workshop, thus having different perspectives on acquiring cultural competence. In the observed learning session and in the focus groups, there were no interview participants. With the observation I aimed to directly examine the process of learning, how people interact in a learning event and engage in knowledge construction. The document analysis (annual and quarterly reports, participants' feedback, and the strategic plan on diversity) provided some data not from a participant's viewpoint about possible values and outcomes of the CCIS program that may reveal information about specific program details and statistics.

3.6.1. Interview.

Interviews were the primary method for data collection in this research. The interview is the most used method in qualitative studies because it has the potential to elicit rich, thick descriptions (Creswell, 2007). Marshall and Rossman (2011) state that a major benefit of collecting data through individual, in-depth interviews is that it offers the potential to capture a person's perspective of an event or experience. Interviews are necessary when the researcher cannot observe behaviour, feelings, or how people interpret past events or situations in their lives that are not possible to replicate (Merriam, 2014; Patton, 2002). The notion of a qualitative interview as an act of crafting meaning (Kvale, 1996), a comprehensive interplay of what is said and how it is said (Gubrium & Holstein, 2012), allowed me to

investigate in critical ways respondents' comprehensions of their cultural experience and beliefs, the process of developing cultural awareness and competence from their point of view. Particularly, in transformative learning, interviews can focus on the learner's story and experience to gain insight into the processes or outcomes of the learning, as well as to track learners' perspective changes or developmental progression over time (Cranton & Hoggan, 2012).

The logic of using this method is that to generate data one needs to interact with people – talking to and listening to participants captured the meaning of their experience in their own world. The interaction element in this method is also relevant to my research topic, with the assumption that people gain cultural competence through interaction and communication by sharing and exchanging their own cultural beliefs and values. Thus, interviews served as a venue for understanding individual experience, cultural competence skills, and personal qualities.

Although interviews have certain strengths and benefits, there are limitations (Rubin & Rubin, 2011) that I had to consider. Possible challenges may arise because of language skills of immigrant participants, whose mother tongue was not English. This was not problematic in my case as all immigrant participants had lived in Canada or other English-speaking countries for at least five years and their language skills were very good. However, participants were not equally articulate and perceptive; some were very talkative and shared a lot, others were not, but all were cooperative. Additionally, interviews require careful wording and asking of questions. As such, during some interviews, I had to rephrase and clarify questions for the participant. For example, I had to explain the meaning of prefix trans- in term of transculturalism for some who were more familiar with the term intercultural and used both terms synonymously. I explained the differences in the meanings of the prefixes while being careful to avoid possible influence on findings and participants' understanding of the transcultural process and its characteristics.

During my professional journalism experience and working with people from diverse cultural backgrounds, I enhanced my skills of conducting interviews and using different types of questions to

stimulate responses from participants, while at the same time being respectful and trustworthy. I also recognize that interviews are not a neutral tool for gathering data, which is the result of interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee as well as the context in which it takes place.

Selecting 21 people from the respondents to my initial e-mail with specific criteria, I sent a confirmation e-mail to the prospective participants describing the purpose of the study, inviting their participation, and asking for convenient times for a personal interview. The interviews were scheduled at a suitable time for the participants. The interviews took place in my office or in the participants' workplace. I gave them the option to choose a place where they would feel comfortable and we would not be interrupted or disturbed. At the beginning of the interview, each participant was asked to sign a consent form. Each interview lasted approximately 90 minutes, and I used predominantly open-ended questions.

3.6.1.1. The questions.

The interview questions were divided into several categories in relation to my research questions. The knowledge questions elicited participants' understanding and knowledge about transcultural competence and skills that they have developed, the most beneficial ways of learning, and the resources that they have used to build their understanding. The second set of questions encouraged participants to share their experiences in acquiring transcultural competence: what motivated them to engage in these learning activities, and how had their behaviours changed and their lives been impacted. In addition, some opinion and values questions drew out more information about their cultural awareness, how they self-evaluate their competence, and potential challenges and benefits of participating in learning activities and practices. Overall, the questions reflected the ontology and epistemology that this research study is based on by generating data about what participants learn, how, and why. If *what* questions look for the basis of developed knowledge, *how* and *why* questions are about examining the process of learning, driven factors and motivation, connecting accordingly transformative theory with qualitative in-depth interviews as a method. Some of participants provided their own stories and narratives

answering *how* and *why* questions related to the process of transformation and personal development they have experienced. The interview guide is provided in Appendix A.

3.6.1.2. The interview transcript and coding.

All interviews were audio recorded (agreed to by the participant) and transcribed for analysis. I developed a manual qualitative coding framework to analyze the data. I preferred handmade transcripts and coding, rather than the use of software because it allowed me to immerse myself deeper in the data. I applied holistic coding (Saldaña, 2009), a preliminary exploratory method that is applied to a large text (in my case, all interviews) to capture the overall content and develop categories in relation to my research sub-questions. Then, I specified the categories around each sub-question, and I further grouped and linked the coding from all interviews to concepts to compare, analyze, and interpret the meaning. More details about the process of coding and analysis will be provided in the upcoming section Process of Analysis.

Once I had the transcripts of interviews, I sent them to the participants to review. There were no major changes or added information. Many expressed their interest in reading the completed study or publications on the research topic and asked me to inform them of any upcoming trainings or learning events. Others, who I met in different occasions after the interview, wanted to know more about the research results. This evidenced that participation in the study was not just a formal event for them but an opportunity to learn more and get engaged.

3.6.2. Focus groups.

A focus group is essentially a group discussion focusing on a specific theme supplied by the researcher. The goal is to create an open conversation that addresses in-depth the selected topic. The assumption of using focus groups is that the atmosphere fosters a range of opinions for a more complete understanding of the issues and the data emerge from the interaction of the group (Cohen et al., 2011).

Focus group interviews are fundamentally different from individual in-depth interviews because data is generated in a group composed of the researcher and participants. It is a dynamic process based

on interactions between multiple people from specifically chosen sectors of the population. This dynamic can be thought of as producing a “happening” that cannot be replicated (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). In other words, the interaction and conversation within any given group will not be reproduced in another group, even if conducted by the same researcher. This is because participants, while they may hold similar views, attitudes, and life experiences, are not merely responding to questions posed by a researcher but also responding to each other and the group dynamic as whole. Morgan et al. (2008) discuss situations when the same researcher conducts two focus groups on the same topic, with participants who share common characteristics, yet the information differs because it is produced within a different conversation. Such dynamic forms of conversation are an important source of information and are a significant part of knowledge building in qualitative research.

While dynamic and unpredictable, focus groups are not a naturally occurring conversation and they should not be confused with natural talk, as focus groups are always arranged by a researcher for the purpose of research (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). Accordingly, this dynamic conversation during information collection starts to create a story that may guide the data production by identifying language, definitions, and concepts that research participants find meaningful as they navigate through their daily life experiences. The dynamics produced in focus group, Morgan et al. (2008) termed ‘the group effect’. The group effect serves as an important and unique source of information and that is why focus group information is not equivalent to the total of individual interviews. In addition, such interaction among the participants in focus groups offers valuable information on the extent of consensus and diversity.

Considering the discussion above, the use of focus groups fits well with my study’s purpose as a tool for: 1) eliciting a range of feelings, understanding, and ideas in dynamic interactive way; 2) understanding differences in perspectives; 3) providing insight into specific factors that influence the process; and 4) seeking ideas that emerge from the group (Kreuger, 2008). A logistical challenge of managing the discussion while attempting to extract information may arise, thus, strong facilitating

skills are required. Since the dynamics in focus groups are different, my role as a researcher was to facilitate or moderate the group discussion between participants, not between myself and the participants. In my case, the inter-relational dynamics of the participants sharing their ideas and experiences were important, not just the relationship between researcher and researched. Therefore, my role after introducing the questions was more peripheral: listening, observing, and stimulating active participation without controlling the discussion. I ensured balanced representation, a relaxed atmosphere, and everyone's equal participation. And to ensure their anonymity, focus group participants chose pseudonyms.

I formed two focus groups with different participants. The first one preceded the interviews. I invited three participants with extensive experience in education, working with diverse groups, and cultural consulting. The purpose of the method was to develop themes and topics and discuss questions that I drafted for subsequent interviews. In the open discussion format, participants were also asked to explore two issues:

1. What they feel helped most to build their cultural competence;
2. Challenges and benefits they acquired participating in or facilitating cultural competence

learning activities.

Involving professionals in a particular field in a much more cooperative inquiry (Bloor et al., 2001; Heron, 1996) was an opportunity to explore and conceptualize transcultural competence and the process of learning. Focus group participants provided positive feedback on the questions that I developed. They reflected on the questions from both their personal learning experiences as well as their experience as educators in the cultural field, providing insight into how answers to the questions could generate data for analyzing the process of transcultural competence and what the most common challenges to learning were that they had observed as facilitators. As well, they commented that the multimethod approach (interviews, observation, and documents) would expand the data for analysis and comprehension.

The second focus group was conducted after analyzing the interviews and the observation of one cultural-competence workshop. I invited participants for the second focus group from among those who attended the public workshop on transcultural competence that I conducted. None of the workshop participants were interviewed one-on-one. They voluntarily signed up for this monthly learning event organized by CCIS. I sent an invitation to six workshop attendants, informing them of the purpose of the focus group. All accepted, but last-minute work conflicts kept two individuals from participating, so four people accepted and joined the focus group. The participants in the second focus group were recruited based on their expressed interest and active participation in the session.

The primary purpose for the second focus group was to collect information about direct learners' opinions of participating and interacting in an event related to the issue of investigation. Secondly, the discussion contributed to achieving synergy in data collection. The questions that the second focus group was seeking answers to were:

1. How do participants construct knowledge during the workshop?
2. How can transcultural approach enhance transcultural development?

Focus group participants were comfortable with interacting, sharing opinions, and reflecting on personal learning experiences because they already knew each other from the workshop and had established a rapport. Executed after my interview analysis and workshop observations, the second focus group provided additional data on how individuals develop transcultural competence in a learning event (the session that I observed) that followed the transcultural transformative model. The two focus groups, each lasted about 90 minutes, were audio recorded and transcribed. Participants were asked to review and sign a university consent form required for study participants and encouraged to choose a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality. The two focus groups were productive for generating knowledge through dialogue, for understanding and interpreting data, and for providing meaning and explanation of the topic of research (Field, 2000) and commenting on its validity and trustworthiness.

3.6.3. Observation.

Observation provides knowledge of the context, allows the researcher to notice things that have become routine or specific incidents, behaviours, activities, and interactions that can be used as reference points for subsequent interviews and in interpretation (Merriam, 2014). The distinctive feature of observation is that it offers a researcher the opportunity to gather data from naturally occurring situations, a reality check (Cohen et al., 2011). This enables the researcher to see things that might otherwise be missed, to discover things that participants may not talk about in interviews, to move beyond perception-based data, to access personal knowledge and interaction, and to complement other kinds of data. Observation is appropriate when changes in behaviour, or at least the ability to document changes in behaviour is considered important (Cranton & Hoggan, 2012). I used semi-structured observation (Cohen et al., 2011) to identify issues that occur during the process of acquiring transcultural competence. Specifically, I took rough notes about how participants interacted in small-group discussions, questions that they addressed, key issues that surfaced during activities, and the general atmosphere of the workshop.

Collecting information as an observer, the researcher may have different relations with the observed. In this study, I took the role of observer-as-participant (Cohen et al., 2011), observing participants in a learning activity (cultural competence training), or more precisely, my role was that of an observer-as-facilitator. It was challenging taking this dual role and balancing my professional affiliation and researcher's role. As I was seeking to explore how participants interact and learn transcultural competence, I facilitated and observed a session applying the transcultural and transformative model of learning.

Participants in this session signed up voluntarily through the CCIS promotional network. None of them took part in the one-on-one interviews. I explained to those who signed up that the session would be observed for research purposes and provided information about my study. All 25 prospective attendees agreed to participate. Being self-conscious about participating in the process of social and knowledge construction as an actor and as an observer (Musante & DeWalt, 2010), I described the

situation to participants, establishing trust, rapport, and reflexivity. Mutual awareness and self-consciousness in this situation were beneficial for achieving workable balance between participating and observing (Wolcott, 2005). Keeping balance between engagement and detachment also helped me to achieve my research goals and participants to advance in cultural-competence learning.

Another concern that I paid attention to was that participants knew they were being observed and this might influence their behaviours and reactions (Merriam, 2014; Patton, 2002). With my extensive facilitating experience in this field, I managed to create a learning atmosphere that was not disruptive and did not affect the quality of collected data. For example, I provided sufficient time for small-group discussions and joined each small group to observe participants' reactions and reflections and to listen to their comments without interrupting them.

In traditional research, ideal expectations are for the researcher to be objective and not contaminate the study. Considering the researcher as a primary instrument for data collection in qualitative research, subjectivity and interaction are assumed. In consequence, the question for such interdependent role of the researcher will not be whether the process of observing affects what is observed but how the researcher can identify those effects and account for them in interpreting the data. Being aware of my background as a researcher and a professional, understanding my biases and interaction with participants as much as I can, helped me to capture the appropriate balance between reflexivity as an observer and facilitator, shaping the space of observation and the analysis that I aimed to produce (Musante & DeWalt, 2010). In addition, I invited a colleague as a second observer, with whom I discussed my observations to ensure unbiased interpretation. The second observer added what she noted, some comments, questions, or reactions from the audience while I presented.

The establishment of rapport is an essential element in using participants' observation as a tool, especially in my case. Rapport is a state of interaction achieved through what participants shared when both the informants and the researcher are "committed to help the other achieve his or her goal, when informants participate in providing information for the study, and when the researcher approaches the

interaction in a respectful and thoughtful way that allows the informants to tell their stories” (Musante & DeWalt, 2010, p. 50).

In this workshop, I put effort into creating a setting for learning, listening, sharing, and observing, being ready to reciprocate in appropriate ways, meaning that I expected myself and my informants to be truthful, at least as they see it. Also, I assured participants that I would both share the research results with them through a presentation to the community and implement community education programming based on the results. The very important skill that I considered in this situation was my ability to attend to details, seeing as much as possible, including the arrangement of the physical space, specific activities that participants were involved in, interactions among people and with me, and verbal and non-verbal reflective comments. Exploring the different dimensions of becoming observer-as-facilitator, acknowledging limitations and challenges, enhanced my multiple roles by calling my attention to the importance of listening, compassion and knowledge-sharing, explicit attention to sources of biases and controlling for these. These all contributed to the research enterprise.

3.6.4. Document analysis.

Documents are a ready-made source of data easily accessible to the imaginative and resourceful investigator (Merriam, 2014). As a supplementary method for data collection in this study, document analysis included a four-year funding report for the Diversity Services Program of CCIS, participants’ feedback and evaluation of the delivered workshops, and quarterly program reports to the Division Manager. The documents are public, accessible on the web or by request. Although they were purposefully produced for the funder, the Ministry of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, the documents shed light on the purpose, value, and the outcome of the cultural-competence program as community learning. In analyzing them, I applied thematic content analysis to uncover themes pertinent to the phenomenon of transcultural learning as a process.

As Patton (2002) states, documents are valuable not only for what can be learned directly from them but also as stimulus for paths of inquiry that can be pursued through direct observation and

interviewing. Because documents have not been produced for the research purpose, they often contain much that is irrelevant to the study; by the same token, they can contain clues and generate approaches to the phenomenon of the study and contextualize data collecting during interviews. As a secondary data source in this study, document analysis complemented and expanded finding conveyed from observation and interviews in terms of program lengths, outcomes, identified challenges, and factors that affected program implementation and delivery.

3.7. The Process of Analysis

The process of analysis was both deductive and inductive. The initial categories of the conceptual framework deductively emerged from the literature. From my experience, from the first focus group, and from the interview questions, I began to see patterns and themes. In this way, coding occurred inductively. I started with concept driven coding in the first cycle, and in the second cycle, I used data driven coding (Gibbs, 2007), re-reading and reviewing participants' responses. I conducted the interviews and analysis simultaneously to avoid repetitious and overwhelming data. Thus, by completing the interviews with the 21 Canadian-born and immigrant participants with variable demographic backgrounds, I reached a saturation point. When additional data did not lead to new emergent themes (Given, 2016), I had sufficient information to create patterns and themes and illustrate them.

I followed Creswell's (2014) guidelines in looking at the data in a six-step process: (1) gathering and arranging data sources; (2) getting an overall impression of the data, which enabled familiarization with it; (3) coding the data using Saldaña's (2009) coding instructions; (4) generating initial themes and descriptions, which could uncover various layers of information and connections; (5) unveiling the findings in the form of quotes or narrative with descriptions of themes and their interconnections; and (6) engaging in interpretation how the findings may or may not relate to the theories while answering the research question.

I proceeded with following steps:

1. Based on my research question with four sub-questions and the rough interview questions, I identified four major preliminary codes: transcultural qualities (C1-TCQ), motivation (C2-MTV), process of transcultural learning (C3-PRO), and impact (C4-IMP).

2. Soon after conducting each interview, I transcribed and listened to each several times, adding personal observations or any details that I noted during the interview. I identified the major codes and let other codes emerge, illustrating the characteristics of a transcultural person and his/her motivations to learn and describing individual learning processes and further impacts.

3. Once all interviews were transcribed and coded accordingly, I reread the data, combined and summarized the coding from all 21 interviews, and linked codes to quotes or narrative paragraphs for later illustrating themes and findings.

4. When major categories were defined and compared, I linked them to the concepts and theories.

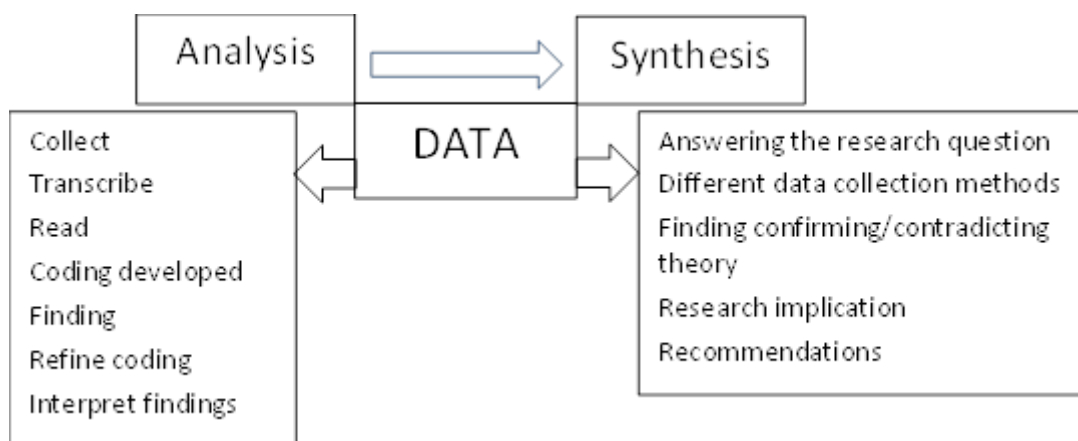
5. The next data collection method, observing a learning event, was completed, identifying links between the existing coding and any new characteristics that emerged. The coding of my observations was more data driven, writing down what I noticed. The collected data from this method contributed some more details to the process of learning and further impact.

6. Participants in the second focus group shared their reflections on the direct transcultural learning experience, which provided additional fragments to construct a holistic and integrated explanation of the phenomenon of developing transcultural competence. Data from the second focus group cross-checked, complimented, and elaborated on the data from the interviews and the observation.

7. Document analysis was the final instrument for collecting data. This provided an indirect view of the benefits and challenges that educators and learners have identified during the program delivered to community. This method was helpful in cross-checking the patterns identified by research participants.

Overall, my approach resulted in a number of patterns and themes linked together similarly or divergently that collectively described and analyzed the research phenomenon and answered the research question in respect to prior research and the broader literature. Based on analysis and synthesis, I was able to move forward and think about the broader implications and practical and research recommendations. The table below illustrates the analysis and synthesis of the process centered around the collected data.

Table 2: Process of Analysis and Synthesis



3.8. Ethical Considerations

As with any study, ethical considerations are central in qualitative research, and researchers must establish safeguards to protect participants’ rights and privacy (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012), fairness and equity, and research integrity and ensure no conflict of interest, according to Tri-Council Policy of ethical conduct. To that end, my qualitative study ensured that I was able to “convey to participants that they are participating in the study [voluntarily] and inform them of the purpose of the study” (Creswell, 2012, p. 231) and, in keeping with research ethics review board requirements, safeguard participants’ rights through strict adherence to confidentiality and informed consent (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014).

The central issue with respect to protecting participants is the ways in which information is treated. Although it was anticipated that no ethical threats were posed to any of the participants or their well-being, this study employed various safeguards to ensure the protection and rights of participants. First, informed consent remained a priority; participants were involved in the study only with their written consent. To ensure that each participant had a clear understanding of their right to safety and confidentiality and of my commitment to protect their personal information, I asked participants to sign a consent form, approved by the University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board prior to beginning the interview process. A copy of the consent form is provided in Appendices B and C. The purpose of the study and questions they would be asked were given to participants prior to their involvement. Since data collection continues over a span of time, participants were given an option to withdraw from the study at any point in the process; however, no one requested this.

Second, all participants' identities were kept confidential throughout the research process by using pseudonyms. Although some respondents selected the option to not remain anonymous, using their own names, I created pseudonyms to protect their personality and professional and social identification. When they revealed information that could identify them, I removed that information from the transcript.

Third, cautionary measures were taken to secure the storage of research-related records and data, and no one other than the researcher had access to this material. Type recorded data was stored on a password protected computer disk. Any notes or transcriptions of interview were stored in protected and locked metal filing cabinet in the researcher's house. I confirmed that participants would be provided with answers to the questions that they may have during the research. I also assured participants that they would have access to the final study if they are interested.

3.9. Issues of Trustworthiness and Crystallization

Discussing the issue of trustworthiness in relation to validity, credibility, and reliability, I consider the concept of crystallization as more relevant to my qualitative inquiry and the phenomenon of

my research. Crystallization combines a multidimensionality of approaches, correlations, methods of data collection and analysis, providing deeper understanding of the topic (Ellingson, 2009; Richardson, 2000). Complexity and continuum, as principles of crystallization, are consistent with the distinctive characteristics of transculturality in my discourse. The continuum is achieved through blended approaches for meaning making and representation. In my study, it was manifested through research goals, questions, methods, research focus and reflexivity. For example, the complexity of my research goals embodied description and interpretation of participants' understanding, knowledge, and learning process construction, as well as pragmatic implementation for practitioners and the community. The themes and patterns were supported by examples, stories, and human emotions that highlighted individual views, assumptions, and constructions. In terms of methods, crystallization included more than one way of expressing data. I utilized semi-structured interviews, observation, focus groups, and document analysis. Although participants were the focus, sharing their experiences and stories, my role includes a significant degree of reflexive consideration as self and a researcher in the process of research design, data collection, forming and analyzing findings, and representation. Thus, applying varieties of epistemologies allows readers to perceive multiple ways of knowing: constructed, situated, and embodied in power relations (Ellingson, 2009).

Reflexivity, as the next principle in crystallization, involves “thoughtful, conscious self-awareness” (Finlay, 2002, p. 532). One site of reflexivity attends to the author's identity, privilege, and context of writing (Macbeth, 2001). My reflexivity included my knowledge and awareness of my position as both insider and outsider of research site, which allows the reader to decide whether my status helped or hindered my study (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). I had insider experience similar to participants in terms of working for a not-for-profit agency and serving diverse populations, as well having similar interests in cultural diversity. Acquiring my cultural competence and experiencing my transformative journey through different circumstances and paths than many of the participants situates me as an outsider to their experiences and background (e.g., ethnic, racial, age, gender). However, I do

not see insider or outsider status as problematic where the researcher has an ability to be open, authentic, honest, deeply interested in the experience of one's research participants, and committed to accurately and adequately representing their experience. For example, it might not be necessary to have similar experiences to my participants or put boundaries between me and them, but it is important to be able to identify, describe, and explain their experience. As Dwyer and Buckle (2009) suggest, although knowledge is always based on a researcher's positionality, being a qualitative researcher, I should have an appreciation for the fluidity and multilayered complexity of human experience. In this view, I see my position from the standpoint of being with my participants, and in some ways, I might be closer to the insider or outsider position. Occupying this space and the dynamic position between the two perspectives affords me a deeper knowledge of the experience I study.

The second part of reflexivity focuses on the construction of representation through establishing validity, credibility, and certainty for facts (Macbeth, 2001). Nonetheless, being open about the research process demonstrates researcher integrity and consciousness that can be transformed from a problem to an opportunity for dialogue (Ellingson, 2019). Focused consistently on self-reflection, I ensured that my biases as a researcher neither influenced how participants' perspectives were portrayed nor determined the accuracy of findings. For example, while I was listening to participants' responses and stories, I was open minded and curious, avoiding any judgmental thoughts, reactions or comparison to my personal experience. I empathized with the emotional struggles that some of the participants recalled, so they felt safe to reveal thoughts and feelings about their past or current experiences.

Finally, the goal of crystallization is "to celebrate knowledge as inevitably situated, partial, constructed, multiple and embodied" (Ellingson, 2009, p. 13). Indeed, my research perspective incorporated participants' perspective with respect and honour to present authentic balanced truth. Further, Ellingson (2009) argues, surrendering definitive truth does not mean the researcher cannot make recommendations, pragmatic suggestions, and theoretical insights for improving the world. Acknowledging that there is always more to know about the topic and about transcultural learning as a

continuous, complex, personal and societal development, I offered and accomplished this research through the lens of crystallization.

3.10. Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

The study contains potential limitations related to common critiques of qualitative studies, as well as some unique to this study (Merriam, 2014; Rossman & Rallis, 2011). One of the key limitations is the sensitivity and integrity of the researcher (Merriam, 2014). Investigating the process and being a primary instrument of data collection and analysis, I relied on my training and scholarly abilities. Cross-checking of transcribed interviews, feedback from colleagues in the field and my supervisor reduced potential biases in interpretation and analysis.

Another limitation as well as delimitation is the boundary of the study: selected aspect of the problem, time, location, and samples. This was guarded against by ensuring a careful data trail and multiple methodological approaches through one-on-one in-depth interviews, focus groups, observation, and document review. I purposefully selected participants who attended cultural-competence programs, not only with CCIS, which provided broader experience in understanding transculturality. However, I did not collect information from individuals who have not attended cultural-competence sessions. I focused on participants who took part in learning activities and can discuss their learning experience in order to construct the transcultural learning process. I want to reiterate that my research was not comparative. Through focusing on Canadian- and non-Canadian-born participants I tried to capture and piece together the path of developing transcultural competence that become visible through examining people with different life experiences and cultural backgrounds who live and work in a very diverse place. The methodology I chose was relevant to these delimitations providing data from multiple methods. Thus, the results of the study could be generalizable for educators who teach adult learners in a transcultural environment.

Additionally, the capacity to articulate thoughts, feelings, and emotions varied among participants. Confusion sometimes existed around certain terminology, but I provided clarifications

when needed. I asked participants to recall and verbalize experiences, solicited intellectual efforts, and demanded participants' energy and focus, which I acknowledged and expressed my appreciation and thankfulness for. I presented a clear research agenda to the participants and encouraged open dialogue, which contributed to creating a conducive, honest environment. I established an environment that provided broad opportunities for engaging participants in discussion, critical dialogue and self-reflection, and meaningful interpretation and thorough analysis. All this created a comprehensive picture of participants' experiences, ideas, and feelings of transcultural-competence development. Connected with critical theoretical concepts and the framework of crystallization, the findings can foster long-term changes in community inclusion and adult learning.

Chapter 4: Findings

4.1. Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore and analyze how adults (immigrants and Canadian-born living in Calgary, Alberta, Canada) acquire transcultural competence by participating in different learning activities, and the extent to which it leads toward an integrative and inclusive society. Living in a super-diverse and deeply networked world demands developing cultural knowledge and speaking more than one language as fundamental to successfully navigating multidimensional cultural influences and exchanges. I believe that a better understanding of transcultural phenomenon will allow educators, practitioners, and policy makers to proceed from a more informed perspective in terms of design and facilitation of transcultural-competence programs. This chapter presents the key findings obtained from 21 in-depth interviews with Canadian- and non-Canadian-born, two focus groups, observations during cultural-competence training, and an analysis of documents related to the cultural-competence program designed and delivered by Calgary Catholic Immigration Society (CCIS).

First, I will discuss multiple understandings of transculture and the characteristics of the transcultural individual as significant to explore further motivations for developing transcultural competence, for understanding the process of learning and its impact on personal development and on society. Recognizing the complexity of internal and external reasons for individuals to expand their knowledge, next, I will present what participants shared as motivations to learn on a personal and professional level. Additionally, participants identified some gaps and challenges that inspired them to learn, reconstruct their worldviews, and promote transcultural competence while living and working in a culturally dynamic society. The third finding will conceptualize transcultural learning as a holistic process that intertwines cognitive and emotional learning with social interaction. Critically reflecting on their journeys, participants were asked to self-evaluate their transcultural competence and its impact on their personal development. The fourth finding will reveal the impact of transcultural competence for building inclusivity on the organizational and community levels. Each finding is supported by data and

is presented in the form of quotations from participants. I documented a broad range of experiences and some narratives that provide opportunity for the readers to better understand participants' multiple perspectives.

4.2. Multiple Understandings of Transcultural Competence

The question of defining transcultural competence in the beginning of the interviews was challenging for participants. Many participants admitted that they were not familiar with the term transculture and preferred using terms multicultural, cross-cultural, intercultural, or just cultural competence as similar and interchangeable. I briefly explained the differences between the prefixes multi-, cross-, inter-, and then asked for their understanding of transculture. Further into the interviews, participants connected their memories, feelings, stories and past knowledge, in order to construct the meaning of transculture. Two-thirds of the participants described transcultural competence as an ability to interact with open-mindedness, compassion, and empathy. Additionally, for many, transcultural competence intersects with self-awareness of and self-reflection on their own biases, while recognizing and understanding others without judging and comparing. As Jim said, "it is being aware of your biases, constantly checking and reaffirming, able to understand them, put those aside, step up forward, and stay open-minded."

Jordan compared self-reflection with "a mirror where we examine ourselves asking why I do what I do? Why do I feel that? Why do I do things that I don't like? How I can overcome them? Having the answers, then, the next step is how we approach others." Anaya shared her way of doing this: "Every time when I meet someone different, I put myself in other's shoes, trying to understand this person." Or as Okeo West said, "being able to empathize and support, with conformity with human rights and dignity" is the essence of transcultural competence.

Participants agreed that transcultural competence involves "being a good listener and a good question-asker because, first and foremost, a transculturally competent person is curious, honest, and sincere" (Sophie). Applying this mode of communication enhances interaction and relationships in a

transcultural context where people feel comfortable to talk about their differences with understanding and without contradicting.

Describing the process as a continuum, participants outlined developing self-awareness, self-examination, and the ability to self-reflect on own biases as essential actions. Then, they could exchange and validate values and views through interacting with others, being a good listener, and demonstrating empathy, openness, and sincerity. Indeed, a person with these skills can be defined as transcultural and “will navigate through and integrate to different cultural contexts at any time, without barriers” (Okeo West); will do so “without being scared of different environments and different people” (Alice); will attain “mutual understanding, support, and respect to [*sic*] each other” (Lucila).

Agata called transcultural competence “fusion” and described it in relation to various aspects, skills, and attitudes, including those listed above. Fusion can start in small places though, like on playgrounds, in neighborhoods, “but it’s not a fairytale, often it is not smooth at all, as our bubbles clash; therefore, we have to learn how to act, consciously developing our transcultural competence” (Agata).

Several other participants described transcultural competence as knowledge about different cultures, history and what happens around the world, and speaking different languages. However, they emphasized that such knowledge is always emotionally connected by demonstrating sensitivity and support, openness in approaching other cultures, as the following quotes illustrate.

We do not always understand the protocol in any cultural tribe; we have to try in the best ability to learn what the need of some of these cultures might be. But really, I think it’s about being open-minded, listening and valuing differences, be open and honest. (Margaret)

Transcultural competence is being empathetic to others, understand where others come from, having world knowledge about what is happening to other countries and how this may affect people, especially people who come here, like refugees, migrants. (Rose)

Participants, who speak different languages, have traveled a lot, and read and learned about different cultures recognized these as essential skills for transcultural competence. For example, Nadia studied Spanish and conducted research in South America. Speaking Spanish helped her to better understand the culture there and interact freely with local people. Likewise, Jim shared that he always tried to learn words from different languages and to use these words, stating that, “even a simple greeting in a different language breaks the ice, builds trust, and eases communication and interaction.” Both Nadia and Jim agreed that speaking different languages comes along with the ability to express emotional understanding, openness, and curiosity.

Two French-Canadian participants admitted the importance of language for transcultural competence. They spoke about how their French accent created tension in interactions, making them feel isolated and discriminated against. Despite their willingness and readiness to learn, they struggled to build this flexibility in crossing from one culture to another because people recognized their accent as difference:

I came to Calgary open-minded. I have experienced people being rude to me just because my French accent, called me a ‘stupid girl,’ blamed me for not knowing my official language. The lack of others’ understanding of my culture made me struggle. (Marie)

Celine emphasized mutual patience as an essential skill in transcultural competence for overcoming cultural isolation and language deficit:

If you do not speak the language, it’s hard to interact—language and interaction are equally important. I’ve been in Germany without speaking German and felt so lonely, same was in Alberta, in the beginning. You have to be patient while you build connections and approach a new community, and the community should be patient and help you. (Celine)

Lucila, an immigrant from the Philippines, added to this, “Transcultural competence is mutual understanding and respect to each other, beyond the colour and accent, beyond the traditions and

religions.” Similarly, Okeo West, originally from Kenya, placed “being respectful and not making judgments as a top quality for [a] transculturally competent person.”

Immigrant participants outlined the impact of their own cultural roots. These roots are meaningful for transcultural competence in terms of how others view, position, or disposition someone who is different. For example, disposition for Sana happens because of her religion; —people change their attitude toward her when she covers her head; for Nadia and Shan, Marie and Celine, their accents made them uncomfortable to speak or read loudly; for Okeo West, his African roots several times exposed him to difficult situations when others offended him with racial comments. Such racial, ethnic, and religious tensions are clear evidence of a lack of transcultural competence, other immigrant participants noted. Thus, they acknowledged the ability to recognizing different cultural identities without betraying their own culture as insignificant for creating a new transcultural community to which individuals belong not because they are similar, but because they are different. For example, Lisa lived in several countries before she settled in Canada. She does not see herself as a hybrid of Chinese and Canadian cultures, rather identifying values from many cultures that intersect nationality, profession, social status, gender, age, and family positionality. Or Andrew, who was born in Nigeria, studied in the UK, and lived in Canada and reflected on his own cultural label:

I am a person who complies with many cultural identities and incorporates values from all, but it doesn't really bother me. I enjoy having all my roots, talk about, learn more and interact with people. Should I call myself transcultural? (Andrew)

At the end of the second focus group discussion, all participants agreed that transculturality is an advanced stage of cultural development that goes beyond the restrictions of traditional cultures (e.g., ethnic, national, racial, religious, gender, sexual, and professional) and broadens cultural boundaries. The most significant finding is that participants connect transcultural competence to identity freedom - the freedom to distance from or integrate into other cultures due to flexibility and reflexivity, empathy and interaction, which encourage an alternative mode of thinking, an ability to navigate through and

transact in multiple cultures. The ability to move beyond the politics of location, from finality to potentials, without opposing differences, keeping the connection with cultural roots but not obsessed by them, differs transcultural from intercultural context

4.3. Motivations for Learning Transcultural Competence

The data from personal interviews and focus groups revealed various reasons related to individuals' life experience, attitude, and aptitude that explain why participants engage in learning. Taking into consideration the multifaceted life of adults, involving professional, family, personal, social, and cultural life, it might be challenging to distinguish clearly between and separate internal from external motivations for developing transcultural competence. Personal and professional growth, communication improvement, family togetherness, satisfying relationships and expanding social contacts, community integration, and pure love of knowledge describe the complexity and motives for learning. Despite this range, there is no apparent difference in motivation among Canadian- and non-Canadian-born participants. However, participants with immigrant backgrounds admitted that a desire to integrate was the strongest motive. Nevertheless, they do not consider this as a forceful external factor, but rather as a conscious autonomous decision for personal growth, well-being, and community belonging. For example, one non-Canadian-born participant noted that her conscious decision to learn different cultural perspectives might be interpreted as a result of the expectations of the host society, that immigrants have to learn about and adapt to Canadian culture. "When I made a conscious decision to move to Canada," the participant explained, "I was prepared to learn many new things. And this is what I have done living and working in other countries." Another immigrant participant said that "at the end, this is your choice to be culturally open and willing to learn and interact, when and how you will choose to integrate," therefore she does not see the host society's expectations as a push factor. Further, a native-born participant talked about her internal motivation for developing transcultural competence:

I do not support the statement that only immigrants should learn about our culture. Being a transcultural learner is not an option if you want to be involved in the society. We need to know

about others that we share our land; I want to know about my great-grandparents, about my colleagues that I work with, the clients that I serve. (Sophie)

From what participants shared, intrinsic goals appear to be leading motivations in transcultural learning, resulting in strong relationships and community involvement. Extrinsic motivations, in comparison, are related to organizational plans and deadlines, evaluation, recommended activities, supervision, and pressure. They have been mentioned by participants as factors in social and economic contexts that control and devalue difference rather than support learning and embrace diversity. Since all the participants have achieved a high level of education—a postsecondary degree, including some with master’s and doctoral degrees—the ability and desire to learn is a reasonable factor that participants articulated: “I love learning,” “Curiosity is my nature,” “I am a learning lover,” or “my personality is to learn and be intrigued.” Furthermore, living and working in an urban area and in a highly diverse society, participants found their cognitive interests stimulated by the various learning opportunities offered by community organizations, workplaces, and educational institutions. In fact, half of the participants responded that they had attended more than five cultural-competence trainings. One-third had taken part in between three and five learning events, including CCIS training, while only three people had attended only one, offered by CCIS. Asked why they had attended this kind of training, participants pointed to the fact that working in a very diverse environment requires more knowledge about different cultural perspectives and an understanding of the possible needs their clients may have. Fluency in one or two languages and cultures is not enough in a super-diverse reality. Transcultural competence is required for interconnecting, interacting, and intersectional belonging in society.

Despite the training was not mandatory in their workplace, participants recognized the support from their workplaces (predominately from not-for-profit and service providing agencies) in organizing learning opportunities which they found beneficial for their professional development. All participants acknowledged that they attended CCIS training voluntarily by their own choice; however, they

promoted this learning event among colleagues as beneficial for their job. Participating in and promoting such opportunities gradually enriches individual's knowledge and competence, as one described:

When your own cultural competence is on a considerably high level, you are self-motivated and self-directed to learn more: your curiosity and the need for more knowledge grow continuously as your reservoir of experience is growing expanding your competence to transcultural. (Rose)

For instance, Jordan proudly shared how he initiated broader involvement of his institution in creating diversity learning opportunities. Passionate to learn, he urged his college department to develop a diversity strategy, to create learning opportunities for staff, students, and the community. Indeed, transcultural competence enables us to engage others and promote the value of it. A few participants explained how external and internal motivations overlapped when, for example, they heard a story about how disrespectfully a person was treated or they observed a reaction of ignorance, judgment, or racial attitude. Then, they searched for more information to understand why this happened, wondering "what I can do personally to stop or prevent this." Further, it helps to understand the notion of transcultural competence as overcoming ethnic, racial, religious, and so forth, determinations and ascribed identities, as Epstein (2009) stated.

During the interviews, participants also examined how their motivation to learn has changed through different stages of their lives, which added to their nature as learners and the complexity of their learning. The majority of participants over 40-years-old were very active learners, however age was not the only factor for learning. Professional field and community involvement also were significant motivations to expand cultural lenses. In addition, family traditions appeared to be another key motivation. Several participants shared stories about how they did not like their families' views toward different cultures. For Sophie, this happened in her early age; for Arthur, it was later, when he met his wife. But realizing how narrow and discriminative the views they adopted from their families was, they became self-motivated to learn and explore more. For others, open-minded family environments served

as a natural factor further fostering a willingness to learn and experience different cultures and to motivate others to learn.

Becoming avid learners, Nadia, Sana, Mike, and Arthur identified a lack of learning practices in schools and among service providers, government agencies, and administrators and recommended a broader approach for transcultural-competence development. They also felt that including it in the school curriculum was equally important for both teachers and students. For example, Mike talked about how, most often, schools and other institutions explored cultural learning through celebrations and food, and he suggests:

These are good approaches, but we have to go beyond a single story, food or dance, and talk about why exactly this food is specific, how does it represent cultural values, and so on. If we, the teachers, do not go deeper and do not encourage doing so, we would not be able to build mutual relationships and move to transcultural competence. (Mike)

Several participants suggested a leading role for academia in motivating faculty, staff, and students to be more involved in learning transculture, participating in activities that will help to understand how to work with international students and colleagues from diverse background, going beyond an understanding of only ethnicity and religion. Cultural differences in learning should also be recognized in professional standardization and synchronization of skills, training, and courses. Why is cultural competence not included among essential skills for postsecondary learners? Lindsey, an instructor at a local postsecondary institution, addressed the question and suggested that recognizing transcultural competence as a vital, essential skill in a professional career could be a motivational factor for learning.

Similarly, Okeo West raised a concern about the role of government policy as an extrinsic factor supporting transcultural learning:

If multiculturalism is a brand name and a state policy and we claim that we are an inclusive society, what is the institutional fabric that supports this? There is inconsistency around the

policy and it often confuses service delivery. For example, the immigration policy requires language and employment skills from immigrants in order to succeed, but nothing is mentioned about cultural skills. They are the most essential, the foundational basis. It should be included in the assessment. Also, the forms and questionnaires should be culturally sensitive. It [transcultural competence] should never be optional and we should be proactive to change the system accordingly to the current demographic picture in Canada. (Okeo West)

Generally, in the literature, extrinsic factors have been described as controlling rather than stimulating individuals to learn. Several participants shared observations that managers initiate training or cultural presentations when a cultural issue arises or if there are ethnically diverse staff. Then, the training is called mandatory for everyone. One participant recalled a situation when some of staff members were reluctant to attend the session as they did not see it as applicable to them. Apparently, after the session, some of the individuals opposed realized the value of the event and opened their minds to learn more. “If this was not mandatory, these people would not discover the benefit of cultural competence” (Valerie).

In this case, the external push factor played a positive role and turned to internal motivation for future learning. Further, Valerie provided an example how authorities can advocate for and promote transcultural learning in the health care service and education. Participation in her educational program about understanding diversity is voluntary; however, health managers who attended found it very useful, recommended it to their staff, and suggested that cultural-competence programs should be mandatory and ongoing for health-care workers. The provincial authorities approved the training as required for health-care providers and administration, as well as for nurse students in the university. “If we really want to target sustainable results and societal inclusion, transcultural competence should be taught in all levels, for both immigrants and Canadian-born” (Valerie).

Alternatively, Marie, Nadia, and Sophie talked about the contradiction between the goals and outcomes of service-providers and those of government funding and how that negatively affects

motivation for learning. Often, the funders are more particular about the numbers and justify funding accordingly, without consideration for where these numbers come from. In such cases, staff may find a good learning opportunity but having already preplanned and approved a number of training sessions, they are not allowed to attend an extra one. Or many clients that are Canadian citizens may need more help than some immigrants, but they are excluded because funding is restricted to only immigrants. Nadia observed similar situations in schools where certain learning activities that she coordinates are available only to immigrant kids, not Canadian-born who might be second or third generation, but would also like to be engaged in cultural competence activities. Instead of creating space for learning and inclusion, the practices that Nadia observed resulted in exclusion and segregation in schools.

The above examples illustrate how inconsistency of extrinsic factors may fail to stimulate intrinsic motives, resulting in a lack of transcultural competence and exclusion. Therefore, participants in interviews and focus groups suggested a flexible approach that could accommodate different learning values and needs, time commitments, organizational support, and individual readiness in motivating transcultural learning. They agreed that one-time training is not enough to achieve transcultural competence. The commitment should be sustainable and on-going, as transcultural development is a lifelong process. As some participants noted, there is a lack of learning sessions that will guarantee an individual's competence. Many participants explained that they continue to take different learning opportunities and engage in sharing knowledge. Therefore, they recommended an approach that is not forceful but rather immersed and emotionally connected to learners, considering their needs, experiences, and activities. Although there was some evidence of required mandatory activities resulting positively in future engagement, many participants identified internal motivation as a leading factor for transcultural learning. Engaging voluntarily in different activities offers choice, acknowledges people's feelings and values, and enhance transcultural competence. Data from participants confirm positive transformation, even though the goal of transcultural learning may differ, depending on individual life experience, surrounding circumstances, and time orientation.

4. 4. Transcultural Competence as Holistic Learning

A holistic learning perspective is concerned with the development of intellectual, emotional, social, physical, spiritual, and creative potentials of every person. Participants in holistic learning contexts find meaning, identities, and purpose through connections to their communities and to the world. The support of others is a fundamental value for holistic learning; it consists of learners' empathy, sensitivity, compassion, and care about the world around. Transformative learning advocates for a holistic approach, including attention to what learners know, how they know, how they act in the world, and reflect on or understand the information they acquire. This holistic approach relies on important connections, for instance between different identities of the self, as they exist in interaction with others, as well as between the self and the community. These connections are achieved through self-reflection, reflection, and dialogue. Holistic learning indeed develops knowledge that is constructed by the context in which a person lives.

A holistic approach toward transcultural competence interweaves different learning paths in a web, where each path leads toward understanding certain points, connecting the known with the unknown through memories, feelings, experiences, and interactions, thus making sense of the new that an individual observes, experiences, and feels. Engaging in transcultural learning invites learners to bring their knowledge of their own culture to the process of cultivating relationships across cultures and developing sensitivity. Thus, the holistic approach in transcultural learning makes learners constructors and owners of knowledge. For the most part, research participants acknowledged that the transcultural learning experience opens up opportunities for acquiring a set of personal attitude, social sensitivity, humility, and intellectual skills that navigate them through the new experience. Participants discussed how transcultural learning expanded their values, visions, and manners in running their lives in a diverse environment. Most acknowledged that participating in group learning events and sharing their experiences opened up space for them to find common challenges they have encountered crossing different cultures. Moreover, they realized that having different cultural lenses for interpreting the same

cultural situation did not put them in opposition to each other, but rather created sense of commonality and humility. Taking part in the study was a learning experience for participants, providing them with an opportunity to reflect on their paths of cultural competence learning, as one participant told me.

“Running through our daily routines, we rarely have time to think about moments in our life that changed us and triggered our curiosity to discover and ask why” (Jordan).

Driven by their curiosity many participants discovered different opportunities to learn about cultures and develop their knowledge, starting from childhood and continuing systematically as part of their professional career. For example, one participant explained that his interest in exploring cultures started in his childhood, reading *National Geographic* magazines given to him by his parents. For another, reading stories about different places in the world in her early age nourished her curiosity that led to a degree in history, traveling and working in different countries, and having a professional career in art and culture. A third participant connected his interest in learning and exploring cultures with his “teenager rebellion,” living in a small rural town.

Being a Don Quixote, looking to find what is over the next hill, I spent years as a kid trying to follow the local river, even people said to me “Come on, you can look at the map.” Africa, India, Middle East were also on the map, but they were not the same, when I visited them. So, for me, traveling beyond the hill to observe and learn was a meaningful knowledge. (Jordan)

For these individuals, the enticement to explore the world and travel around exposed them to diverse cultures. Once on their journey, they gradually developed transculturally by reading, learning, researching, and practicing, all the while questioning and examining their own views and beliefs. Traveling and immersing themselves in different cultures became a source for developing cultural knowledge for almost every one of the participants who emigrated, worked, or studied abroad. For non-Canadian-born participants, leaving their home country was a starting point to developing their transcultural competence, including learning languages and different ways to communicate and behave, all of which required effort and consistent learning.

Nadia, who came to Canada as a school-age child, struggled being the only non-English-speaking student in the class, “but actually this turned to a benefit for me and helped me to advance quickly; I observed how people talk, their gestures, and behaviour.” In university and in her workplace, Nadia’s interest in learning about cultures has expanded. She became particularly interested in Latin American cultures and took courses about Latin American, learned Spanish, and traveled there. “Speaking different languages, I felt comfortable to interact and function by myself in different cultural environment,” she said.

For Lindsey, who is British, moving to Canada was a big change and an eye-opener:

My hometown is a small historic place, in a rural county, with very few people from outside [...] nobody comes in, and nobody goes out. I was the first who emigrated. My close friend there was from Pakistan, but I’ve never noticed. I realized this later, when I came here. I didn’t know about any cultural festivals that I saw here... The transition for me was huge. I was very careful how I question and talk. I wanted to learn everything.

Canadian-born participants were not likely to have had the same experience as Lindsey; they found travelling and exploring cultures to be pleasant and enjoyable and not at all the result of a need or the product of an external reality.

I traveled a lot from a very young age. I loved meeting people and was curious about everything. I was in Africa just by myself—one white girl and felt so comfortable. I just soaked up like a sponge everything that happened around me. Transformation for me happened naturally—this is a skill that I put in my resume. I just love it! I love people. My goal is to make people happy, laughing, to learn their cultural language (she laughed). (Sophie)

Further, Sophie explained how she developed this skill:

I’ve been asked often “how do you do this?” I just go to people. When they are new here, don’t wait them to come to you—you go to them, you know the language, you know how to do the things, they may not. Go to them, talk, ask questions, and spend time with them. Be curious, not

judgmental, don't assume, be a really good-question-asker and listener. If you live in South-West, go to North-East, volunteer in that community, learn about, and go to different schools. Curiosity is most important for me.

Sophie was confident that her path for transcultural development works very well, but the person should be willing to take it and keep going on. Similarly, for Jim, transcultural competence was driven by his curiosity and exposure to different cultures in his life and work experience: "I've been exposed a lot and explored. I am not hesitant to engage to those communities that I am an outsider." Moreover, Jim said that "being open to listening is a crucial part" of it, as is using "respectful language, and courtesy words." Together, these are critical elements to moving from an initial curiosity to engaging in interaction and learning.

Another participant, who was born and raised in Taiwan and came to Canada as a university student, noted that "the system here was different for me; I observed and listened a lot. I didn't speak much, I learned a lot from listening to other people." The data show that both immigrant and Canadian-born participants acknowledged the significance of listening skills in guiding them to better understand others and interact respectfully, especially for those participants who work as service providers and have very diverse clients, like Sophie:

People are not always comfortable to answer our questions, being shy, experiencing trauma, or not speaking well the language. Then, do not push on, be patient and observe, give a silent space for this person, even share your own story. As such, flexibility in using different communication approaches to understand someone who is different than you is also a skill that helps to navigate through cultural differences, negotiate with.

From what participants shared about learning transcultural competence, it confirms that they do not separate intellectual skills from their emotions, feelings, and attitudes. As part of the emotional aspect of learning, they discussed how they developed this competence, interacting with people, while cultivating humility and respect for varied and complex human experiences, recognizing their own

limitations, and ultimately finding the ability to accept individuals as unique, without opposing them. In the interviews, participants talked about how demonstrating sincerity, a genuine interest in others, and reflecting on their own life cultivated their empathy, compassion, companionship, collaboration, and wisdom.

The following quotes illustrate how different approaches to learning work simultaneously to develop transcultural competence (e.g., group interaction, global knowledge, awareness, humility, and emotional support). One participant in the observed transcultural learning session described his experience of group work in the following way:

This gave me a different idea who I am, where I have certain things and thoughts from, why I do not like some of them and want to change. Actually, what fascinated me by participating in this small-group dialogue is that I felt open and comfortable to share things that always have bothered me.

Through group-conversation, another person identified her “aha” moments about different perspectives in relation to historical and political events:

If you know where people come from and why, you are aware that they might struggle, you can connect all this knowledge in order to understand and help those people. But you cannot develop this if you do not have real experience with people from all over the world. Many Albertans never traveled beyond the province—they don’t know much about the rest of the world and that’s why they might be ignorant and prejudiced. (Rose)

Further, Rose, who was born in Canada and has lived in different countries, explained that she took many cultural courses as part of her degree. This, along with her a compassionate and sensitive character, enabled her to strengthen her transcultural competence:

Hearing tragic stories from immigrants hit me; I accept them more from emotional perspective, very sensitively. I had moments in class near to tears listening to stories from my students that hit me so much. Those people trying so hard to move forward. It is a great way to share and listen to

these stories, as many people do not have an idea about the life could be if you are not born and raised in a country like Canada. (Rose)

For Lucila, using stories and role-play in her program is an important learning approach to understand differences in cultures and social positions without opposing to them:

I love listening and telling stories. I try to learn about my roots and share this with others. Using role play, learning through being in other's shoes, evoke emotions and make people to imagine how they may feel in a different position. (Lucila)

Being in other's shoes and having the flexibility to change perspectives are skills considered valuable by Anaya, an immigrant who worked in another country before coming to Canada and who had significant exposure to different cultures. She said, "Every time when I meet someone different or see something different, I put myself in other's shoes, and I found it makes me a better person." She commented that she uses this skill successfully in her work and it builds trust with her clients. She also acknowledged the role of mentors, people who are knowledgeable, patient and supportive in her learning, noting that "I was lucky to be surrounded by people with open hearts and minds, and I learned a lot from them."

Mentors, supporters, and peers for some other respondents played essential roles in their transcultural journey. If, for Anaya, these supporters were her managers and supervisors, for Marie and Gonzales, their spouses from different cultures help them to express their feelings in a language other than their mother tongue. Shan, an international student, relies on her Canadian friends to learn about her new culture; her friends invited her for Christmas and Thanksgiving and traveled and spent vacations with her. Celine, who was single and felt lonely, found this support in a community; she actively searched for and joined a church, where she found love, spirit, and compassion:

The holistic way of learning transcultural competence involves spirituality. In a church or in the community, you have the need to be loved, to feel accepted and happy. When people share their

stories, they make you feel belonged. If you have love and compassion in your heart and want to give, if you are a caring person, it will work for learning transcultural competence.

Celine's emotional story confirmed the importance of considering affection in transcultural competence, because it is only with open hearts and open minds that people can move forward. Participants agreed that by sharing stories and listening to others, people engage in critical reflection, dialogue and interaction, question their values and beliefs, and transform.

In their transcultural journey, participants distinguished between learning paths appropriate to different ages, believing that adults and kids learn differently, especially if they are immigrants. For example, Anaya compared how she and her son acquired transcultural competence:

I have to work every day on it, I do it consciously, even my openness to cultures is very conscious. For him it is fluid, just happens, naturally. Looking at my journey for a half of a century, I talk about survival, he talks about life. I talk about employment, he about career.

Several immigrants with children supported the idea that if the adults learn through consciously focusing, their children attain competence more naturally and spontaneously, by building relationships even in the neighbourhood playgrounds. Moreover, they engage their parents in this spontaneous learning. Moms looking after their children get engaged in conversations, share stories, exchange recipes, visit each other's houses. Indeed, they cross borders of the unknown and learn about different cultures. This aspect describes transcultural learning as intergenerational process of interaction in both directions: children learning from parents, relatives, and family traditions and adults becoming engaged in relationships through and learning about cultures together with their children.

Next, I present four personal stories of transcultural transformation shared by Arthur, Sophie, Jim, and Valerie that reflect these participants' holistic learning. These individuals encountered negative (Arthur and Sophie) or positive (Jim and Valerie) situations, moments in their lives as children, youth, or adults that served as "a turning point," a moment of "cultural shock," an "eye opening" experience in their quest for broader cultural meaning. The retrospective disorienting dilemma for Jim and Valerie

evoked positive feelings of respect and appreciation for their relatives, friends, and colleagues who served as role models of transculturally competent behaviour.

Arthur described himself as a fifth generation Albertan from a farming family. His great-grandfather settled down in High River in the late nineteenth century; his grandfather was the first white child in the area. “Although we lived across [from] the Native reserve, we never had any interaction with kids from there,” Arthur said. For his family, the road to the reserve was a sort of dead end until a few years ago, when, as he and his wife were driving to the family farm, she stopped to refill the car with gas at the gas station near the reserve. It was his first stop at, what was for Arthur, this kind of forbidden place and he was very surprised that his wife had stopped there. He explained how the lack of exposure and interaction with different cultures, together with some family prejudice, distanced and dispositioned him, so later he felt embarrassed of his dad’s and grandfather’s ethnocentric racial attitudes. By contrast, his wife is comfortable in interacting with different people because she has experienced this from an early age.

“Gradually, I made an effort to be open to other cultures and I started to learn and build respect”, Arthur said. He acknowledged that he embraced the open-mindedness from his wife and expanded his cultural view and knowledge beyond the boundary of his inherited culture. As a father, he encourages his daughters to respect and understand other cultures, he interacts with his neighbours. However, as a teacher, he still observes in schools cultural behaviour and attitude from some teachers that are far from transcultural flexibility and openness.

Likewise, Sophie talked about her experience of single-culture restrictions adopted from her family:

My parents influenced my understanding of other people’s culture and it turned me into a kind of racist child. Once, I said something loudly in class that I heard from my mom which came to be very racial. I had trouble and felt very confused. The fact that I still remember this explains how significant this negative experience was for me.

She explained how this incident opened her mind. When she traveled and performed as a musician as a teenager, she understood how narrow her cultural views were, so she started to learn about history and culture which became a fascinating topic to her.

Both stories present personal transformation from biased ethnocentric behaviour adopted in the families to a conscious decision of going beyond the preconceived box to explore, learn, and practice ethno-relative ways of thinking and interacting with people. The negative disorienting dilemma prompted a positive personal transformation that further motivated Arthur and Sophie to develop their transcultural competence and advance in their professions as successful public educators, teachers and trainers. From a transcultural perspective, Arthur's and Sophie's experiences show that it is possible to overcome the obsession of inherited or given culture and expand their cultural interactions and relationships.

The next two stories, from Valerie and Jim, illustrate how positive exposure to different cultures from an early age affirm personal and professional path for learning transculture. If, for Valerie, family values influenced her attitude toward different cultures, for Jim, sport was the incentive to adapt to diversity and for expanding his transcultural view.

Valerie grew up in a very diverse family with lesbian parents. They lived in a small apartment in France and were neighbours to a family from Gabon with several children. Valerie spent most of her time with the neighbour's children, particularly with one boy her age, interacting and building a strong friendship. "I learned from this family how to not giving back but bringing forward, doing this from heart, with love." She also recalled a story when the boy's parents asked her parents for arranged marriage. "My parents reacted so tactfully and politely and explained that this is not a common practice for us, but we still can be good friends, so did we." Valerie explained her transcultural flexibility with her early exposure and openness to different cultures. Free from a narrow-minded culture, Valerie felt comfortable in learning, expanding her knowledge, and educating others (e.g., her husband and her colleagues).

Jim is Canadian-born and has moved across Canada and lived in different places very often because of his father's work. He recalled memories from when he lived in a small Inuit community, in the Northwest Territories.

This was totally different cultural exposure, having both good and bad. I felt very isolated coming from a very large place and ended up in a class of 11 people, mostly Inuit. But I discovered beluga hunting, traditional ceremonies, different land, clothing, cooking. I loved playing basketball and there was a team there. As a minority, I had to work hard and compete to get a spot there. But, you know, then, I've never thought about cultural differences between me and them. And I've never felt different or excluded by my teammates because we were bonded by our love of playing basketball.

Jim found his love of sport and interactions with people who shared positive emotions and supported each other vital to building cultural flexibility while crossing cultural borders. Afterward, during his professional career, he learned a lot about cultures and languages, attended courses, and developed strong transcultural competence. However, he strongly believes that shared passion through sport always triggers interactions and builds relationships with other team members who may have different cultural values and views. He continued to apply sport to engaging youth in learning, developing mutuality and respect, and understanding others.

The variety of learning approaches described by participants shape the holistic notion of transcultural learning. For example, the four stories that I included illustrate how participants learn from their personal stories and anecdotes, by being owners of knowledge. Participants also described how they constructed their knowledge: starting from early age, they were curious and inquired about cultures, framed their own and others' cultures, positioned themselves among others, reflected on their assumptions and beliefs, and interacted with open minds and open hearts. The holistic approach also encompassed learning different languages, travelling, seeking cultural exposure, and this all involved emotions and spirituality. Based on the premise that holistic learning accounts for a diverse set of

situations described by participants, it is only meaningful and possible in a safe environment where learners feel comfortable and have intimate support. Similar and unique, participants' perspectives and goals evolve and further impact their personal and professional development, which I examine in the next section.

4.5. The Impact of Transcultural Competence: From Personal Change to Community Inclusion

In examining their experience of transcultural learning, all participants admitted its impact on their personal and professional development. Experiencing disorienting dilemmas, being in different sociocultural contexts, taking different paths of learning, and being driven by different motivations brought them to a stage where they feel a sense of belonging, of being able to navigate successfully through the different cultures that they encounter. Searching for a deeper understanding of how participants see themselves as transcultural learners, I asked them to self-evaluate their transcultural competence. Reflecting on their journey and considering different motivations for learning self-assessment demonstrated participants' confidence and self-esteem in building transcultural competence. I asked participants to position themselves on the scale from 1 to 10, where 1 is lowest and 10 is highest level of competence. Ten participants self-assessed at level 7-8, and another six at level 6-7. They did not find self-evaluation challenging because I allowed them enough time to examine and reflect on their transcultural journey. They answered quickly and articulated for giving themselves a certain level:

[T]he more I attend learning and community events I meet more people that I learn from them.

The more I learn I understand that I need more. (Lucila)

I am pretty good because I love it. I am a teacher, a trainer. I am happy to be told that I am wrong. To be able to learn, you are willing to be wrong. (Sophie)

I am fascinated by cultures—you can find culture and opportunity to learn in every simple thing, even when people negotiate for an event space. (Agata)

I think I do really well. I learn from my colleagues, from international students that I help too, from my wife and relatives. (Gonzales)

Those who self-assessed lower (4-5) expressed their determination to learn more and develop comfort in navigating through different cultures. They also acknowledged that taking part in this study is a learning opportunity for them that expanded their cultural knowledge; it reminded them to stay open-minded, not to generalize and be biased before understanding deeper reason for someone's behaviour. For example, Lindsey revealed that she constantly modifies her behaviour and wants to learn more. Arthur identified that he speaks only one language. English limits his communication with different people and his ability to learn about their cultures and histories. Indeed, cognitive knowledge in its various approaches and venues was considered important for individual transcultural development.

Two of 21 participants credited their competence at the highest level. Both are immigrants who took many learning opportunities and worked in different countries before they resettled in Canada. Okeo West, who is originally from Africa, has studied in the Netherlands and United States, has earned a PhD, and works in public service, justified his self-evaluation in the following way:

The most important thing in evaluating your transcultural competence is measuring skills to the extent to which you are able to adapt in a cultural situation, recognize the challenge and react quickly and effectively. When you work and live in a specific country, you embrace and practice certain values, and they become more or less embedded in your values, so your experience impacts how easily you can navigate through cultures. I needed to take courses when I was in my home country. The nature of my work required me to speak different languages and to navigate through different social groups, negotiate with. Later on, I learned about culture of diplomatic relations and ambassadors—very different culture in term of social power and status.

Okeo West also commented on how his competence helped him to handle some awkward situations, dealing with differences in social status and power relations when either he or his clients were in a lower position or when he heard racial comments directed toward him. "It is even harder," he explained, "when the situation is urgent and no time to explore: the person across you does not speak the language but his life is at risk or he desperately needs your help." Herein, Okeo West sees the critical

capability and dynamic approach of the transculturally competent person, not ignoring unpleasant emotions, but rather learning from them and teaching others. Likewise, Anaya, who rated herself an 11 (one point above the scale from 1 to 10), clarified that she evaluated her competence truly aware of her constant persuasion to learn and practice new knowledge, with humility and compassion, with confidence and determination: “Every single day in my half-century life, I make sure I learn something!”

The examples presented by these two non-Canadian-born participants correlate in their high self-evaluation not because of their similar immigrant background but because of the variety of their approaches and activities in pursuit of transcultural self-development. Travelling and living in different cultures, experiencing unpleasant moments that they learn from, speaking additional languages, possessing a willingness and passion to learn, being open-minded and empathetic are all characteristics that confirm the holistic aspect of transcultural development resulting in strong self-confidence. Thus, self-assessment is relevant for transcultural competence because it gives a sense of the personal impact of the process. As constructivist transformative learning, transcultural competence is an individually constructed and discovered process where one is actively involved and interacts with others by negotiating, reflecting on, and sharing one’s own views and experiences. That’s why specific patterns of impact cannot be distinguished for immigrant or Canadian-born participants. Self-evaluation of competence is also a tool for enhancing life-long learning, identifying gaps and needs, and promoting transcultural learning, which participants demonstrated through this activity. Moreover, the skills and knowledge they have acquired during their transformative journeys enable them to empower and educate other members of their families, colleagues in their workplace, and people in their communities about the importance of cultural awareness, sensitivity, and competence.

A transcultural individual can transfer her/ his skills, knowledge, and abilities from a transcultural life experience. The capacity to address changes in a complex interpersonal and transcultural setting requires analytical and pragmatic approaches while remaining receptive and

attentive to cultural assumptions and values that are also transferable, according to study findings from participants. Therefore, participants strongly believe that individuals acquiring transcultural competence can foster integration and inclusion in society and they act for it with the vision and skills they acquired.

“With open-mindedness and respect toward diversity without violation we can make inclusion reality,” Kathy said. “Many people do not realize that diversity and inclusion is not just a headline,” Anaya added. “It is an achievable stage; something that you should tend and work on it. And developing your own transcultural competence is part of that work.”

Participants’ confidence and determination can be explained with the fact that most of them (14 of 21) are in their 40s and 50s and have quite extensive educational, life, and work experiences that built their self-confidence. Empowered with transcultural knowledge Valerie, Ron, Jordan, and Jim see themselves as active agents for promoting learning to family members, colleagues, and their community as a path for navigating successfully through the dynamics of cultures. They described transcultural learning as a foundational process that comprises personal consciousness, self-determination and courage to initiate collective action. As Ron stated:

We cannot rely on an evolutionary approach; we have to push. Not many leaders understand the importance of this learning. Sometimes, we fail our society by looking for the positive, but not working on it. We’re the people that help the society to draw the line. It’s like pendulum, how far things will go on this or that way. We have a role to not push or allow the pendulum far.

Some participants (e.g. Jordan, Okeo West, Valerie) talked about how they applied their transcultural awareness to challenge entrenched organizational practices, recommend changes and receive permission to move forward and implement the changes. Other, like Sana, Marie, Sophie, and Arthur acknowledged their personal limitations and by seeking contributions and support from others developed empathy and motivation to serve as agents of change in their organizations and communities.

The group of participants in their 20s and 30s, which Marie, Sana, and Nadia belong to, was not less motivated to take on roles as advocates and promoters. They see themselves as being on the right

path, equipped with knowledge and skills and ambitious to continue their journey as learners and educators. Those who work in the field of education believe in the positive impact of transcultural learning. They suggested not waiting until the trouble happens to fix it because transcultural competence is not a prescribed list to complete immediately and get a solution.

Participants in the first focus group agreed that transculture is a concept and as such, it should be introduced to children at an early age to develop awareness about different cultures and learn to interact respectfully. Ultimately, according to Ron, who referred to Bennett's developmental model, being mindful and conscientious will move individuals to an unconsciously competent level. In fact, individuals did not identify a specific time when they became integrated and competent; rather they see transcultural competence as never-ending learning. Agata, who is over the age of 50, described her journey in the following way: "I still do not have enough learning, every day there is discovery. I constantly need to make adjustment to my knowledge."

Similarly, Nadia, Alicia, and Arthur shared their ambitions to continue learning and exploring cultures. Learning is not just giving a sense of confidence to interact in a new cultural environment but also creating transcultural and inclusive professional places. They also raised the concern that often, different cultural views toward specific professions can deprive those professions of culturally diverse representation. For example, Arthur and Alicia noted that stereotypical attitudes from specific ethnic groups made their professions unattractive to youth from different ethnic groups. Some ethnic groups assume that people with uniforms are corrupt and, for example, transfer this misconception to firefighters in Canada. Some parents do not encourage their kids to study journalism because it is not a financially prosperous profession; they want their children to be engineers, lawyers, and doctors. These examples illustrate how a lack of knowledge about or the persistence of negative assumptions about a profession can result in a lack of diversity, as was the case in Alicia's workplace. "My boss," Alicia said, "tried hard to break the taboo, but so far, in my work setting, all colleagues are white, except me." Some immigrant participants have observed and described situations where negative assumptions either

from mainstream society or newcomers result in a lower social position and under-representation. It may not be qualified as discriminatory and racist behaviour, but rather as a lack of competence or fear of unknown, Alicia explained: “If I am not comfortable to interact with someone who is different than me, I would avoid him.” The avoidance and fear of the unknown consequently lead to segregation and exclusion. Herein, participants see their role to promote inclusion that is built not on the basis of sameness but on the openness to differences, the uniqueness of each and every member of society or workplace

Moreover, participants spoke about certain strategies they use to implement transcultural learning for organizational change and for fostering inclusion. They identified activities related to improving communication and behaviour (e.g., Sana, Nadia, Rose, Gonzales teach students and teachers), taking leadership role in educating staff and clients (e.g., Valerie and Ron lead and implemented programs for developing competence), policy change and strategies (Jordan approached partners and took initiative for developing inclusive strategy in his department). Participants (e.g., Marie, Gonzales, Valerie) applied their knowledge and: humanistic approach in daily life to maintain harmony with their partners and families. Others (e.g., Agata, Anaya, Sophie, Jim) serve as mentors for colleagues and clients by being good listeners, supporters, offering guidance and thus, fostering an inclusive atmosphere. Indeed, participants see themselves as agents of inclusion and recognize their abilities to transfer their skills, knowledge and vision to empower others.

In analyzing organizational reports and programs relating to cultural competence by non-profit agencies, I observed a higher interest and involvement in transcultural learning than in the private sector. For example, some companies in the private sector expressed an interest in hosting or having employees attend learning activities, but management found that turnout was low because staff were not all available at the same time to participate. This concern was raised by participants whose organizations partner with businesses. What they noticed is that often, companies will look for a quick fix for an immediate cultural issue or will address a specific ethnic group, which often provides more ammunition

for stereotyping than it does avenues of inclusion. A frequent approach of companies is to make newcomers and internationally trained professionals “fit” in the existing workplace culture, which is a one-site perspective, an assimilative rather than an integrative approach. Participants also shared their observations that many private companies and their leaders are goal oriented, having end-goal strategies and tasks. However, they do not consider transcultural competence to be an important factor for achieving these goals or they do not see it as a beneficial leadership commitment. Since it is hard to quantify transcultural competence, this creates a huge challenge in motivating business leaders to prioritize personal and organizational involvement in such learning activities and practices. Participants suggested that management should connect transcultural competence with professional development and with a company’s end-goals, which might lead to a more inclusive workplace.

This participants’ perception has been addressed by the renowned consultant, scholar, and author Fons Trompenaars (2015) suggests connecting cultural diversity with business cases and organizational end-goals in order to engage businesses in transcultural competence and create more an inclusive professional environment. Further, Trompenaars (2015) and Glover and Friedman (2015) identified four elements of transculturalism for organizational development. The first one is recognition: what is the dilemma? The second step is respect: there is a dilemma and both sides have legitimate opinions. Third is reconciliation: coming to some sort of agreement. And the fourth is realization: translating the process into actual behaviour. This is a more pragmatic approach to navigating cultural differences and dealing effectively with a business environment. Although, my research does not present data regarding these four steps, the concept closely relates to the transcultural learning with its stages of inquiry, framing, positionality, dialogue, reflection, and action that I identified. The learning/professional journey that people take to understand their cultural identities corresponds to inquiry. Respect is a basis for cognitive attitude and behaviour orientation toward people with diverse values and positionalities. Then reconciliation is the transformative moment of navigating the complexity of various cultures, building creative problem-solving skills through reflection, self-reflection, and dialogue. And lastly, realization

refers to a person's competence to realize the actions necessary to implement reconciliation, to build a transculturally competent team. Indeed, Trompenaars's analysis provides a more empirical approach to engaging business in learning and creating more inclusive workplaces. What emerged from interviews and focus groups, combined with some document analysis, is that it is apparent that transcultural learning can foster social inclusion if it is sustainable long-term and it is provided with orientation and learning specific to educational institutions, workplaces, and communities.

4.6. Summary

This chapter presented the four findings uncovered by this study. Findings were organized according to the sub-questions followed from the research question of how adults (immigrants and Canadian-born) living in Calgary acquire transcultural competence by participating in different learning activities and the extent to which it leads toward an integrative and inclusive society.

Four major findings emerged from this study:

1. Participants articulated understanding of transcultural competence as multidimensional process of self-reflection, open-mindedness, and empathetic interaction that navigates flexibly across different cultures and engages in relationship with mutual understanding. For many participants (14 of 21), 'transcultural' was not a commonly used term and not clearly distinguished from 'intercultural' or 'cross-cultural'. Reflecting on their experiences during the interviews, participants constructed meaning of transculture as conscious learning that shifts their perspectives, as an advanced level of cultural competence and more relevant to cultural dynamics in our contemporary society. The most significant characteristic of transcultural competence is related to individuals' openness, self-reflexivity and flexibility to integrate different belongings and representations without opposing but transcending them, by connecting global to local.

2. Examining and reflecting on their individual experiences, participants outlined intrinsic and extrinsic factors that motivated them to develop transcultural competence. The predominant goals for their volunteer participation in learning include personal and professional growth, improvement of

communication and interaction, strengthening relationships, integration, and cognitive interest.

Gradually, autonomous motives transcended to community engagement for promoting transcultural competence.

3. Participants describe learning transcultural competence as a holistic process that involves cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions. The cognitive aspect entails participants' curiosity; meaning construction about different values, cultures, languages; and exploring and reasoning their own biases and past experiences. The emotional aspect functions for developing and demonstrating humility, kindness, empathy, compassion, and respect to others. The social dimension is related to a conscious effort and determination to understand others and interact with them in social, cultural, and professional spheres.

4. All participants acknowledged the positive impact of transcultural competence on personal and professional development. Many of the participants self-evaluated their transcultural competence at a considerably high level: 6-8, on the scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is the lowest and 10 is the highest. The age is a factor for transcultural competence as this is a life-long learning process; however different age does not affect the participants' determination, motivation and engagement in learning. Immigrants and Canadian-born acknowledge equally the values of transcultural competence developed through their unique experience or with some similar patterns of experiencing unfairness. Different feelings and reactions they have experienced in their journeys did not have negative impact on their personal transcultural development, rather motivated empathy and courage to learn and act, not afraid to acknowledge personal limitations. They perceive their role as advocates for increasing cultural awareness of individuals, members of their families, co-workers, and the community at large. Furthermore, they recognized the importance of transcultural competence and acted as educators, mentors and leaders by challenging existed practices and promoting inclusion in the workplace and in society. However, they identified an ultimate indeterminacy of transcultural competence in different fields (i.e., educational, government, and organizational policies) and suggested incorporating

transcultural competence as sustainable learning in education and professional development. Overall, the findings emphasized the ultimate role of transcultural competence as cohesive, enduring learning for social harmony, belonging, and inclusion.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1 Introduction

The theory reviewed in Chapter 2 linked transculturalism with transformative learning as a continuous process of recognizing different world views and identities, adaptation and interaction in our culturally dynamic reality, and transnational mobility across the world. Acquiring transcultural competence as a process of transformative learning allows individuals located at the crossroads of cultures to navigate and create a more inclusive society. Connecting this theoretical concept with the findings presented in previous chapter, the following chapter will provide interpretive insights and analysis

It is important to consider the meaning of the word “analysis” from a transcultural viewpoint. In noting its original derivation in Latin is from Greek, Epstein (2012) pointed to the double meaning of the prefix “ana-” as up and back, and “lyein,” meaning “to loosen, to unite.” Usually, “analysis” has been understood as “a theoretical restoration of the initial origin or the truth of a thing, only in the “backward” sense” (p. 87). According to Epstein, “ana” also presumes “upward movement, the elevation of something to a new level of being” (p. 87). In this meaning, “analysis” reflects the transcultural notion of a progressive movement of culture and allows for us to see transformative learning as an enriching model for developing transcultural competence.

Participants’ unique experiences, as shared with and communicated to others, build relationships, commonality, and positive dispositions. Transculturalism conveys, as a critical universality, the capacity to criticize one’s own culture, to recognize one’s limitations, and openly embrace cultural plurality. Indeed, this capacity develops the ability to proceed to the next stage, self-reflectively, where the differences may become a starting point from which to move forward, discover one’s identities and roles in the universe, and attempt to build transcultural communities (Epstein, 2012; O’Sullivan, 1999). Moreover, transcultural development begins with the realization that beyond our uniqueness and

diversity, we share universal human potentials and experiences (Slimbach, 2005). Having this capacity, we discover the ways that others make sense of the world and expand our vision of alternative values and manners.

In this chapter I will also discuss how a transcultural perspective has been articulated by participants and scholars and the qualities that are acquired during transcultural and transformative learning. Then, I will analyze why participants engage in learning, interpreting their intrinsic and extrinsic motivations through the lenses of self-determination theory. Next, I will connect transcultural competence with transformative learning, a process progressing from inquiry to framing, positionality, dialogue, reflection, and action. And finally, I will present the impact of transcultural learning for personal and community development and for fostering inclusion by integrating and interpreting concepts.

5.2. Constructing Meanings and Dimensions of the Transcultural Person

The first finding is in regard to understanding transculture, focusing on the qualities of a transcultural person. In outlining the characteristics that best describe the transcultural person, participants approached and reflected on their potentials and possibilities of being and becoming transcultural, grappled with doubts and questions, engaged in meaning construction, and changed their frames of references, thus transforming. This aligns with potentiation, the process of “a positive, constructive deconstruction” (Epstein, 2012, p. 269).

Exploring the meaning of the term *transcultural* and the capacity of becoming a *transcultural* individual, participants described such qualities as cultural awareness and sensitivity, open-mindedness, language abilities, openness to cultural experiences and interactions, being an empathetic and good listener, among others, which are all generally very similar to those qualities that the literature has inventoried. Open-mindedness is associated with openness to experience, openness to approaching other cultures and learning about them, and has been identified as a favourable characteristic by most of

transcultural theorists. Openness is a requisition to enter a transcultural journey that further drives the transcultural learner to see and map the world in a new way (Slimbach, 2005). It invites learners to bring their knowledge of relationship to the process of cultivating relationships across cultures. This is the primary goal for transcultural competence that Lewis (2002) distills: to open windows to reality outside ourselves and to discover that others exist and accept them without comparing them or judging them against ourselves. Openness, from a transcultural perspective, is freeing oneself from cultural limitations and the hegemony of any single dominant culture, opening the door to transcend one's own culture and interact with cultures, as Epstein (2012) suggests.

Participants connect open-mindedness with self-awareness, self-examination, and self-reflection on own biases, being conscious and constantly questioning one's own cultural assumptions. Thus, open-mindedness has a transcultural dimension: it opens a reality outside yourself, allows one to question their own biases and reflect on them, and accept others without judging them. Open-mindedness is receptiveness to the other, due to the individual's capacity to share an experience that brings individuals together and further transform them. This corresponds to the transformative interpretation of open-mindedness (Mezirow, 2009), which includes openness to a different point of view, together with empathy and concern about how others think and feel. As such, open-mindedness correlates to affective development, another significant characteristic of a transcultural personality, comprising the capacity to demonstrate empathy, patience, sincerity, gentleness, and humility. From a transformative learning perspective (Baumgartner, 2001; Charaniya, 2012; Dirkx, 2006, 2008), emotions are a key component through all stages of perspective transformation. Participants in this study underlined and explained emotional connection and social humility as "trying to put myself in other's shoes" or "being emotionally connected and supportive" with the clients they serve, colleagues, friends, relatives, or even people they meet on the street. Additionally, participants emphasized the paths for achieving emotional intelligence – being good listeners, question-askers, and acknowledgers, communicating with respect and mutual understanding. This communication mode demonstrates consciousness and awareness of the

values and beliefs of both self and others; it affects individual behaviour and interaction. For example, Anaya, Okeo West, Sophie, and Marie pointed out the importance of such communicating skills when dealing with unpleasant situations and helping clients in need.

Participants seem to show that the needed skills may originate from a combination of experience and the integration of multiple cultural frameworks together with cognitive knowledge, including language proficiency, world history, ethnography, religion, and cultural orientations. Most participants have traveled, lived, or worked surrounded by different cultures, interacting with and navigating through; therefore, they recognize live contact with different cultures as a transcultural quality. One participant emphasized the importance of immersion in other cultures for developing emotional connections that cannot be acquired through books or informational sources. In such an environment, surrounded by varieties of traditions, values, languages, beliefs, and real experiences, a person can test his or her cultural competence. This is the readiness of transcultural learner to recognize the true, by “reaching down into the soil of each culture” (Slimbach, 2005, p. 213). Additionally, Addleman et al. (2014) and Bennett (2012) caution that experiencing different cultures alone does not make a person culturally competent and might even risk reinforcing an emphasis on the visible components of culture and stereotypes. Instead, the focus should be on engagement in interaction, receptivity to learning from and understanding the other while incorporating cognitive learning.

Indeed, most participants agreed that knowledge and real experience are mutually valued and interconnected for personal transcultural development. For example, all immigrant participants and many of Canadian-born participants speak more than one language, have studied cultures, and have taken advantage of different learning opportunities prior to or during their exposure to different cultures. Those who are monolingual acknowledged this as a limitation to effective interactions in different cultural environments. Several participants (e.g., Celine, Marie, Lindsey, and Arthur) described situations when their lack of language knowledge, or their accent, or unfamiliar linguistic expressions

made them feel confused, isolated, or discriminated against. Unlike others (e.g., Agata, Gonzales, Jim, Nadia, and Okeo West), who were motivated to learn and practice different languages, so they felt comfortable communicating and interacting, easily built trust, and had their language skills recognized for showing respect to others.

Language as a core transcultural value is emphasized in the literature: a language carries and nurtures a culture; an identity is shaped by a language (Dagnino, 2015). Further, Dagnino mentioned that “linguistic determinism” would limit transcultural frontiers’ horizons and creativity. Tzvetan Todorov (1998) described language as a door to accessing others’ worldviews and habitus; “it is soaked in thoughts, actions, judgments inherited from the past,” “it imperceptibly transmits to us a worldview” (p. 13). Epstein pointed out that one’s transculturality “presupposes ‘translingualism’” (2004, p. 50). Hence, it can be said that transcultural individuals fluent in more than one language have more tools of expression, acquire enrichment through interaction and engagement with the experience of foreign concepts, meanings, and characters. In that sense, language is a tool to understand other cultures and to switch between cultures.

Intercultural communication theorists (Bennett 2004, 2009; Hammer, 2012; Kim, 2012; Landis et al., 2004; Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009) defined cultural competence as the knowledge, attitudes, skills, and behaviours needed to communicate effectively in cross-cultural contexts in *geographically* situated environments, and as preferably required for *expatriates* (italics added). Even though a variety of models, guidelines, and indicators for measuring and assessing cultural competence have been created, the researchers pointed out that these tools are incomplete, inconsistent, or overlapping. Moreover, they limit cultural competence to a geographic space and refer to expatriates only. With worldwide mobility, transnational movement, virtual space and time, and growing cultural influences, *transculturality* offers a new approach to individual identity formation and transcultural competence, equally essential for mainstream, locally resided, or migrants and travelers. Transcultural individuals are

self-constructive, lifelong learners who freely choose their multiple identities. Bennett (2003) called this process an artistic cultural bricolage; likewise, Epstein (2012) likened transculture to a colour palette, from which an individual decides how to blend different colours and create a self-portrait. Additionally, Dagnino (2015) observed how individuals achieve a new identity representation of transcultural reality in transcultural narratives by using personal creativity in interpreting the world, redefining themselves by reflecting on their life experience, and comparing, contrasting, and combining past and present events by way of the senses. So too did participants in this study critically reflect on their past and present experiences, describing how they incorporated values from different cultures without surrendering their cultural roots. They acknowledged that having multiple identities neither poses a contradiction nor bothers them; they are flexible in performing and negotiating those different identities. The literature supports this evidence:

Transcultural persons fully identify with their roots in a certain cultural ground, while not clinging to them. Transculture, of course, does not completely release us from our “primary” cultural bodies, just as culture does not release us from our physical bodies. (Epstein, 2012, p. 60)

Immigrant participants see themselves beyond hybrids and hyphenated binaries (i.e. Chinese-Canadian or Indian-Canadian), as chameleons, accommodating values from the cultures that they have experienced. Open-mindedness allows them to explore and learn anew, to intersect multiple cultures and shift flexibly. However, they agreed that certain identity patterns are core and allow them to not lose their cultural centre (Slimbach, 2005). Preserving and performing such identity values and characteristics make them feel comfortably.

Conversely, the host society or others may use core values such as gender, race, religion, or ethnicity, for generalizing and stereotyping, resulting in cultural discomfort, tension, and racialization. For example, because she wears visual symbols associated with her religious belonging, Sana has

experienced avoidance and ignorance by members of mainstream society. Similarly, Okeo West was verbally abused because of his race. Also, Lucila, Marie, and Shan talked about experiencing negative attitudes from local people because of their different ethnic identity. Slimbach (2005) highlighted that in having such experiences during a transcultural journey, “self-identity can be damaged by either a society withholding recognition or by projecting an inferior or demeaning image upon another” (p. 216).

Reflecting on these unpleasant incidents, participants recognized that the source for them might be an ethnocentric attitude, unexamined biases and beliefs toward others, cultural denials or lack of cultural exposure and interaction. When the source is recognized, it can widen our cultural horizons and open our mind for developing awareness, challenging our perspectives and stereotypes, moving beyond cultural boundaries, and trying to understand other’s feelings and experiences. Indeed, it opens new possibilities, beginnings, and becomings, and herein the transcultural orientation lies (Dagnino, 2015; Epstein, 2012; Slimbach, 2005). Derived from the literature and embodied by both Canadian-born and immigrant participants, transculture can be theorized as a learning path in identity formation and human development, moving one away from ignorance, imposed religious beliefs, and other identity constrains.

Table 3: *Qualities of transcultural person*

Dimension	Quality	Description
COGNITIVE	Open-mindedness	Genuine interest and curiosity to learn, explore, experience, and apply different cultural perspectives Openness to a more complex understanding of the world and oneself, accepts others without comparing and judging
	World knowledge	Knowledgeable about cultures, ethnicity, history, geography, religions, politics, sociology. Understanding culture in a holistic way
	Language proficiency	Speaking the language of the host society, Using different spoken/written/nonverbal languages
	Analytical skills	Disengage from taken-for-granted knowledge and non-reflective action, ability to think from the perspective of the other Ability to apply different cultural perspectives in problem solving, to relate global to local in a transcultural context
	Awareness, self-awareness and self-reflectivity	Awareness about own and other’s perceptions, reactions, differences, and interpretations Exploring and questioning own biases, avoiding stereotypes and judgmental attitude, resist oppression

AFFECTIVE	Empathy and sensitivity	Capacity to demonstrate emotional support, sincerity, gentleness, patience, and joy within a specific cultural context Capacity to “put oneself in another’s shoes” and understand others’ viewpoints
	Humility	Ability to recognize own limitations. Respect toward diverse others Ability to deal with negative and positive emotions associated with participating in unfamiliar setting Recognize that beside the diversity people share common human potentials and experience
	Transcultural identity	Freedom from one predetermined or hybrid culture Feel comfortable with multiple identities, flexibly shifting, without abandoning own cultural roots Identity as continuum, mirroring the dynamics of cultures
SOCIAL	Cultural exposure	Life experience of different cultures Willingness to participate in different cultural events and unfamiliar settings
	Communication skills	Good listener and question asker Ability to apply and interpret different cultural styles, etiquettes, and expressions Ability to engage in meaningful dialogue and mutual self-disclosure
	Engaging in interaction	Ability to maintain positive interpersonal relationship Flexibility, confidence and comfort in navigating through different cultures Ability to motivate and inspire others for transcultural learning and interaction.

Table 3 summarizes the qualities of the transcultural person, divided into three dimensions that correspond to the three transformative learning approaches: cognitive, affective, and social (see Table 3). The cognitive dimension is comprised of open-mindedness, world knowledge, language proficiency, analytical skills, awareness, and self-awareness. The affective dimension includes empathy and sensitivity, humility, and transcultural identity. The social dimension involves cultural exposure, communication skills, and engaging in interaction. Participants were able to describe the transcultural individual as possessing a powerful human quality: a universal and at same time unique individual, open to cultural differences, to exploring and connecting diverse cultural settings, to integrating micro and macro cultures while being emotionally supportive and respectful.

Participants' descriptions resonate with the definitions of the transcultural individual from the literature as an open unity, "a mode of being located at the crossroad of cultures" (Epstein, 2012, p. 60), enriched through interaction with and immersion in multiple cultures (Dagnino, 2015). By demonstrating emotional capacity and "standards of the heart" (Slimbach, 2005, p. 207), as well as international language and communication skills such individuals are able to navigate through the transcultural reality.

Herein, is the difference between transcultural and other terms: intercultural, cross-cultural, or multicultural, particularly related to prediction and generalizing identity. As alluded to earlier, intercultural meaning is reduced to certain practical goals, communicating and interacting in a foreign context presupposed to achieve successful performance, but ignores myriad external conditions, that is, power structures and social positionality (Rathje, 2007). Even Slimbach (2005), who proposes a guide for transcultural development, refers predominantly to those who study abroad or teach international students. I argue his attainable model lacks inclusive notion of transcultural competence that does not divide individuals based on geographic locality and diminish the responsibilities of mainstreams to develop transcultural competence. Similarly to most intercultural models that focus mainly on national categorization ignoring social factors and social location that shape our sense of self and others, Slimbach does not elaborate on social positionality and past experience as factors for transcultural development, missing the idea of transformative learning.

Cross-cultural derives from anthropology research in which cultural groups are compared and contrasted, and cultural identity is seen as belonging to a certain cultural group (Brink, 1997; Nielsen, 2012). Cross-cultural relates to adaptation, adjustments, involves adoption of behaviours that accomplish goals and achieve tasks (Ang, Van Dyne, & Rockstuhl, 2015). Intercultural and cross-cultural have the positivistic view to predict, generalize, and anticipate successful interaction; they are focused on immediately applicable solutions and take a fix-it approach. Primarily oriented to expatriates, then, the

target is desired outcomes in a specific, dominant culture. The multicultural tendency is to view identity as reinforcing boundaries and binaries based on past cultural heritages and to insist on an individual's belonging to a certain culture (Cuccioletta, 2002; Epstein, 2009). Differences are viewed as fragmented and fixed to specific groups, and it is not necessary to accept difference (Kim & Slapac, 2015).

Contrary to all of these, the transcultural is based on breaking down boundaries, implies openness and mutuality, embraces diffusion of identities and cultures; every culture needs interaction with other cultures to compensate for its deficiency (Epstein, 2009). It is a concept that captures the living traits of cultural changes, it acknowledges and connects multiple dimensions, languages, and lived experiences that express transcultural identity. Therefore, transcultural is a next level of continuity of evolving, a transaction across multiple cultures, a new epistemology of pluralism that reflects the cultural dynamics in a highly diverse, transnational, global society.

Exploring and discussing transcultural qualities was a possibility for participants who were unfamiliar with the term *transcultural* to build on and enrich their knowledge about it. Ultimately, it reflects Epstein's interpretation of analysis, meaning moving to a new level of understanding, a model for self-development that is emphasized in his definition of transcultural. The next focus in this analysis is on the conditions and motivation for engaging in transcultural learning.

5.3. Conceptualizing the Conditions for Transcultural Learning

Transcultural learning does not contain an explicit theoretical component about which conditions motivate the learning process. Epstein (2009) suggests that the transcultural individual should be a cultural adventurer, developing their interest in cultures, willing to immerse oneself in a different culture and learn a new way of being and perceiving and understanding the world. As a humanistic paradigm, transculturalism emphasizes individual inner growth that is realized through the interaction of self, context, and life experiences. Hence, the focus is more on the inherent motivation of the individual

having personal empowerment and self-determination in learning, without elaborating on motivational factors.

Similarly, transformative learning does not outline in-depth any theoretical aspects of motivation. Transformative theorists discuss how a disorienting experience provides a trigger for transformative learning (Clark & Wilson, 1991; Cranton, 2002; Mezirow, 2012, Taylor, 1994a) and challenges individuals' meaning perspective. A disorienting dilemma integrates circumstances when persons consciously or unconsciously search for something that is missing in their life, pushing them to learn. When they find this missing piece, the transformation process is catalyzed. According to the transformative learning literature, triggering events include emotions and critical thoughts and are impacted by context (e.g., historical, geographical, and sociocultural factors, prior experience, personal goals, and learning readiness). Theorizing the disorienting dilemma and triggering experience as a condition and the first stage in the meaning-making process, transformative theory does not conceptualize much about motivations for learning, which participants in this study examined and reflected on, searching for answers as to why they learn.

Although it is more psychologically based, I found self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2012) produces a prominent theoretical construct that can be relevant in this case by describing why and how humans become passionate about learning. Built around three needs that humans fulfill—competence, autonomy and relatedness—Deci and Ryan (2012) elaborated on this in the following way:

They [people] need to feel competence in negotiating their external and internal environments; they need to experience relatedness to other people and groups; and they need to feel autonomy on self-determination with respect to their own behaviours and lives (p. 87).

Further, the two theorists link these needs to a self-determination continuum along which amotivation and extrinsic and intrinsic motivation lie. Amotivation is a state in which person lacks motivation to act. I will not discuss this state as it is not applicable to my study participants. A person

with extrinsic motivation is acting to achieve a goal that is different from the consequences of the action. Intrinsic motivation is defined “in terms of the inherently satisfying internal conditions that derive from experience of competence and autonomy, as well as, in some cases, from relatedness” (Deci & Ryan, 2012, p. 88). It includes people who are motivated by interests that are of their own origin. According to the researchers, people can move along the continuum, one way or the other, depending on a particular situation they are facing or domain-oriented factors, which can have a considerable effect on the life goals of individuals. Life goals can be grouped into two categories: “intrinsic aspirations such as growth, relationships and community, and extrinsic aspirations such as wealth, fame, and image” (p. 93). The pursuit of intrinsic aspirations is associated with greater well-being and better salient performance, whereas the pursuit of extrinsic motivation is associated with less wellbeing and worse salient performance, Deci and Ryan (2012) concluded.

In terms of the effect of social context on motivation, Deci and Ryan (2012) reveal that deadlines, evaluations, surveillance, and competition decrease intrinsic motivation because the autonomy need is not achieved. Controlling context is one that pressure people to think, feel, and behave in a specific way. It is important to note that direct expressions of caring, mutually shared feelings, and interacting with another are likely to promote satisfaction in terms of the need for competence and relatedness. In contrast, offering choice and acknowledging people’s feelings enhanced intrinsic motivation and satisfied people’s need for autonomy.

Additionally, Chirkov et al. (2003) examine the relations of cultural values to the well-being of individuals from individualistic and collectivistic cultures, in societies with vertical and horizontal structure. Autonomy resulting from full internalization was important for individuals’ well-being regardless of whether they belonged to collectivist or individualistic cultures. In terms of hierarchal structure, Chirkov’s study found that a vertical social structure is likely to be experienced as more controlling than a horizontal one, and thus tend to thwart people’s need for autonomy. Findings from

Chirkov's research are important because they suggest that cultures play a role in whether people satisfy their autonomy. However, achieving the need for autonomy would contribute to effective functioning and wellness regardless any cultures, therefore these findings should not be generalized.

Drawing from what participants expressed, it seems for most of them intrinsic motivation is a leading factor in acquiring transcultural competence. The dimensions vary broadly. For example, for Ron, Jordan, and Agata, transcultural learning began at an early age, driven by self-curiosity, pursuing autonomy and expanding cultural horizons. Many participants and all immigrants entered the journey of learning when they were exposed to different cultures by traveling, working, and living abroad. Their interest was triggered by observing and experiencing new way of communication and interaction, so they consciously and openly engaged in learning (e.g., Alicia, Anaya, Lindsay, Nadia, Okeo West, and Shan). This process was similar for Canadian-born Jim, Rose, and Sophie. Their initial interest further endured and progressed to well-developed and implemented in their practices and professional careers. Indeed, led by intrinsic aspiration, they attained competence, personal growth, and better salient performance. Likewise, immigrant participants satisfied their autonomy, achieved comfort, greater well-being, and integration. Both examples follow the path described by self-development theory and relate to the transcultural idea of inner growth and self-determination. Moreover, the evidences are relevant to transformative learning: learners triggered by experience are prompted to examine their frame of reference.

The concept of interest is important in this case because it refers to a complex system of individual experience, emotions, cognitive aspects, and engagement (Deci & Ryan, 2002; Krapp, 2007). The cognitive dimension is connected to personal readiness to acquire new information, to assume new knowledge, to enlarge competencies related to certain domains, and to change. It is on a conscious level—a person is not content with his or her current level of knowledge or abilities and is interested in more. The other tendency is a direct function of the quality of experience and is guided by emotions.

Both tendencies are equally important for participants and played significant roles in their motivation for transcultural learning (Krapp, 2007). For many participants, emotional experience was a basis for cognitive motivation and engagement in this holistic process of learning.

Another group of participants expressed how their parents influenced their learning. At the beginning, this might be identified as an extrinsic motive, however, it progressed to an intrinsic one. For example, Valerie experienced positive feelings and influence from her parents that she evaluated as valued and further integrated them into her learning and self-development. In contrast, Sophie and Arthur observed a model of ethnocentric attitudes toward different cultures that reflected negatively on them and later they rejected these models. Being triggered by such a dilemma, they were able to question, search, and discover why such behaviours and attitudes occurred. From that point, critically reflecting, they expanded their cultural views, pursuing their autonomy and relatedness.

Transformative and transcultural learning, as well as motivational theory, recognize the role of relationships and emotions as a motivation for learning—the need for greater understanding, support, mutual trust, respect, and empathy between individuals, but also between learners and social contexts. From the participants' experience, it has been illustrated by Marie, Arthur, and Gonzales how they have been motivated to learn by receiving emotional support and love from their partners while learning the partner's mother tongue and integrating his/her culture, or vice versa, as Valerie and Sana motivated their husbands to learn, explaining why some behaviours, attitudes or comments their partners made imply discriminative notion. The emotional support by mentors, colleagues, and friends strengthened intrinsic motivations for Shan, Anaya, and Alicia. On the other hand, negative emotions can also trigger an interest in learning and understanding why certain situation happens. Participants working in the field of education have explained how students who have experienced some discriminatory attitude shared their stories in class. Through awareness, empathy, and understanding, students were motivated to learn more about cultural differences and enhance their competence.

Self-development theory could also apply in explaining motivations for transcultural competence at the organizational and community levels. Managers and leaders realize the need of transcultural learning in the workplace is vital in our global, diverse reality. Pursuing fast results, often, such activities and strategies are associated with deadlines, reports, mandatory training, and evaluations. Instead of fostering cultural competence, controlled approaches and practices can result in staff fatigue, the feeling of being overwhelmed, and resistance to learning and change. Administratively prescribed diversity strategies and codes of conduct can create a fear of communication and interaction with unknown, other because people are afraid to make mistakes and be punished. Then, instead of inclusion, the outcome may be silent avoidance and hidden ignorance. Motivational theory alerts us to such extrinsic motivations, when learners are not ready and the goals are not personally related to them. In support of this claim, participants talked about sporadic activities included in compulsory professional development do not engage employees in profound learning. One reason identified by a participant is that the attendees do not feel comfortable to share experience with all colleagues and afraid how it may affect their job. Another participant commented that if the training is not emotionally connected to personal stories and experiences, it may lead to stereotyping and generalization of people belonging to specific culture, most often related to ethnicity. Or too many activities and diversity strategies aligned with funding requirements, checklists of do's and don'ts, competition, or mandatory certificates for the professional portfolio may cause fatigue and diminish interest in participating in transcultural learning. Several participants suggested extrinsic goals from an organizational perspective may have positive effect and be integrated as intrinsic if they reflect the holistic aspect of transcultural learning.

On the other hand, participants acknowledged the positive role of society and some organizational practices for providing learning opportunities that adequately address cultural dynamics, as well as personal choice and learning style, and foster intrinsic motivation in learners. For example, Sophie talked about the values of visiting different religious places and learning from religious leaders there, or Valerie described how she structured her educational session according to specific professional

needs and levels. Having a considerably high cognitive capacity, participants admire events that engaged them in interactions and relations, further mobilizing them in promoting the value of transcultural learning and becoming agents of change.

In summary, findings from participants are similar to what the literature has inventoried in regard to motivation for transcultural learning. Personal development and growth as intrinsic motivations are predominant in this study and closely relate to becoming more integrated and autonomous, as well as somewhat more competent and, most likely, more able to relate to and be emotionally supportive of others (Deci & Ryan, 2012). It is important to note that direct expressions of caring, mutually shared feelings, and interacting with another, as indicated by theorists and confirmed by participants, is likely to promote satisfaction in terms of the need for competence and relatedness. In contrast, extrinsic aspirations, which were less typical among study participants, are entirely contingent on satisfying demand and decreasing autonomy and, accordingly, do not lead to perspective transformation and transcultural competence. Autonomy orientation, from a transcultural perspective, refers to the mode of being by choice and the inherent motivation for self-determination, empowerment, and embracement pursued voluntarily (Epstein, 2009). Transformative learning, as transformation of meaning perspective, affirms the concept of expanding self and pursuit autonomy by acknowledging the role of the triggering experience and the need for meaningful relationships based on support, mutual trust and respect in the process of becoming transculturally competent. Thus, the complexity of the transcultural person's growth lies in their dedication and ability to maintain a balance between autonomy and social relatedness. Lastly, the role of context is recognized theoretically: in social environments that encourage and acknowledge individuals, autonomy is supported and contingency is minimized, which contrasts with controlling contexts that pressure people to think, feel, and behave in a specific way.

5.4. Transcultural Competence as a Transformative Learning Process

Mezirow's theory of transformative learning comprises cognitive, affective, and social dimensions that bind our thoughts, emotions, and relationships in a meaningful way. The process is a holistic one that involves the integration of all dimensions of the learner. When considered in the context of culture, the journey of transformation is intellectual, relational, and reflective for an understanding of self and others. More specifically, this journey usually begins with a questioning of one's beliefs and attitudes, challenging certain culturally based assumptions, and results in a new perspective (Charaniya, 2012, Mezirow, 2009; Taylor, 1994a). Study participants described transcultural competence as a process of listening, hearing, observing, questioning, relating, feeling, and sharing of stories. Throughout this process, participants identified the following benefits they acquired: cognitive flexibility, abstract complex thinking, empathy, tolerance, open-mindedness and self-awareness, confidence in their interactions and the knowledge they have. When a transcultural perspective is invited into the mix, this process of making meaning relates to multiple forces, both local and global, that reflect peoples' lives, finding coherence and navigating the crossroad of cultures. A transformative journey is neither limited to an intellectual dimension nor a linear progression; rather, it is a spiraling, creative, collaborative and intertwining journey of discovery that transforms "the hero" (Campbell, 2004). Overall, the participants' stories show different experiences and learning scenarios, relative to each one's life. Some are more receptive than others to modifying their belief system and challenging their home culture. Some inherited multiple cultures, while others learned about cultures, how to integrate and navigate at different stages of their lives, whether in childhood, as a teenager, in school, during young adulthood, or as an adult.

Transcultural learning appears as transformative process when each individual is a creator. According to the transformative learning literature (Mezirow, 2009; Taylor, 2009, Taylor & Cranton, 2013), the core values of learning include cultivating a critical openness, engaging the whole person,

stimulating critical thinking and suspending judgments through dialogue, appreciating diverse perspective without opposing, dwelling with questions, touching the affective, strengthening the cognitive, and enhancing the social. All these characteristics are also recognizable in the transcultural learning model (Epstein, 2009, 2012; Slimback, 2005; Sorrells, 2014), progressing from inquiry to framing, positionality, critical dialogue, reflection, and acting as a transculturally competent person. Encompassing these stages, the transcultural process seems not to be a one-time transformative event, but rather a continuous way of constructing meaning, integrating sociocultural surroundings, and navigating transitioning phases.

5.4.1. Inquiry.

According to Sorrells (2014), inquiry is wanting to know about the self and others; it is curiosity, listening, and understanding others. Slimbach (2005) adds to this: it is a willingness to take risks, to question our prejudices and suspend judgments, and to challenge our worldviews. The personal characteristics of intellectual curiosity and being comfortable with ambiguity are critical for most of the participants entering a transcultural journey. Intellectual curiosity allows the learner to be open to asking questions, while experiencing the unknown, and having one's beliefs challenged aligns with participants' views of learning from every situation and opportunity. Another learner's attitude in the inquiry stage that is closely related to intellectual curiosity and comfort with ambiguity is intellectual and social humility (Charaniya, 2012). Intellectual humility allows learners to be more open to different points of view, which participants demonstrated by sharing their curiosity and willingness to learn from any situation that life offered to them. Social humility enables learners to be willing to listen to those points without judging and contradicting, rather with empathy and understanding of other's experience or challenges. These attitudes combined with opportunities in the learning environment enable the learners to be touched and transformed intellectually, what Jim, Rose, Anaya, Sophie, and most of other participants revealed in the interviews. They described how they learn when they travel, work in very

diverse environment, teach, or immerse themselves in other cultures. Listening to stories from immigrant students evoked emotional support and cultural awareness for Rose and Mike. Similarly, Lucila, Marie, and Sophie learn together with their clients through sharing stories and expressing feelings of being in privileged or unprivileged situations because their racial, ethnic or language identities.

Nevertheless, this process of acquiring knowledge and constructing new meaning that did not exist in previous learners' experience cannot happen when the exploration is limited to intellectual discourse. Following participants' comments, it is sharing of more than just stories, experience, feelings and ideas; it is engagement, collaboration, and relatedness. Study participants identified relationship and collaboration on different levels (i.e., within family—Arthur, Valerie, Sana; in a workplace—Anaya and Alicia; in the community—Jim and Celine) that enhance their transcultural learning, by broadening their views, practicing news skills and developing feel of belonging. Indeed, inquiry is a step in transcultural learning that leads to engagement, interaction, dialogue, and social connectedness. They all are critical ingredients because they allow learners to explore, frame, and re-vision their cultural understanding, shift their frame of reference, so that transformation is possible.

5.4.2. Framing.

Framing, as the next step in the transcultural learning framework, is the ability to consciously and flexibly shift perspective between micro and macro, local and global, the present and the past (Sorrells, 2014). This is the ability to look through different lenses and have multiple expressions when we have knowledge about different cultural dimensions, history, time, and space (O'Sullivan, 2001; Slimbach, 2005). Framing is also a capability to distance one's self from one culture in order to understand locate one's self beyond their own culture (Bakhtin, 1981; Epstein 2012) and experience alterity (Wulf, 2010). In fact, many participants recognized the importance of learning multiple cultural dimensions, and those who traveled a lot were able to navigate easily and comfortably through the

cultural dynamics. Some others struggled, at least in the beginning of their journeys, with lacking certain language skills (Celine, Nadia), or being unfamiliar with certain communication patterns (Lindsey trying to understand Canadian patterns of expression that are different from British), traditions (Shan spending time with Canadian friends to learn about Canadian traditions and balance with Taiwanese), or facing others' resistance toward them (Okeo West and Lucila had difficult moments because of their race identity). As it has been said in transformative learning, during framing, learners change not just the knowing and meaning but also the way of knowing and making meaning. This process is not always smooth and easy; it might be encompassed by vulnerability, struggling, confrontation, and ignorance, which has been revealed in participants' findings. One example is Lucila who came to Canada as foreign worker. She worked overtime but never complained to her managers in the beginning because of her vulnerable status. Slowly she built confidence, mastered her professional skills, got her permanent residence, and realised that she could teach others who experienced similar struggles. She linked the stories of wisdom from her grandparents with the stories that she learned and the experience in the new society developing strong connections between her past and present which helped her to navigate through her transformative journey.

The assumption in intercultural theory is that expatriates are those who experience more unpleasant moments in a transformative journey due to their social position, race, religion, language, or cultural barriers. In this study, there are no outstanding differences that differentiate between Canadian-born to non-Canadian-born with regard to transcultural development and the story of Arthur illustrates this. Raised in a family with very ethnocentric traditions, as Arthur described, he later struggled with this white privilege, he avoided contact with Indigenous people or people from different race. However, the life offered situations in which he reflected on his past and slowly changed his frame of reference. Further, he took different opportunities for learning and interactions that expanded his knowledge and made him comfortable to act surrounded by different cultures. Generally, participants demonstrated high

intrinsic motivation, a willingness and capacity to learn, as well as flexibility in shifting their frames of references to further expand their transcultural horizons and help them navigate cultures.

5.4.3. Positionality.

Socially constructed categories position us in society and place us into groups. This is a way of classifying other people as unknown, and figuring out who they are and, more importantly, who people are in relations to us. Beyond such major social categories as gender, race, and age, we define people through communication and interaction, positioning them by various social markers (e.g., ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, religion, ability or disability). Considering the dynamics of cultures and places of interaction, positionality is complex and critical for transformative learning and transculture. Immigrant participants illustrated this by their experience of having different ethnic ancestry. For example, some people with South Asian, Mexican, Kenyan, Taiwanese, Chinese, or Pilipino backgrounds acknowledged ethnicity as part of their unique identity and a contextual factor for learning. For Canadian-born participants, family traditions and the social space in which they have lived also reflect on their positionality and the way they make sense of the world. However, most participants affirmed that Canadian society, with its policy and traditions in welcoming diversity and uniqueness of its citizens, has not created severe social dispositions and resistance to change. Although non-Canadian-born participants have experienced some challenges in transitioning into Canadian society and culture, it did not critically affect their social position. Some talked about professional and educational nonrecognition as reflective of their self-positionality, but their self-motivation to personal growth and integration into the new society consequently brought them to a social position that makes them feel powerful with the knowledge and achievements they have acquired. Those who work in a service-providing field, for instance helping vulnerable and marginalized people, expressed consciousness and awareness of positionality. Overall, all expressed understanding about place in society as fluid, subject

to time and personal experience, overlapping and intersecting, which is a factor in transformative learning.

On the other hand, transcultural theory recognizes the role of inclusive and safe environments. All human beings are of equal value and deserve mutual respect and recognition, but they develop and express these values within a social environment, which is culturally and historically conditioned (Epstein, 2012; O’Sullivan, 1999, 2012; Slimbach, 2005). This posits that our universal human nature is our primary identity, more fundamental than any specific categorizations and social positions; it is a radically egalitarian and universalistic implication for transcultural development. Epstein (2012) argues that this vision may sound utopian but “it is only commensurable among discourses and values that may keep various groups peacefully negotiating their place and role in local and global society” (p. 187), abandoning hegemonic claims. Then, from transcultural thinking, positionality might be interpreted as a point for achieving consensus when the motive must be egalitarianism. Citing Bakhtin, Epstein further explains that freedom achieved through transculture cannot change existence, only the sense of existence and it is changed when is interwoven in the expanded transcultural context.

Demonstrating an awareness of oneself as a culturally conditioned human being and identifying as a member of multiple micro groups with relatively more or less social, economic, and political power and privilege are among transcultural competences outlined by Slimbach (2005). Evidences from the participants support this transcultural proposition by describing their experience of interacting with others, how they resisted and asserted their positionality and identity. For example, Okeo West experienced resistance because of his race, but in another situation his race and cultural roots served as benefits when he helped a client. Taking the path of being constantly conscious about individual representations, participants talked about their responsibility as local community members and citizens of the global community to build social inclusion when they engage in transcultural interaction.

Mezirow's theory has been criticized (Baumgartner, 2001; Fenwick, 2008; Johnson-Bailey, 2012; Johnson-Bailey & Alfred, 2006; Merriam, 2008) because it offers a Western, white, middle-class perspective of learning and does not account for alternative sociocultural aspects of knowing. This indictment reflects on the power and positionality between learners and educators, and, furthermore, Freire (Freire, 1970; Freire & Macedo, 1995) contributed by addressing culture and race, emphasizing the importance of dialogue in the process of change and empowerment because differences in power are evident when we engage in dialogue.

5.4.4. Dialogue.

Dialogue has been defined as the core substance of transformation (Taylor & Cranton, 2013), an epistemology of transformative learning, “an indispensable component of the process of both learning and knowing” (Freire & Macedo, 1995, p. 379). As such, dialogue implies curiosity, critical consciousness, and the readiness and eagerness to engage in learning. Dialogue creates an invitation to discover something new about oneself as well as other's perspective, while constantly asking questions and challenging our assumptions, and discovering through new meaning-making. Theorists (Berger, 2004; Carter, 2002; Mezirow, Taylor & Associates, 2009; Sorrell, 2014) remind us that engaging in dialogue is beyond a mere speech act or conversation. It involves relational and trustful communication, openness to alternative points of view, a sense of trust and empathy, an awareness of other's feelings and attitudes. These are all things that participants identified for effective participation in dialogue and in transcultural learning.

Dialogic moments support the transformative processes of inquiry, framing, and positionality and connect to critical reflection and action when an individual is in a culturally diverse environment or is crossing cultural borders. However, dialogue is possible when there is interaction, a commitment by a group to sufficient time and space for collaboration, reflection, and integration. A group can be formed spontaneously (i.e., when an individual is in a different cultural place or when an individual voluntarily

joins a learning group). In my research, I observed how participants engage in dialogue during a transcultural learning event and what they shared. It seems that participants did not need much time to enter a dialogue, although most of them were meeting each other for the first time. They demonstrated openness in sharing their assumptions, values, and experiences. They formed a support group to share their own marginalization. The value of participation in a group setting has been recognized for developing awareness, empathy, and changing assumptions and perspectives that individuals never thought about. Addressing this in the small-group discussion, participants recalled moments when they have been judged or they judged others' behaviours. Group engagement allowed for better understandings of self and others through dialogue, accepting alternative points of view, which lead to transformation through disengagement from taken-for-granted frames and reframing. Group dialogue is a catalyst for an encounter between people who might not have met before, but they demonstrated and shared their commitment and motivation to learn from each other (Shapiro, Wasserman & Gallegos, 2012).

Many participants also appreciated the time during the session dedicated to sharing stories and personal experiences, which contextualized their learning and emotional engagement. Storytelling is a major means for creating emotional engagement in transformative learning (Shapiro, Wasserman & Gallegos, 2012). Connection occurs not just in the sharing of the story, but also in what happens once people share their stories—when they feel heard and met by group members, the sense of cohesiveness emerges. This is what I observed in the session where participants freely interacted, creating dialogic moments. Drawing from the theory and my observation of one learning session, the factors that affect transformative dialogue and lead to reflection and action can be summarized around participants' motivation and commitment to engage in learning, curiosity, and openness to stretch the limits of knowing by stretching across differences. Nonetheless, effective dialogue requires demonstrating emotional maturity—knowing and managing one's own emotions and recognizing emotions in others and demonstrating self-control and trustworthiness.

5.4.5. Reflection.

Critical reflection that occurs in the dialogue, for Freire, or in the discourse, for Mezirow (2003), drives the process of transformative learning. Individuals involved in reflection can offer a perspective about their own perspective which is an essential condition of transformative learning. When knowledge—beliefs, values, and assumptions—is constructed through discourse and reflection, it has greater validity and synthesis of existing views and evidence because it questions the integrity of deeply held assumptions and beliefs based on prior experience. It is often prompted in response to an awareness of conflicting thoughts, feelings, and actions, and at time can lead to a perspective transformation (Mezirow, 2000).

Reflection has been seen by participants as a learning opportunity either in group interaction or independently. Some admitted that not very often they have time to reflect on why they think, behave, or act in a certain way, to question how they have adopted such a way, whether they like it or not and, if not, why they do this. Participants agreed that interviews provided them with an opportunity for independent self-reflection on their biases, behaviour, language, and thoughts. As Ron explained, referring to Bennett's developmental model, when we are not unconsciously competent, we have to be conscious about our reaction and respond. Anaya shared that our conversation during the interview assured that her approach of trying to be in other's shoes always helps her, it is self-reflective and empathetic. Those who attended the transcultural learning session that I observed and the focus group said the session was a turning point from which they started to dedicate more time to reflecting and question their assumptions, for example, when they communicate with a homeless or less educated client, or served refugees, experiencing mental trauma. However, they pointed out that the initial reflection does not make a person transculturally competent. Being constantly aware and conscious about what, how, and why a person reacts and thinks in a certain way will progress through self-reflection toward transcultural competence. This refers to the three forms of reflection that Taylor

(2009) identifies in the transformation of meaning perspective: content (reflecting on what we perceive, think, feel, and act), process (reflecting on how we perform the function of perceiving), and premise (an awareness of why we perceive). In fact, premise reflection is the basis for critical reflection and refers to presupposition underlying our knowledge of the world; therefore, it needs to be engaged more often in knowledge development, especially when individuals have greater experience. Many researchers, such as Freire (1970), Johnson-Bailey and Alfred (2006), emphasize this and link critical reflection to social change by developing awareness of power and positionality. Although participants did not reveal much about experiencing dramatic change of power and status, they discuss the positive outcome of being critically reflective for challenging our own strong views and encouraging others to do so. Furthermore, they acknowledged self-reflection and critical reflections for changing organizational practices that overall improved the services they provide for very diverse groups.

Emotions are also part of critical reflections because we are not purely objective and neutral about what we notice or inquire about (Dirkx, 2012; Taylor & Cranton, 2013; van Woerkom, 2008, 2010). Participants addressed how their feelings and ability to be supportive are attached to transcultural understanding and transformative learning. The empathy comes in many ways and in different stages of their lives, both personal and professional.

Reflection informs the micro, mezzo, and macro levels, which corresponds to the transcultural notion of connecting local with global, offering multiple ties, interconnections, and linkages in a multifaceted location. Thus, reflection helps to navigate the dynamics of cultures and worldviews by not turning away but crossing over. Immigrant participants (e.g., Alisa, Agata, Lindsey) as well as native born (Jim, Marie, Jordan) talked about their transitions from a home culture and family to a broader cultural exposure or a new host culture. For Sophie and Shan, being outside of their home culture was the moment for self-reflection that guided them through the journey of transculture. Most interviewees were flexible in navigating between and building their own zone of comfort by self-reflecting on the

home and new cultures. Despite the difficulties inherent in the process of adaptation and transition that some have experienced, they feel “in-place,” at home. And ultimately, by understanding that no one is locked in a single cultural reality, they developed both the capacity to see events from a transcultural perspective and the will to act on behalf of a common good (Mezirow & Associates, 2000), standing at the crossroads of different ethnic, historical, and professional cultures.

5.4.6. Action.

Engaging the cognitive, emotional and relational aspect of knowledge through inquiry, framing, positionality, dialogue, and reflection prepare individuals to act responsibly to both themselves and others, and to make a difference. Herein, the holistic notion of transcultural learning is. Integrating all features, the transculturally competent individual is self-confident in his or her new roles and relationships. Empowered by transcultural knowledge, participants described situations in which they acted confidently and compassionately with the clear idea that by their actions they contribute to a more inclusive, equitable, and peaceful world.

To act transculturally competent means being able “to transcend the borders of traditional cultures,” “to overcome the isolation of their symbolic systems and value determinations and to broaden the field of “supra-cultural” creativity” (Epstein, 2009, p. 350). Study participants admitted that every time when they act in a transcultural environment: teaching students (e.g., Sana, Nadia), negotiating for renting event space or interacting with neighbours (Agata), business-consulting (e.g., Ron, Jordan), providing service for immigrants and people in needs (e.g., Lucila, Marie, Celine, Margaret), they invoke their knowledge and build upon it. However, they are aware that there is no final stage in this process; every time, they expand their cultural limits and discover something new. Indeed, this is the transcultural concept of positive constructive deconstruction: a life experience of change and acting, a continuous way of integrating the immediate sociocultural surroundings. Next, I will discuss how transcultural competence and actions impact an individual’s life and foster community inclusion.

5.5. The Power of Transcultural Competence for Individual Growth and Community Inclusion

According to transcultural theory, the transcultural individual appears to be based on a transformative human quality that enables individuals to identify subtle changes in human dynamics to anticipate and cope with obstacles/conflicts that arise. Participants embodied, in their own ways, how transcultural development positively impacted their personal lives by developing the higher order cognitive and emotional knowledge required to manage transcultural complexity. They described themselves as more inclined toward humanistic thinking and acting, more related to the “other” rather than rejecting or distanced from the “other,” supportive of those who experience cultural differences and adaptation to a new culture. Rose shared that her knowledge about refugees’ experience and places with war conflicts made her very supportive and sensitive to her students displaced from such zones. Likewise, Celine follows the professional requirements with cultural sensitivity and compassion while helping foreign workers to overcome challenges.

Furthermore, participants transfer their transcultural values and worldviews into their professional activities: work ethic, organizational policies, and service delivery. They addressed the question of what can be assumed regarding the usefulness of the transcultural individual for the workplace and how they can transfer their skills, competencies, and abilities from transcultural life experience to organizational transformation. Indeed, most are engaged in the process of institutional change with optimistic, action-driven approaches, seeking efficiency and effectiveness. Sana explains to teachers and students how to navigate through conflicts that arise as a result of cultural differences and positionality. Similarly, Jim and Vince applied their language and cultural knowledge dealing with people who were involved in crime situations and the reaction from their families.

Participants recognized the need for more systemic transcultural learning. They hope and aim to broaden people’s knowledge. For example, Valerie and Sophie talked about the positive impact of their professional engagement in developing transcultural competence at different organizational levels.

Arthur, Sana, Nadia, and Lucila discussed their observations in schools, where they encourage providing transcultural learning for students and teachers, and also identified significant gaps in the educational organization and structures. Okeo West firmly stated his backing for strong government policy and support in response to the cultural dynamics and immigration realities in Canada. Participants consider themselves to be agents of change while maintaining a degree of personal competence and analytical abilities, including a nonjudgmental approach, controlled emotions, and constantly monitored behaviour. Developing analytical and pragmatic approaches while remaining receptive and attentive to cultural assumptions and values appears to be a strong capacity that impact participants' lives and help them to address changes and take an initiative in guidance and implementation of transcultural learning at a broader level for building inclusive place of working and living. To achieve this, participants agreed that they have a vision, skills and incentives and have to continue to be proactive and engage other members and leaders in their workplace and in the community to sustain and further develop resources and action plan. As some of them said in interviews the sporadic activities could not result in inclusion. When there is a lack of knowledge, skills, or motivation, an anxiety, resistance, and frustration occur; then, is not realistic to achieve inclusion.

These findings are consistent with the transformative learning literature regarding the reciprocal connection between personal and social impacts of transformative learning. From the notion that transformation includes the how, from what, by whom, and for what (Taylor & Snyder, 2012), transcultural development as a perspective transformation is a reciprocal process that occurs at the intersection between the personal and the social. It is a product of others (social recognition, relationships, and interactions) and of personal change, which potentially leads to a greater sense of individual responsibility for and about others. According to Scott (2003) and Chin (2006), this is social accountability. Social accountability seems to indicate a moral outcome, possibly reflective of a greater empathy toward others, a commitment to growth, and a higher level of human liberation, which is associated with transcultural competence outcomes.

Here, I bring another idea from Epstein's work, the concept of interference is crucial for transcultural experience and impacts the inclusive multi-dimensional space. Interference, discussed by Berry and Epstein (1999) and later elaborated in Epstein's (1999, 2009, 2012) work, lies at the foundation of the transcultural project and creates a new interpersonal and transcultural community to which we belong not because we are similar but because we are different. Through interference, differences complement each other. Epstein emphasizes that different cultures should not be satisfied with merely tolerating one another but rather they should be creatively involved with one another. Transcultural transcendence happens through the interference of one culture with another while self-deconstructing and self-transforming one cultural identity: "every culture is intrinsically insufficient and needs interaction with other cultures to compensate for its deficiency" (2009, p, 334). In this sense, when cultures interact, they create completeness and mutuality among cultures, consequently, complementing the society where cultures function. As such, interference is a progressive, inclusive process, where people can self-differentiate without losing their own identity, but instead adds to it. Data from the participants and observation correspond to the meaning of interference that Berry and Epstein (1999) propose and delve into the word semantic:

"Interference" has the same Greek and Latin root as the word "difference" but while "differ" means to carry apart, "interfere" means to bear or bring between. Within a transcultural model, spaces between diverging cultures are filled by the effects of their interference. Interference produces not unification but rather more diversification within existing diversity; differences no longer isolate cultures from each other but rather open between them perspective of both self-differentiation and mutual involvement. (p. 9)

Interference produces a kind of wholeness, an inclusion that acknowledges differences and makes possible self-differentiation and mutual involvement to coexist and this can happen in a transcultural framework, which is a higher level than multiculturalism, according to Epstein. His idea is

very similar to O'Sullivan's (2012, 2018) understanding of inclusion in transformative learning from integral and planetary perspective.

Within the cosmological context, O'Sullivan (2018) challenges societal hierarchy and calls for coherence of ourselves, our universe, and our relations to each other, for expanding the horizon of our consciousness. His conception of integral development transcends the limitations of western ideas and links to the universe, planet, earth, community, and the personal world as dynamic wholeness. This approach is imperative for all members to enter communities of greater inclusion that "operate not on the basis of sameness but on the creativity of difference" (O'Sullivan, 2018, p.8).

The evidence from participants correlates with the literature in the way in which they described the understanding of inclusion and their individual role in fostering inclusion: by engaging in transcultural learning on an individual and organizational level. Almost everyone demonstrated personal confidence in and commitment to learning when self-evaluating their level of cultural competence. Moreover, participants consciously described how and why they achieved this stage and expressed personal and collective responsibilities for building an inclusive community, where subjectivity is honoured and differences are respected.

Finally, the process of transcultural transformative learning and the stories from the participants have common patterns with the archetypal hero's journey described by Campbell (2004): a hero with a special power is called to adventure, moves beyond his ordinary place of comfort, receives a supernatural aid, crosses a threshold, travels a road of trials, encounters a goddess, and experiences the wholeness of the world and a transformation of consciousness. Similarly, the 'heroes' in my case take the adventure of learning transculture, and, accepting challenges, traveling, and working, they learn and they feel fears of the unknown, but they have the courage to commit to their journey, guided or supported by mentors and friends. However, I disagree that Campbell's formula is always applicable and the patterns can be used as checklist. Specifically, in transcultural journey, individuals share stories that

are unique and different. In addition, Campbell's myth analysis is based on Indo-European tradition, so Asian or African mythology is excluded. Then, different traditions may result in different path of journeys. What about a hero who is greatest because decided to follow the path that no one else has tried? Or a group of people that decide to work together to change the status quo? Why not a heroine? Why always Campbell refers to masculine and women (e.g., goddess, princess) are goals in hero's journey? Campbell (2004) uses the phrase "follow the bliss" (p.101), but what if someone is deprived or unable to follow the bliss due to different social circumstances? By raising these questions related to unequal representation or ignoring cultural differences, my point is not to devalue Campbell's work, rather preventing from romanticizing and using his story-formula as a bible.

I agree with the transformative notion of hero's journey, seeking new knowledge, often by disrupting comfort. At the end of the journey, the hero is never the same again, has grown as a person, and achieves self-realization and competence. The participants' experiences are stories of an adventure, full of trails that lead to new ways of thinking, communicating, and interacting, because willingness to learn is immanent for transcultural transformative learning. All took the journey self-motivated to learn, to explore, to teach others, to go beyond a discourse of reality grounded in a taken-for-granted bounded cultural scheme of reference, and, thus, to make changes in the society.

Culture structures narratives, creates stories. In turns, narratives structure culture, reveal emotional engagement, how we form our world views, which impact how we perceive and act toward others. In this way, the parallel with Campbell's hero is valuable. The result of the miraculous passage and return of the hero is the freedom to live consciously and peacefully with the universal will, having the transcultural skills to live at the crossroads of cultures and to navigate through appropriately and competently. Indeed, here is the analogy between transformative transcultural learning and hero's journey.

5.6. Summary

This chapter connects transcultural discourse from scholars' and participants' perspectives. The transcultural paradigm offers an alternative humanistic perspective grounded in a social constructivist, transformative learning, and philosophical view whereby social collaboration, coadaptation, and coexistence offer a path for humanity's progress and community inclusion. Overall, in this discussion, the participants' thoughts and views about the phenomenon of the study support the literature.

Transculturality is the sum of qualities relating to being a transcultural individual, such as an ability to see the world in a way that relates to others with limited prejudicial thinking, to transcend one's own culture to understand and see the merits of another culture, to bring people of different backgrounds together. Participants' open-mindedness and receptiveness to the other are due to their capacity to share an experience of life that brings individuals together, being emotionally supportive, curious to learn and explore, to listen and interact. In this aspect, the humanistic perspective of the transcultural individual resides.

From this humanistic stance the motivation to develop transculturality coincides more with intrinsic rather than extrinsic motivations, emphasizing inner growth and a self-determination to learn, triggered by prior experiences. The role of greater understanding and support is recognized for enhancing an intrinsic motivation that satisfies people's need for autonomy and social relatedness and to achieve integration and transcultural competence. If these qualities are integrated with external factors to learn, they may have a positive long-term effect and engage people in transcultural learning.

Transculturation, then, is designated as a holistic process of learning and exchange, from which a new reality emerges, transformed and complex, that is, it is not a mechanical agglomeration of traits, not a mosaic, but a phenomenon—constructed, original, and unique. Although most of the participants were not familiar with the term transcultural, they examined different steps in the process of learning they have experienced and constructed a meaning that resonates with the literature. As such, the transcultural

process of continuity comprises cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions, following through inquiry, framing, positionality, dialogue, reflection, and action.

Taking a transcultural journey, individuals transform themselves and become agents of change in their own environment. Participants revealed outcomes of transcultural learning that benefit both the individual's personal growth and that of an organization or society. They emphasized variables, including self-awareness, authenticity, communication, building rapport, trust and empathy, collaboration, and empowerment. Enriched with transcultural competence, participants moved beyond their own cultural socialization, expanded their cultural horizons, and, furthermore, contributed their knowledge for greater effectiveness and community inclusion.

As scholars have remarked, transculture is a different model of cultural development that transcends the borders of traditional cultures. It is a mindset in our highly diverse contemporary society that offers a conceptual landscape for considering cultures as relational webs and flows in active interaction with one another (Geertz, 1973). Hence, transculture is the culture of transcultural individuals, a philosophy, ideology, and a way of life.

Chapter 6: Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1. Overall Conclusions

The overall objective of this study was to explore the process of acquiring transcultural competence by adult learners and how they use their transcultural skills and knowledge to empower their personal growth and foster societal inclusion. The conclusions from this study follow the research questions and findings and therefore address four areas: 1) understanding transcultural competence and the qualities of the transcultural person; 2) factors and practices that motivate adults to engage in transcultural learning; 3) the process of developing transcultural learning and learners' transformations; and 4) the impact of transcultural competence on the personal and professional lives of participants, and how they transfer transcultural knowledge for fostering inclusion in workplace and in society. What follows is the general conclusions drawn from this research, some research implications and recommendations, and my final researcher's reflections.

1. Understanding transcultural competence and the qualities of the transcultural person

My research concludes that transcultural competence is a multidimensional process that requires the development of personal qualities such as open-mindedness, curiosity toward different cultures, and knowledge about different languages and history, together with an ability for emotional attachment and support, reflection, and flexibility in navigating different cultural experiences. However, the findings underlined that such qualities can be developed through immersion and engagement in real cultural interactions, by being good listeners and story tellers, transparently sharing their world views and changing their frames of references. I outlined the multiple transcultural dimensions (see Table 3) according to three categories—cognitive, affective, and social—which are relevant to different paths of adult learning. For example, the cognitive dimension is comprised of open-mindedness, knowledge about the world, proficiency in more than just the language of host society, awareness, and reflectivity. This dimension also encompasses the importance of analytical skills and the ability to apply different cultural perspectives in a transcultural context. The affective dimension relates to humility, empathy,

sensitivity, and freedom in constructing and choosing multiple identities without opposing each other. The social dimension refers to real cultural exposure, communicating and interacting flexibly and comfortably in different cultural settings and maintaining positive relationships. By describing transcultural qualities, participants were able to expand their knowledge about transculture as a level of competence that is more adequate to the cultural dynamics in the contemporary society.

2. Factors and practices that motivate adults to engage in transcultural learning

The second finding revealed why participants are motivated to learn and develop their transcultural competence. The research outlined intrinsic and extrinsic factors and activities that encourage their learning engagement. The dominance of internal motivation can be explained by the need for personal growth, family relationships, and adaptation to a new society and working environment, equally valid for immigrants and Canadian-born. Different attitudes were expressed regarding external reasons for learning. The results show that if an administratively prescribed, mandatory approach is forceful, it will not result in transcultural enhancement. Especially if the professional authorities do not have a clear idea about the strategy and sustainability of transcultural learning, it could create exclusion and a fear of diversity. Additionally, several stories revealed how family experiences (both positive and negative) could be turned into a motivational factor for developing transcultural knowledge and further promoting its value and benefits to others. The overall agreement was that transcultural learning and practices should be promoted in all levels (e.g., work, education, community) for both members of mainstream society and newcomers with relevant approaches according to the context. Aligned with self-determination theory, it can be concluded that the concept of motivation and interest in learning (on both personal and organizational levels) refers to a complex system recognizing individual experience, personal emotions, cognitive knowledge, and engagement in relationships.

3. The process of developing transcultural learning and learners' transformations

The third finding is focused on constructing transcultural learning as a process. This study describes transcultural learning as a holistic process in which learners invite their previous and current knowledge, individual observations, experiences, feelings and interaction to the process of cultivating relationships across cultures, developing skills and awareness, social sensitivity, and humility. Participants — immigrants and native-born, discovered different paths and opportunities for transcultural learning that transformed them. In this sense, differences between the two groups do not contradict them, neither impact negatively the learning process, societal engagement and belonging. Rather this study acknowledges transcultural competence as vital for all members of our society, without differentiating between them based on ethnicity, race, religion, and social privilege or disadvantage. Connecting these findings with transformative and transcultural theories led to the construction of learning paths that involve inquiry, framing, positionality and progressing to dialogue, reflection, and competent action. As such, the transcultural process is coherent; it relates to multiple forces that connect the local to the global, challenging taken-for-granted frames of reference, expanding world views, integrating new practices, and transforming individuals. Additionally, each of those critical ingredients corresponds to the cognitive, affective, and social dimensions of learning. And each learning step is closely connected to the learning stages outlined in transformative theory. There is common ground to be found here between transformative and transcultural theories in terms of how to view the learning process; both see it as cohesive and spiraling, a positive and constructive deconstruction, and involving ongoing change and action in sociocultural surroundings.

4. The impact of transcultural competence on the personal and professional lives of participants, and how they transfer transcultural knowledge for fostering inclusion in workplace and in society.

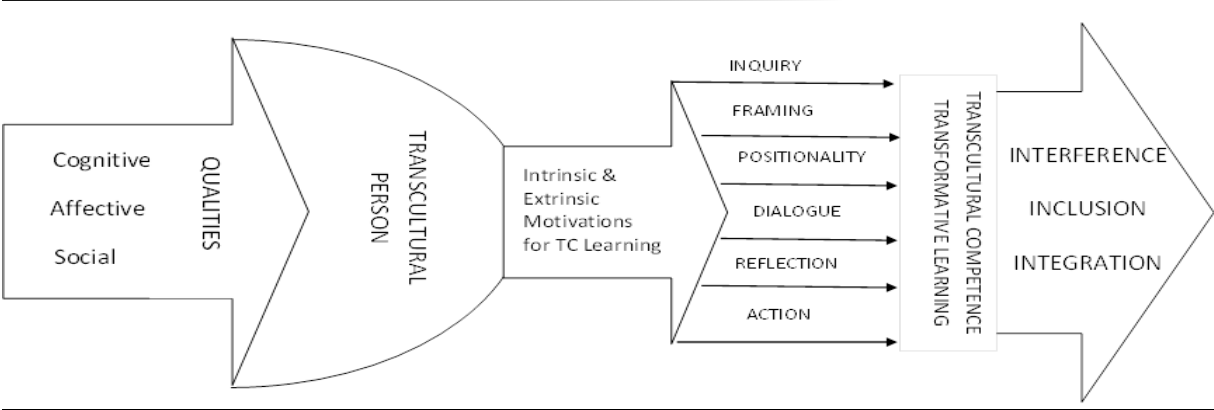
All participants agreed on the positive impact of experiencing transcultural learning, from individual empowerment to empowering communities to build upon integration and inclusion. Many participants demonstrated confidence in their transcultural competence, which was evidenced in their self-evaluations. The age and education of the participants were also a contributing factor in

considerably higher levels of competence. Transcultural competence is a foundational basis for inclusion and participants feel obligated to be proactive and to advocate for and promote it at a broader level. They do this as mentors, supporters, educators, taking leadership role for reviewing and recommending changes in organizational policies and strategies to create inclusion; they applied transcultural knowledge and vision in every-day interaction and communication with humanistic approach.

A deficiency in transcultural knowledge has been identified in government policies of integration, education, and professional development in business organizations, where the implications of this study will be valuable. With its reciprocal connection between personal and organizational impact, the fourth finding corresponds to the theoretical concept of perspective transformation, meaning that transcultural competence occurs in the intersection between the personal and the social. And this coincides with the transcultural notion of interference, a progressive, inclusive process through which people express their multiple identities without opposing or losing cultural qualities, but rather adding to and creating a sense of completeness and inclusion. Thus, by enriching one’s self through a transcultural journey, individuals become agents of change and empower the community that they belong to,

The next figure (Figure 1) visualizes the transcultural model for personal development and social impact for fostering inclusion, derived from the research findings and grounded in the relevant theories.

Figure 1: Transcultural Model for Personal Development and Social Impact



The idea of continuity is illustrated through the connections between the different stages: developing transcultural qualities, outlining the motivations for learning, navigating through inquiry, framing, positionality, dialogue, reflection, resulting in competent actions that further lead to cultural interference, integration, and inclusion. The graphic captures the complexity of the process, with its multiple dimensions that may overlap or contradict in different times and contexts. And this process does not reach a final destination; it is constantly going on, reaching new horizons of knowledge and implementation by reflecting the cultural dynamics of the society, transnational movements, and local and global changes. Therefore, this study has multiple implications, which are discussed in the following section. These implications could generate new ideas for further research and subjects of dispute.

6.2. Recommendations and Research Implications

The transcultural transformative model of learning proposed in this study aligns with the new realities and demands of a rapidly diversifying and transnational world characterized by new mobility patterns, interconnectedness, and post-ethnicity (Fleras, 2018). Furthermore, the transcultural notion of understanding cultures as self-differentiated but mutually involved, without isolating them from each other corresponds to the humanistic interferential model in the study of cultures proposed by Bakhtin (1986), Berry and Epstein (1999), and Epstein (2012). My research offers a theoretical perspective and a vision to aimed at dissolving cultural and ethnic binaries and the duality of opposing local to global, national to international, particular to universal, and mainstream to newcomers, us to them. As such, it could apply to changing the governance model of immigrant integration policies and practices by raising awareness of intersecting identities, multiple social layers and involvements, and by developing knowledge for living together with/in/through complex differences without drifting apart (Fleras, 2018; Vetrovec, 2019).

The new notion of identity and belonging, from culturally specific and nationally exclusive to traversing borders and interspatial connections, calls for revising traditional identity theory and conventional thinking about sociocultural construction. A future in-depth exploration might focus on

what it means to be a transcultural individual from an existential sense of being. Another approach for future research could be to focus on how the transcultural individual integrates multiple time and space perceptions, living in a transcultural setting, characterized by movement across geographic, cultural, linguistic, and temporary space. Next, acknowledging transculture as a meaning perspective requires new interpretations of the language, particularly reformulating *diverse society* as no longer be described as diverse. More accurately, it is “*complexly diverse*” (Fleras, 2018, p. 17), referring to the interplay of multiple identities and attachments, socioeconomic and demographic profiles, and a sense of belonging that is not only between identified groups and communities but also within, emphasizing complicated engagements. For example, Fleras (2018) suggests framing diversity in contemporary society by focusing on the move, as a process, rather as a thing and a noun. Accordingly, more conceptualizing is needed in defining dimensions of inclusivity as a principle, a position, a value, and a reality, in the context of culture, power, and inequality.

This study did not delve into a comparison of transculturalism and multiculturalism as a governance model outlining pros and cons. Scholars (Epstein, 2009; Fleras, 2018; Mansouri & Muraca, 2014) offer different views of how durable multiculturalism is and how it should be theoretically attuned in the world of multidimensional attachments and new mobility movements. Thinking in this direction, more research should be conducted about rethinking and advancing governance policy on migration and integration according to the transcultural context. Embracing this mindset will shift the discourse in the humanities, sociology, political science, and economics. Recognizing transcultural development as an individual and collective process might be difficult to manage, predict, and evaluate because of its complexity, interdependence, and interconnectivity. More specifically, my focus is on the implication of transcultural concept in educational practices and in adult learning.

6.2.1. Implications for education.

Today, education can no longer be understood as national only. In a transcultural view, education recognizes the diverse positionalities and subjectivities of different groups in relation to micro, meso,

and macro socio-political, historical and cultural contexts, without dichotomizing and stigmatizing. Indeed, transculturally competent educators and learners will be able to engage in dialogue and implement diverse forms of learning, communicating, and interacting. Through reflectivity and self-reflectivity, they will deconstruct taken-for-granted frames of reference and create new understanding of self and others, not as a product, but as producers of culture. Incorporating activities that cross borders of space, cultures, and languages will create an inclusive environment for learning. Then, differences will be resources and participants will be mediators that bridge their experiences with new knowledge and will enhance the process of learning and transforming. Adopting transcultural education will require a safe space for sharing experience and stimulating dialogue; we will need to develop relevant evaluation strategies and new responsibilities for educators and learners. Evaluation strategies should depend on the context and should align with the holistic approach toward transcultural transformative learning, including cognitive, affective, and social-competence development. Sociocultural transformative learning is not a neutral objective process; therefore, it cannot be evaluated in a straightforward manner. Mezirow (1991) suggested that only the process can be evaluated, not the product, which is valid for transcultural learning. Observation of how participants engage in inclusive and reflective dialogue may give some indicators for transcultural learning. In addition, self-evaluation, self-reports, and narratives might be relevant forms for assessing transcultural competencies.

A core element in creating a transcultural transformative learning setting is the building of trust. Earlier research (Mezirow, 2000; Taylor, 2009a; Taylor & Jarecke, 2009) indicated that this factor is challenging to establish in transformative learning. It might be even more challenging in a transcultural discourse requiring inquiry and self-inquiry and an understanding of different positionalities, inequalities between learners and between teacher and students, and the sharing of reflections. In my study, I outlined some transcultural qualities and a path for developing transcultural competence, but more research is needed with regard to what activities could stimulate openness to dialogue, willingness to self-disclose, or to share one's own story. What are the initial strategies to create trust, to move beyond

one's comfort zone, and apply the model? Including teachers, parents, community members and leaders, who are also learners alongside students, will foster positive dialogue and an environment where all participants will build positive relations in both the schools and communities and will nurture trust.

Another important element to consider while implementing the transcultural model in education is empathy. Engendering empathy and compassion among learners and teachers is required to assess alternative values and beliefs and to build relationships and inclusion. Participants indicated that developing awareness both of self and others, interacting with people different than themselves, might be risky. 'Trying to be in others' shoes' is not always easy. Looking at it as a mutual process might be more challenging when it involves teachers and learners. Developing self-awareness and empathy will lead to a greater appreciation for both parties while inviting learners and educators to engage in transcultural learning. Future investigations will be beneficial to identify challenges that educators face when taking an empathetic stance with learners and how to manage empathy when fostering transcultural transformative learning. How emotional intelligence and social justice themes (e.g., human rights, oppression and inequity, the plight of refugees, trauma impact, and planetary sustainability) can be integrated in the literacy? By developing transcultural texts that will encourage empathy, will engage students in sharing their experience, and will help students improve their reading, listening and speaking skills. Then, transcultural literacy can serve as a tool for celebrating identities and critically engage in the multiple and contested history of people and places.

Reflection (self-reflection and critical reflection) is a fundamental part of transcultural learning because it offers learners and educators the opportunity to describe their experience in innovative ways and to realize their potential for becoming transculturally competent, responsible, and liberated. Dialogic and integrative, reflection creates shared representation of experience through a dynamic interaction between the educator and learners. In this interaction, teacher's role shifts from being a manager and instructor, to a challenger and supporter, an advocate, a researcher, a co-learner and a facilitator in all levels of education. Teachers will need to learn how to navigate smoothly and flexibly through these

roles. And this process is non-linear, complex, and influenced by memories, experience and emotions. Reflection provides a framework for integrating all these aspects, it can be communicated and discussed, and can lead to empowering transformation at personal and social levels. Additionally, reflection enables the linking of personal experiences in social context and allows transformative action to occur in a transcultural environment. Fook (2011) proposes critical reflection as a method to research experience. Such a methodological approach could better represent the complex and fluid nature of transcultural experience and transformative actions.

Epstein (2012) cited Bakhtin in contending that education is a human interaction and a dialogic cognition, “becoming-through-knowledge,” “where social and existential dimensions intersect” (p. 291). Drawing from this statement, I argue that transcultural learning, with its holistic notion, can preserve the humanistic core of education and human development in our increasingly digitalized life, where advanced technologies and artificial intelligence are indispensable.

6.2.2. Implications for professional and organizational growth.

This study offers ideas for individual development; for practices in the workplace for better usage of talents in organizations; and for facilitating sociocultural adaptation, interaction, and inclusion. By informing individuals about transcultural phenomenon, they will learn how to integrate multiple cultures and identities in their lives and have healthy relationships. However, this requires practice in cross-cultural settings, deep self-reflection, and the monitoring of one’s own behaviours and reactions. Acquiring transcultural qualities, individuals can serve as mentors and mediators for colleagues who struggle with cultural differences and communication across cultures. Empowered with such skills and knowledge, transcultural individuals can serve as agents of inclusion. Organizations and businesses could support ongoing learning initiatives and implement internal policies for the progress of cultural integration. A transcultural worldview will help international businesses to bridge gaps between local norms, standards, perceptions and working habits. Furthermore, human resource departments can establish competent hiring practices for recruiting, training, and retaining international talents. Future

research can explore inclusive practices by organizations and evaluate the effectiveness of the tools and strategies for developing transcultural competence and inclusion in workplace. Transculturally competent workers and leaders with cognitive, affective, and social knowledge will be more adaptable and flexible, better prepared to face technological progress in all spheres. They will be more career-competitive, answering the increasing demand for human skills (e.g., cultural, emotional, and social intelligence) in our era of high technology and artificial intelligence. Thus, organizational management derived from a transcultural humanistic approach and driven by a responsible vision and mission will better serve social and economic demands and prosper on local and global stages.

6.3. Researcher's Reflections

In Chapter 3, I discussed how transformation occurs during interpretive research and further explored how participants transformed by acquiring new knowledge. Here, I will talk about my transformation as a researcher going through this journey illuminated by new knowledge and new research ideas. I see this research as collaborative in many forms: between myself and the participants, my colleagues in the workplace, my advisor, and other researchers that I met at many academic conferences. Altogether, these collaborations helped me to plan and understand more deeply the research phenomenon, as well how it will be implemented in practice and in society. Moreover, this research journey was reflexive and transformative for me, enhancing my self-awareness, my being, and doing. Referring to Higgs and Titchen (2011), as a researcher, I created the epistemology and the ontology through rich knowing of the investigated topic and of myself. By ontology, I mean my way of being a researcher: respectfully balancing power in my relationships and being ethically responsible and empathetic, embodying these core values to produce rigorous and trustworthy research. From an epistemological perspective, I achieved this by blending different types of knowledge (e.g., cognitive, professional, reflexive), switching flexibly from one level of knowledge to another depending on context and situations, and by being creative and being a human in my research and in my interaction.

Higgs and Titchen (2011) described this blending and interplay of knowledge in qualitative research as “a choreographed piece, but with the freedom to let go and be creative,” (p. 305) which gives the researcher the capacity to dance and reveal all aspects of self. Analogically, Epstein (2012) uses the choreographic approach to transformative thinking and education; he describes the process of transculture as a colour palette, which an artist combines creatively in painting. Similarly, an individual can blend colours to produce a self-portrait of cultural identities that do not oppose but transcend. Indeed, both descriptions are relevant to my reflexive, creative journey, opening the way to transformation, illumination, and liberation.

The transcultural model of learning that I presented based on findings from research participants applies to me as well. I did not just observe, interpret, analyze, and report; I learned through this interaction. I learned about different cultural perspectives, experiences, learning paths, challenges, and good practices. The stories that I heard triggered me to revise my stereotypes and reaffirm my values, made me conscious about situations that I previously neglected or undermined because of my unconscious biases or privilege and positionality. Nevertheless, some of the stories resonate with episodes of my life, my frustrations and fears when I arrived in a new, unfamiliar cultural environment. I recognized that the relationships with participants are as important as the research itself. Therefore, I was very conscious when I reported the research, in a way that demonstrates respect, compassion, honesty, humility, and transparency.

Knowledge is power (Foucault, 1980), and knowing that as a researcher I have power, I use it very respectfully and try to empower my participants by providing space for dialogue, reflection, and shared knowledge. By listening patiently and clarifying some terminology, I ensured mutual understanding. Negotiating different viewpoints instead of opposing them allowed participants to feel valuable, to feel that their voices were being heard. Operating with reflexivity allowed me to achieve the research goal not just by answering the research questions, but by understanding and developing practices for fostering inclusion at an individual level as well as on institutional, organizational, and

societal levels. On the one hand, I acquired knowledge through interviewing people and through engagement with phenomenon under investigation. On the other, the generated knowledge enhanced my research capability and I gained new research ideas. Simultaneously, the generated knowledge through engagement illuminated fellow participants about the process of transformative learning, which can be used by practitioners and people in society to change practices and policies. Hence, the findings in my research mirror this process of transcultural learning: developing transcultural qualities triggered by different motivations to learn, transforming oneself, becoming an agent for change in an organization/ society, and promoting inclusion.

The purpose, then, of qualitative research, as outlined by Higgs and Titchen (2011) as “increasing understanding of practices in their broader sense, improving practice, and enhancing our own knowing, doing, being, and becoming as researchers” (p. 307), aligns with my reflections and discoveries. Journeying through inquiry, framing, positioning myself toward others, having dialogue, reflecting, reacting, and acting, I see myself enriched and transformed, moving through the spiral of transcultural learning. Like Campbell’s Hero, enriched with this research experience, I am eager to share my knowledge and educate others.

I am a person-centred individual. I love social interaction. I love listening to people’s stories. It might be because of my professional life or perhaps it is just my nature. This explains why I have been attracted to qualitative research methods: because it is extremely complex, just as one’s self. To explore and interpret personal character and one’s life story, the qualitative researcher has to be a very sensitive individual, reflexive, and well-developed personally and professionally. It is not just learning the craft of qualitative methods, but to immerse myself in the study, in my research questions, with passion and self-knowing. This occurred to me after every interview, after each learning session I facilitated, and through the collaboration and feedback from my participants, colleagues, and mentors. I conducted this research with an idea of how it could contribute to the growth and transformation of individuals living in a super-diverse, dynamic world, at the borders of the local and global nexus. Additionally, I was seeking to

develop a practice for organizational and community growth, for building an inclusive place where people feel belonged and respected. With this thesis, I offer what I theorized from my learning journey as a researcher.

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Appendix A

Interview Guide

1. Tell me about the cultural-competence learning activities that you have participated
2. What motivated you to take part in them?
3. How do you understand cultural competence?
4. If you have to self-evaluate your cultural competence, where will you position yourself in the scale from 1 to 10 if 1 is lowest and 10 is highest.
5. Tell me, in details, about the situations/ experiences that have triggered your cultural curiosity and engaged you in learning activities.
6. Where do you look for information about different cultures, cultural awareness?
7. Tell me about a learning experience that had a positive impact on your personal or professional life dealing with diverse cultures.
8. How do you negotiate and navigate through a cultural conflict or misunderstanding due to different cultural values and communication styles? (How did you feel in such moments?)
9. What kinds of practices/ values/ behaviours have you changed in your life because of your cultural competence?
10. Tell me about your current cultural interactions in your personal life and work experience
11. What kinds of challenges (barriers) do you experience learning and practicing cultural competence?
12. What else would you like to share about your cultural competence?

Appendix B

Consent Form for Focus Group



Consent Form (Focus Group)

Name of Researcher, Faculty, Department:

Sinela Jurkova, Werklund School of Education

Supervisor:

Dr. Shibao Guo, Werklund School of Education

Title of Project:

Doctoral Thesis: Transcultural Competence as Transformative Learning that Fosters an Inclusive Society

This consent form, a copy of which has been given to you, is only part of the process of informed consent. If you want more details about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

The University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board has approved this research study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this focus group is to collect data for a Doctoral thesis on the above topic. You have been asked to take part in because your experience relates to the topic identified above. The study will explore how adults (immigrants and Canadian-born living in Calgary) acquire transcultural competence by participating in different learning activities and the extent to which it leads toward an integrative and inclusive society.

What Will I Be Asked To Do?

You will be asked to take part in a focus group lasting approximately 60-90 min.. This will take place and time that is convenient to you. You will be asked some questions regarding what helped you most to build your cultural competence, any challenges and benefits you have experienced while participating in learning activities. The focus group will be audio recorded unless you choose not to have your participation to be recorded. You will remain anonymous through a pseudonym of your own choosing. Your participation is completely voluntary. You may refuse to participate altogether or in parts of the study. You may decline to answer any and all questions, and may withdraw from the study without penalty.

What Type of Personal Information Will Be Collected?

Should you agree to participate, you will be asked to provide your gender, age, ethnicity, education and profession.

All the information you provide will remain confidential. The results will be presented on such a form that you will not be identified.

There are several options for you to consider if you decide to take part in this research. You can choose all, some, or none of them. Please review each of these options and choose Yes or No:”

I grant permission to be audio taped: Yes: ___ No: ___

I wish to remain anonymous: Yes: ___ No: ___

I wish to remain anonymous, but you may refer to me by a pseudonym: Yes: ___ No: ___

The pseudonym I choose for myself is: _____

Are there Risks or Benefits if I Participate?

There is no risk to you in taking part in the focus group. You will not incur any costs and you will not be paid for your involvement.

What Happens to the Information I Provide?

Participation is completely voluntary, anonymous and confidential. You may withdraw from the focus group after it has started and up to one week after the focus group has taken place. To withdraw simply let the researcher know that you wish to withdraw. If you withdraw the information you provided will not be used as part of the thesis and the information will be destroyed. There will be no penalty to you for withdrawal.

No one except the researcher and her supervisor will be allowed to see or hear the recorded discussion from the focus group. The data will be kept in a locked cabinet only accessible by the researcher and her supervisor. The anonymous data will be stored on a computer disk protected by password and accessible only by the researcher.

Signatures

Your signature on this form indicates that 1) you understand to your satisfaction the information provided to you about your participation in this research project, and 2) you agree to participate in the research project.

In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the investigators, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from this research project at any time. You should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

Participant’s Name: (please print) _____

Participant’s Signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher’s Name: (please print) _____

Researcher’s Signature: _____ Date: _____

Questions/Concerns

If you have any further questions or want clarification regarding this research and/or your participation, please contact:

*Mrs. Sinela Jurkova
Werklund School of Education
E-mail: ssjurkov@ucalgary.ca
Phone: 403-244-2298*

*Dr. Shibao Guo
Werklund School of Education
E-mail: guos@ucalgary.ca
Phone: 403-220-8275*

If you have any concerns about the way you've been treated as a participant, please contact the Research Ethics Analyst, Research Services Office, University of Calgary at (403) 210-9863; email cfreb@ucalgary.ca

A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference. The investigator has kept a copy of the consent form.

Appendix C

Consent Form for Interview



Consent Form

Name of Researcher, Faculty, Department:

Sinela Jurkova, Werklund School of Education

Supervisor:

Dr. Shibao Guo, Werklund School of Education

Title of Project:

Doctoral Thesis: Transcultural Competence as Transformative Learning that Fosters an Inclusive Society

This consent form, a copy of which has been given to you, is only part of the process of informed consent. If you want more details about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

The University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board has approved this research study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this focus group is to collect data for a Doctoral thesis on the above topic. You have been asked to take part in because your experience relates to the topic identified above. The study will explore how adults (immigrants and Canadian-born living in Calgary) acquire transcultural competence by participating in different learning activities and the extent to which it leads toward an integrative and inclusive society.

What Will I Be Asked To Do?

You will be asked to take part in a interview lasting approximately 60-90 min.. This will take place and time that is convenient to you. You will be asked some questions regarding what helped you most to build your cultural competence, any challenges and benefits you have experienced while participating in learning activities. The interview will be audio recorded unless you choose not to have your participation to be recorded. You will remain anonymous through a pseudonym of your own choosing. Your participation is completely voluntary. You may refuse to participate altogether or in parts of the study. You may decline to answer any and all questions, and may withdraw from the study without penalty.

What Type of Personal Information Will Be Collected?

Should you agree to participate, you will be asked to provide your gender, age, ethnicity, education and profession. All the information you provide will remain confidential. The results will be presented on such a form that you will not be identified.

There are several options for you to consider if you decide to take part in this research. You can choose all, some, or none of them. Please review each of these options and choose Yes or No.”

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I wish to remain anonymous, but you may refer to me by a pseudonym: Yes: ___ No: ___

The pseudonym I choose for myself is: _____

Are there Risks or Benefits if I Participate?

There is no risk to you in taking part in the focus group. You will not incur any costs and you will not be paid for your involvement.

What Happens to the Information I Provide?

Participation is completely voluntary, anonymous and confidential. You may withdraw from the interview after it has started and up to one week after the focus group has taken place. To withdraw simply let the researcher know that you wish to withdraw. If you withdraw the information you provided will not be used as part of the thesis and the information will be destroyed. There will be no penalty to you for withdrawal.

No one except the researcher and her supervisor will be allowed to see or hear the recorded discussion from the interview. The data will be kept in a locked cabinet only accessible by the researcher and her supervisor. The anonymous data will be stored on a computer disk protected by password and accessible only by the researcher.

Signatures

Your signature on this form indicates that 1) you understand to your satisfaction the information provided to you about your participation in this research project, and 2) you agree to participate in the research project.

In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the investigators, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from this research project at any time. You should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

Participant's Name: (please print) _____

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher's Name: (please print) _____

Researcher's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Questions/Concerns

If you have any further questions or want clarification regarding this research and/or your participation, please contact:

Mrs. Sinela Jurkova
Werklund School of Education
E-mail: ssjurkov@ucalgary.ca
Phone: 403-244-2298

Dr. Shibao Guo
Werklund School of Education
E-mail: guos@ucalgary.ca
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If you have any concerns about the way you've been treated as a participant, please contact the Research Ethics Analyst, Research Services Office, University of Calgary at (403) 210-9863; email cfreb@ucalgary.ca.

A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference. The investigator has kept a copy of the consent form.