Canadian Reconciliation by Racialized Settlers: Visible Minority Teachers' Responses to Decolonization, Indigenization, & Reconciliation in Alberta

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RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT

The graduate student research referred to in this paper was conducted as part of the course-based Masters of Education in Educational Studies program, Faculty of Education, University of Alberta.

As part of understanding the meaning and process of educational change, students are asked to conduct a small research assignment on their chosen topic. This research assignment is planned during the second summer residency of the MES program and then undertaken and completed during the semester that the students are registered in the EDU 515 course. An experienced instructor with a doctoral degree works with the students, as a class, and guides them throughout the research experience.

The students' research assignments comply with the University of Alberta Standards for the Protection of Human Research Participants and the instructors of the EDU 515 course hold the ethics approval to have the class complete this research assignment.

Please note that, unlike research conducted for a Masters thesis, the research completed in the MES program is a course-based assignment under the umbrella of a class ethics approval. For this reason, findings from the research assignment are discussed from this more specific context and the research is referred to as an "assignment", rather than a study.

For further information on the Masters of Education in Educational Studies program, the research assignment, or to contact the Program Director, please see our website: uab.ca/mes

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This research project explored the thoughts, attitudes, and lived experiences of four visible minority teachers at an urban charter school in Alberta, to report on racialized settlers' perspectives on decolonization, Indigenization, and reconciliation in Canada. The central question for this inquiry was: *How are visible minority teachers responding to decolonization, Indigenization, and reconciliation?* To answer this question, the following sub-questions were prepared: (a) how do visible minority teachers understand the concept of settler privilege? and (b) what do visible minority teachers know regarding Indigenous knowledges? The findings from this research assignment suggested that racialized settlers face additional barriers when compared to White/Caucasian settlers, to engage and contribute significantly and meaningfully to decolonization, Indigenization, and reconciliation. More research is needed to further explore this phenomenon surrounding racialized settlers in Canada to fully understand their circumstances and to examine how their unique situations in society could enlighten the complex processes surrounding the intercultural relationships present within Canada's multicultural mosaic. This paper is concluded with the personal and professional implications of this research assignment and the Master of Education in Educational Studies (MES) program on the author.

Literature Review

This literature review synthesizes peer reviewed qualitative and quantitative research along with professional documents to provide an overview of decolonization, Indigenization, and reconciliation, with a focus on visible minority Canadians and the education sector in Alberta. As teachers and school leaders in Alberta must demonstrate ongoing understanding of Indigenous knowledges and apply them to professional practices as outlined in the Teacher Quality Standard (Alberta Education, 2018) and the Leadership Quality Standard (Alberta Education, 2020), a growing number of teaching resources and professional development opportunities for the

Indigenization of education have been created in recent years. However, the focus of such developments largely centered around the dichotomy of Eurocentric and Indigenous worldviews, as scholars such as Hiller (2017) admitted that more research is needed for "differently positioned settlers" (p. 432), including visible minority Canadians. Additionally, Datta (2020) cautioned that newcomers to Canada may unknowingly but instinctively be adopting the mainstream Eurocentrism that was prevalent in Canadian institutions, which further perpetuates Eurocentric colonialism in Canada. Thus, this literature review will focus on visible minority Canadians and explore the gap in understanding this population's relationship to decolonization, Indigenization, and reconciliation in Canada.

Situating Visible Minorities in Colonial Canada

Visible minorities are neither White nor Indigenous, according to Statistics Canada (2021). This positionality often excludes visible minorities from discussions on decolonization, Indigenization, and reconciliation, particularly when these conversations are solely focused on the dichotomy of Eurocentrism and Indigeneity (Hiller, 2017). Academic journal articles in this literature review rarely mentioned visible minorities, and the few demonstrated conflicting ideas about where visible minorities fit in the discussions on decolonization, Indigenization, and reconciliation. While some researchers emphasized that visible minorities shared a colonial victimhood with the Indigenous peoples due to racism in Canada, other scholars grouped visible minorities with White settlers who benefitted from colonial privilege (Chung, 2016; Datta, 2020; Ng, 2020; Purewal, 2019; Ramirez, 2021; Sefa Dei, 2018). This contradiction regarding where visible minorities were positioned requires close examination to understand how all Canadians can be included in the processes regarding decolonization, Indigenization, and reconciliation.

Visible Minorities as Colonial Victims

Colonialism in Canada, both past and present, refers to the systemic mechanisms put in place by White settlers to normalize and perpetuate Eurocentric worldviews, ultimately maintaining the White peoples as the beneficiaries of the dominant societal system (Hiller, 2017). Thus, visible minorities, along with the Indigenous peoples, were categorized as victims of colonialism due to marginalization and oppression by literature. Ng (2020) and Purewal (2019) mentioned historical instances of the Canadian government having adopted policies of discrimination based on race and ethnicity: the Komagata Maru incident of 1914 when a ship full of Punjabi immigrants were turned away by the Canadian government despite Canada having welcomed over 400,000 European immigrants in the same time period; the Chinese Head Tax which forced a steep fee for each Chinese immigrant to enter Canada despite the government having had no such tax for any other ethnic group; and the Japanese Internment Camps where entire families and communities were forced to relocate and leave behind their properties to be claimed by White Canadians. Sefa Dei (2018) explained that Canada's pattern of discrimination based on race and ethnicity continues today, as the dominant mainstream Canadian culture was preoccupied with delegitimizing and erasing non-White existence, particularly for the Indigenous, Black, and African Canadians. Ramirez (2021) reported that naturalized Canadians were taught and tested on Eurocentric knowledges in preparation for the Canadian citizenship test, which further colonized newcomers to become participants of the dominant Eurocentric culture. Altogether, the literature demonstrated the Canadian government's historical and continuing practices that prioritize Eurocentric assimilation, which victimizes visible minority Canadians.

Visible Minorities as Privileged Settlers

While the literature established that racialized immigrants, settlers, and refugees were victims of colonialism in Canada, academics also stressed that visible minorities benefitted from a form of privilege by having displaced Indigenous peoples from their lands. Sefa Dei (2018) argued that while Black and African Canadians suffered from Eurocentric colonial erasure, they also benefitted from 'settlerhood' in Canada. Chung (2016) and Datta (2020) elaborated by asserting that visible minorities exercised varying degrees of settler privilege in modern Canada, assimilating to the Eurocentric mainstream and perpetuating it. Ramirez (2021) also argued that participating in institutions that spread Eurocentric ideas afforded settler privilege to visible minorities and newcomers. Further, Ramirez (2021) explained that when a newcomer becomes a naturalized citizen, the Canadian government fails to require Indigenous knowledges and ideas on reconciliation to be learned by the new Canadian. This was despite the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015) having included in their Calls to Action, for newcomers to be educated on Indigenous knowledges, particularly during the naturalization process. Altogether, the literature asserted that all settlers, regardless of their race and ethnicity, were implicated in colonialism, as visible minorities benefitted from settler privilege.

Visible Minorities Uniquely Situated in a Third Space

The literature established that an overlapping and seemingly conflicting portrayal of visible minorities as both victims and beneficiaries of colonialism exists. To make sense of this dissonance, Aujla-Bhullar (2018) explained that visible minorities existed in a dual-role in the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized, a third space, which incorporated qualities of both sides to varying degrees. In addition, Kanu (2006) mentioned this third space could be a

way forward in decolonization, as the combination of various cultural traditions and diversities of visible minorities could lead to reconciliation based on hybridity and pluralism.

Decolonizing Canada

For Canada to move forward with reconciliation, scholars such as Arrows (2019) and Datta (2020) advised that decolonization must take place first, before Indigenization. Arrows and Hiller also required two simultaneous layers to decolonization: institutional and individual.

Institutional Decolonization

To decolonize Canadian institutions, Armstrong (2013) and Battiste (2011) criticized that Indigenization was occurring prematurely while decolonization was still ongoing. Both scholars worried this premature Indigenization would conflict with proper decolonization of institutions, leading to the 'add-and-stir' model of adding Indigenous elements as tokens to pre-existing Eurocentric spaces in superficially performed Indigenization. Meanwhile, Kanu (2006) advocated for a hybrid approach which combines decolonization and Indigenization together, creating a pluralistic way forward. Currently, Alberta Education's mandates to incorporate Indigenous knowledges and Indigenous ways of being in the Teacher Quality Standard (2018) and the Leadership Quality Standard (2020) demonstrate this instance of the 'add-and-stir' model, since the institution overseeing such initiatives have not yet decolonized entirely. If educational jurisdictions were to truly decolonize, Battiste, Madden (2019), and Mullen (2020) all outlined that requirements for standardized testing and other high-stakes assessments must be removed, along with eliminating competition for grades between students, ultimately removing attitudes and ideas that instil Eurocentric superiority above the knowledge systems of other cultures. Hiller (2017) and Madden also warned that premature Indigenization would lead to a re-centering of colonialism in Canada, which would rebrand settler privilege with culturally

appropriated Indigenous elements and resulting in neo-colonialism. Armstrong, Arrows (2019), Battiste, Hiller, and Madden all worried this was precisely where Canada was heading towards, as institutions reacted hurriedly to Indigenize without taking the appropriately researched and measured steps toward decolonization first.

Indigenous Decolonization

To decolonize racialized Canadians, Chung (2016) and Ng (2020) mentioned a key difference between visible minorities and Indigenous peoples in their relationship to Eurocentrism in Canada. Visible minorities generally want to be accepted by and belong to the mainstream culture in Canada, while the Indigenous peoples wish to be left out of its colonial dominance, desiring independence and sovereignty instead (Chung, 2016; Ng, 2020). Therefore, efforts in Canada to decolonize by hybridizing and combining multiple knowledge systems is undesirable and detrimental to the Indigenous peoples and Indigenization, as it is a movement to preserve the dominant Eurocentric culture in a form of neo-colonialism. Additionally, Mullen (2020) argued that the concept of decolonization had been confused and diluted with an adjacent idea of racial social justice, since decolonization is about removing the colonizers and their dominant worldviews from the occupied land, while discussions surrounding racism and social justice were distracting from the narrative and resulted in a hijacking of the concept (Mullen, 2020). This sentiment outlined another difference between racialized settlers and the Indigenous peoples, as Indigenous-centered decolonization was about dismantling settler privilege rather than achieving racial equity.

Settler Decolonization

Hiller (2017) explained that there were upward and downward spirals in unsettling the settler, where the upward spiral involved outward actions toward decolonizing societal systems,

while the downward spiral involved the inward reflections and personal commitments toward decolonizing one's own thoughts and attitudes. Similarly, both Arrows (2019) and Chung (2016) advocated for confronting the settler within oneself by juxtaposing any thought or attitude with Indigenous worldviews to reveal harmful colonial ideas embedded within the self. In particular, Chung (2016) described how visible minority settlers could channel their sense of being 'othered' by racism and transforming that experience into decolonizing the self from Eurocentric oppression and internalized racism. Chung (2016) also explained this process was difficult and required ongoing and repeated introspection, which was a sentiment shared by Datta (2020), that decolonizing oneself was a lifelong process.

Indigenizing Canada

While a majority of Indigenous scholars advocated for Indigenization to occur only after true decolonization, the reality is that efforts to Indigenize Canada have already begun in a pluralistic manner (Kanu, 2006). Therefore, the literature discusses at length of some of the appropriate ways to Indigenize Canada given the current situation.

Centering Indigenous Worldviews

Mullen (2020) called for the centering of Indigenous worldviews as a proper way to Indigenize Canada. This sentiment was shared by Madden (2019) that without properly centering Indigenous perspectives, surface-level Indigenization would still frame Indigenous knowledges under Eurocentric superiority. Battiste (2011) explained such centering required proper respect for Indigenous knowledges and worldviews, and that one could not simply mirror the Indigenous with the Eurocentric, as the two knowledge systems were not compatible. Similarly, Datta (2020) asserted that reconciliation had become a facade by the Eurocentric institutions today due to their continued appropriations of Indigenous knowledges without decolonizing their institutional

foundations first. Gyepi-Garbrah, Walker, and Garcea, (2014) reported how they centered Indigenous worldviews to achieve reconciliation on a smaller scale, by Indigenizing the space where newcomers learned about Canada. They created opportunities for intercultural connections by organizing workshops and meetings in Winnipeg, allowing immigrants and refugees to learn about the colonial history of Canada and for the Indigenous individuals to share their experiences and stories with the newcomers personally. This removed the use of Canada's mainstream Eurocentric culture to act as a bridge between the marginalized cultures, as it often occurs under the neo-colonial multicultural mosaic today (Gyepi-Garbrah et al., 2014). Such examples of centering Indigeneity offered inspiration for other ways to Indigenize Canada appropriately with respect and reciprocity for centering Indigenous worldviews.

Settlers Becoming Indigenous Allies

Arrows (2020) emphasized that we were all related, focusing on our shared humanity. Similarly, Restoule and Chaw-win-is (2017) asserted that everyone was Indigenous somewhere on the planet, focusing on Indigeneity as a necessary feature of collective human survival. Restoule and Chaw-win-is reiterated that we must exercise humility and return to our Indigenous beginnings as peoples, to decolonize ourselves to reconnect with our ancestral Indigeneities to become true allies in decolonization and Indigenization in Canada. Other scholars asserted that becoming an Indigenous ally required ongoing commitments to Indigenous responsibilities, such as building and maintaining respectful relationships based on reciprocity with the land and the Indigenous peoples (Battiste, 2011; Chung, 2016; Datta, 2020; Madden, 2019; Mullen, 2020; Ng, 2020; Purewal, 2019; Ramirez, 2021). Additionally, scholars emphasized the importance of continually decolonizing the Eurocentric self within and committing to demonstrating actions to

reveal the colonialism in others to help center Indigenous perspectives in solidarity with the Indigenous peoples (Hiller, 2017; Madden, 2019; Purewal, 2019; Sefa Dai, 2018).

Concluding the Literature Review

This literature review on the Canadian realities of decolonization, Indigenization, and reconciliation with a focus on visible minorities and education has highlighted three themes: the dual-role of visible minorities existing in a third space in the colonizer-colonized relationship; decolonizing Canada both institutionally and individually from oppressive colonial Eurocentrism; and the Indigenization of Canada by centering Indigenous worldviews as allies. The review also revealed a gap in literature regarding a deeper examination required to explore the third space situated by visible minorities and their potential inspirations for reconciliation.

Research Assignment

Approach

This research assignment utilized a basic qualitative approach (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) to learn about visible minority Canadian teachers' responses to decolonization, Indigenization, and reconciliation. Creswell and Guetterman (2019) explained this approach was ideal for explorations involving unknown variables, which suited the research topic on visible minority teachers' lived experiences. Creswell and Guetterman further explained that this approach aimed to explore little-known topics, often empowering marginalized voices.

The qualitative research approach was also consistent with the central question of how visible minority teachers responded to decolonization, Indigenization, and reconciliation, as the open-ended approach allowed for the meanings behind participants' experiences to be explored organically, without a hypothesis to be tested (Marshall, Rossman, & Blanco, 2022).

The theoretical frame for this research assignment was constructivist and interpretivist.

As such, it was assumed there were multiple realities and interpretations to the same phenomenon to be constructed, depending on the perspectives of the participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This framework allowed for the gathering of knowledge from the participants, then the construction of thematic groupings of information, ultimately addressing the complexities in the topic. By using this framework, a deeper understanding was contributed to the existing knowledge on decolonization, Indigenization, and reconciliation, as the research assignment specifically involved visible minority teachers in Alberta, offering perspectives of a minimally examined subgroup (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019).

Participants and Site

The research site and participants were chosen via convenient criteria sampling (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) at an urban charter school in Alberta. The charter school context differed from public or Catholic schools because it was a smaller enclosed organization compared to the larger and more connected public and Catholic systems in comparison. Also, the charter school had a focused mandate due to its charter, while their counterparts were more diverse in their aims. Being located in Alberta also differed the research site compared to other educational jurisdictions in Canada.

Four visible minority teachers were chosen as research participants because visible minority voices were lacking in the literature on decolonization, Indigenization, and reconciliation. Teacher perspectives were chosen because teachers were at the forefront of implementing decolonization, Indigenization, and reconciliation in Alberta schools (Alberta Education, 2018). Of the four participants, three were female and one was male. The participants reported the following ethnic and cultural backgrounds: Black/Barbadian-Caucasian/White Mixed-Canadian by birth in Toronto, Chinese-Canadian by naturalization from Hong Kong at

age one, Filipina-Caucasian Mixed-Canadian by birth in Edmonton, and South Asian/Indian-Canadian by birth in Clearwater, BC. The participants taught a wide range of subjects and grades, and had taught for at least five years, ensuring their familiarity with the Indigenization of the education system.

Data Collection Methods

The research assignment utilized a homogeneous subgroup sampling method (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019) to allow for the collection of in-depth information about the target group of visible minority educators in Alberta. The four participants engaged in one-on-one, in-person interviews that were scheduled immediately at the end of a school day. The interviews were semi-structured (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) to allow for flexible and open-ended probing questions that originated from a set of 6 prepared questions in advance. The interview sessions were approximately an hour long and audio-recorded using a laptop and a smartphone, ensuring there was a backup file in case of technical issues.

Marshall, Rossman, and Blanco (2022) discussed two types of interviewers: the miner, who assumes that knowledge must be mined out of the participant, and the traveller, who assumes that knowledge must be travelled to with the participant. The interview preparation was conducted using the approach was of a miner. For example, one question was, “Please tell me about what you have seen or heard about colonization in Canada,” which was designed to extract knowledge out of the participant. During the interviews however, the following prompting questions were mixed between the miner and the traveller types, as well as some clarification and devil’s advocate questions. For example, a miner’s prompting question was, “What comes to mind when you think of the word, settler?” while a traveller’s prompting question was, “So you could say that time and money are limiting resources, but in an ideal world, what would it look

like to Indigenize schooling the proper way?" An example of a clarifying prompting question used in the interviews was, "So when you mentioned that the existing resources are problematic, is your sentiment that if you don't fix it yourself then nobody else will?" A devil's advocate question was, "Some Canadians believe that true decolonization and Indigenization are no longer possible because we've lost so much Indigenous languages and cultures throughout history. Do you think there is still a way to achieve reconciliation?" In addition, each interview began with icebreaker questions about the participants themselves, such as questions about how the participant came to be on this land and what their families' histories and journeys were for them to be here.

After each interview was conducted, the recorded audio was transcribed by directly typing onto a digital spreadsheet without the aid of a software, which allowed for unintentional bias to be limited while processing the data (Marshall, Rossman, & Blanco, 2022). Then, each spreadsheet was electronically shared with the participant by email for member-checking for accuracy and clarity of the transcripts (Marshall, Rossman, & Blanco, 2022). During this process, only one participant did not respond, while only one other participant requested changes to their transcript. The requested revisions were minor and did not alter the overall message of the interview.

Limitations, Delimitations, and Assumptions

To make this research assignment manageable within one semester in a part-time capacity, a delimitation was required by recruiting only four participants from the same school and interviewing only once. Another delimitation was the avoidance of quantitative approaches because they required extensive training and expertise for proper statistical analyses. Thus, the research design was qualitative, which was further delimited to the data collection method of

semi-structured interviewing, and the constant comparative data analysis method.

The limitations of this research assignment were that it was conducted by a novice researcher, who also belongs to the same demographic group as the participants of visible minority teachers. While the researcher's passion and interest for this group acted as a strong motivator for the research assignment, personal biases and unintended assumptions may have influenced the data. Additionally, the participants were recruited from the same school.

A key assumption in this research assignment was that the participants would be able to expressively articulate on the topics of decolonization, Indigenization, and reconciliation due to their careers in teaching. However, two of the four participants who mainly taught Math or Physical Education were not as well-versed in the research topic, particularly when compared to the other two participants who taught Social Studies and English. Another assumption was that all participants would be able to communicate their lived experiences from the perspectives of visible minorities rather than as mainstream Canadians, but two of the participants were Caucasian-mixed, resulting in one participant even declaring they identified as a Caucasian and have never personally experienced discrimination and racism. However, both mixed-heritage participants were able to speak from their lived experiences of growing up while closely observing their visible minority parent, providing comparative observations to their Caucasian parent, resulting in more comprehensive data.

Data Analysis Methods

Creswell and Guetterman (2019) explained that the first step of data analysis was organization, which prompted the interview recordings and transcripts to be set up in a Google Drive folder under the researcher's University of Alberta account. In the folder, separate spreadsheets were created for each interview. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) suggested conducting

constant comparative analysis for qualitative research, which led to the transcribing and coding of the interviews immediately after the first interview. Then, a hand-analysis method was conducted to process the data without using computer analysis software programs (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019), because the necessary familiarity and the training were lacking. During this process, the data was open-coded (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) using descriptive phrases in one column, which were then simplified into shorter in-vivo codes (Saldana, 2009) in the next column, all directly on the transcript spreadsheets by inserting the new columns to the left of the margins. Once a transcript was saturated with final codes, it was assigned a city name based on the four participants' cities of birth: Clearwater, Edmonton, Hong Kong, and Toronto. Then, the background colour of each transcript was changed using a colour coding system which assigned blue for Clearwater, yellow for Edmonton, red for Hong Kong, and green for Toronto. Using this organizational system, each code was labelled with its line number. For example, the code label "HK190" indicated it was from the red transcript for Hong Kong in line 190, and the code label "C85" indicated that it originated from the blue Clearwater transcript in line 85. Once all codes were labelled in this manner, they were grouped together by four predetermined categories: decolonization, Indigenization, reconciliation, and miscellaneous, based on the central research question. This categorization was done on a new spreadsheet, where a thematic matrix chart (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019) was created with the x-axis labelled as the participant cities and the y-axis as the four categories. Once the codes were copied onto this matrix chart, they were deductively grouped, codifying (Saldana, 2009) the numerous codes by taxonomy using their semantic relationships (LeCompte, 2000). The codes were grouped until a meaningfully sound hierarchical list of subcategories (Saldana, 2009) was formed within each pre-existing category of decolonization, Indigenization, reconciliation, and miscellaneous. Ultimately, this allowed for

the answers to emerge based on the central question of, how visible minority teachers in an urban charter school in Central Alberta are responding to decolonization, Indigenization, and reconciliation.

Findings

Interview data from four participants guided the emergence of three categories regarding visible minority teachers' responses to decolonization, Indigenization, and reconciliation: (a) allyship - demonstrations of empathy and solidarity with the Indigenous peoples of Canada, (b) paradoxes - attitudes, beliefs, and actions which were contrary to the allyship, and (c) barriers - factors that contribute to the paradox and hinder true allyship with the Indigenous peoples.

Allyship

Participant data showcased visible minority teachers' allyship with the Indigenous peoples. This was demonstrated by: (a) awareness of Indigenous history and ongoing inequities, and (b) empathy and solidarity for the Indigenous peoples based on shared struggles of marginalization and racialization in Canada.

Indigenous Awareness

Participants illustrated a comprehensive understanding of Indigenous concerns such as generational trauma from Residential Schools and water safety on Reserves. The Toronto-born participant mentioned the lack of quality housing and public services on Reserves, while the Clearwater-born participant indicated a lack of basic infrastructure on Reserves, such as paved roads affecting school buses in winter. Both the Clearwater- and Hong Kong-born participants discussed lower educational outcomes for Indigenous students on and off Reserves, while the Edmonton-born participant raised the issue of houselessness disproportionately impacting Indigenous populations. The Hong Kong-born participant also voiced concerns surrounding the

Canadian government's inadequate responses to the United Nations' Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, while the Toronto-born participant questioned the misallocations of resources regarding Pope Francis's visit of apology to Canada. All participants affirmed that Canada is built on Indigenous lands, and these lands were forcibly taken from the Indigenous peoples. These showcase the participants' awareness of Indigenous concerns.

Empathy & Solidarity

All participants identified Residential Schools as a defining lesson for establishing empathy in racialized settlers, particularly when teaching racialized students to imagine being "in Indigenous peoples' shoes." As teachers, participants shared the need for more Indigenous content to be embedded into schooling, requiring more vetted teaching materials and accessible professional developments for teachers. The Hong Kong-born participant wished for Indigenous guest presenters in classrooms to authentically teach Indigenous knowledges. Both the Clearwater- and Hong Kong-born participants recalled their teachers misappropriating and stereotyping Indian and Chinese cultures in school, which led to the mirrored understanding that the Indigenous peoples would also prefer their cultures to be taught in a deeper, meaningful, and authentic manner. Further, the Toronto-born participant wished for school authorities to provide necessary incentives and time required for teachers to properly Indigenize education.

Outside of teaching, participants noted Canada's refusal to fully recognize education and credentials of immigrants of colour, which was empathized with the lower educational attainment of Indigenous peoples, demonstrating a shared marginalization in Canada's Eurocentric meritocracy. The Toronto-born participant further explained that in Canada, a visible minority will be questioned where they are from, while a White/Caucasian person will be

assumed as a “true Canadian” regardless of their origin. This stereotype that a “true Canadian” is White/Caucasian was related to the Indigenous peoples’ frustration that they are no longer the owners of the land despite them being its first inhabitants. Similarly, the Clearwater- and Edmonton-born participants detailed how employees at various stores mistreated them for being visible minorities, requesting additional identification and denying purchases in front of onlookers. Such embarrassments became fuel for participants to commit to social justice and allyship with the Indigenous peoples. In particular, the Hong Kong-born participant recounted being bullied by White/Caucasian peers, resulting in internalized racism and excessively assimilating to Canadian Eurocentrism at the detriment to their own Chinese identity.

Paradox

Despite such demonstrations of allyship, participants provided two areas of paradoxes which were contradictory to their commitments and solidarity with Indigenization and reconciliation: (a) personal beliefs and actions as racialized settlers in Canada, and (b) professional actions as publicly regulated teachers in Alberta. Out of respect for the participants, their individual labels have been removed in this section.

Personal Paradoxes

Participants reported various personal beliefs and actions that contradicted their declarations of Indigenous allyship. One participant questioned if Canadians even want reconciliation, as nobody seemed to be taking it seriously. Similarly, another participant expressed that immigrants and refugees are actually grateful for the opportunities given to them by Eurocentric Canada. Other participants expressed uneasiness at the notion of giving back the land to the Indigenous peoples due to the risk of becoming displaced themselves. Another participant desired Indigenization to be conducted at the cost of the European/White settlers but

not the racialized settlers because Canada is already predominantly Eurocentric. These sentiments demonstrate a cognitive dissonance that the participants' solidarity may be difficult to translate into actions when it negatively impacts their own personal lives.

Professional Paradoxes

Similar to the personal paradoxes, participants noted professional actions as teachers which contradicted their Indigenous allyship. One participant implementing changes to their teaching program admitted that Indigenous sources were not considered due to the lack of age-appropriate materials. Similarly, other participants reported not including any Indigenous content in their classes because it was deemed irrelevant to the subject and quality resources for could not be found. Another participant wished to separate out Indigenous content from existing subjects to create another subject, so that the remaining subjects could stay true without becoming Indigenized. All participants explained that for their teaching practices to become truly Indigenized, they require more guidance, funding, materials, and support from those requesting such Indigenization. These instances of missing action contradict with Indigenous allyship.

Barriers

Three main barriers were noted by participants which contributed to the paradoxes: (a) the requirement to assimilate to Eurocentrism in Canada, (b) the lack of awareness regarding racialized settler privilege, and (c) the instinct to preserve and perpetuate one's own culture.

Eurocentric Assimilation

Participants reported that immigrants are faced with adjusting to Eurocentric ways for survival in Canada. The Toronto-born participant explained that while assimilation is necessary for all settlers, racialized settlers' adjustments were greater than that of European/White settlers due to racism and discrimination being built into the fabric of Canadian society. The participant

outlined how racialized settlers are thus overwhelmingly concerned about needing to fit in, creating barriers for additional cultural and societal tasks such as seeking out education on Indigenous matters. Similarly, the Hong Kong-born participant stated that a White/Caucasian newcomer would have an easier time compared to a racialized newcomer at adapting to the education system in Canada due to the Eurocentrism permeating all Canadian institutions. With this added burden to assimilate, racialized newcomers even resort to sacrificing their own cultural diversity, such as choosing not to pass down their own language and customs to their children in favour of the Eurocentric "Canadian ways." The Edmonton-born participant also indicated White privilege as a barrier for racialized settlers, as a White/Caucasian person had more societal and cultural privilege to have access to the needed time and psychological room for Indigenization and reconciliation.

Racialized Settler Privilege

Participants were cognizant of the notion that settlers in Canada benefit from the privilege created by continued colonization of Indigenous lands and resources. However, when asked about settler privilege, all participants initially believed that visible minorities were not settlers themselves, but immigrants instead. This distinction was explained by both the Clearwater- and Edmonton-born participants as the label "settler" being associated with the historic Europeans who first colonized North America hundreds of years ago. However, the Toronto-born participant verbally sequenced if Canada today is the ongoing result of continued colonization of Indigenous lands, then visible minorities are also considered settlers, as they were not Indigenous to the lands. Ultimately, all participants deduced that visible minority immigrants and refugees were still settlers, regardless of their racialization. The participants expressed that this understanding was not widespread in Canada and thus racialized settlers in

general did not see themselves as beneficiaries of settler privilege. The Edmonton-born participant admitted that White privilege was a more widely known concept, while the Clearwater-born participant noted how visible minorities saw themselves being distanced from the discussions and responsibilities of reconciliation because racialized settlers did not associate their identities with the White/Caucasian settlers. Therefore, this lack of awareness and understanding about racialized settler privilege acts as another barrier for visible minorities to become true allies to the Indigenous peoples.

Self-Preservation & Perpetuation

Participants mentioned the racialized settlers' instinct to support their own cultures and languages in Canada as a coping mechanism against Eurocentric assimilation. The Edmonton-born participant disclosed that their Filipino relatives would naturally gravitate to their own, prioritizing Filipino culture and the Tagalog language rather than to focus their efforts on Indigenization and reconciliation. Similarly, the Hong Kong-born participant detailed that racialized settlers had a double-edged relationship with Canadian Eurocentrism because despite gaining settler privilege from it, they must also combat it to preserve their own languages and customs. This ongoing internal struggle for racialized settlers was seen as another barrier to Indigenous allyship. In addition, this complex relationship with Eurocentrism led the Hong Kong-born participant to discover the notion of settler guilt, as racialized settlers contribute to neo-colonialism by subconsciously projecting their own values and cultures in Canada to the further detriment of the Indigenous peoples. Thus, this innate nature of all settlers to preserve and perpetuate their own ways in competition with the Indigenous ways was identified as another barrier to Indigenization and reconciliation.

Summary

Allyship, paradoxes, and barriers were key themes from this research assignment on visible minority teachers' responses to decolonization, Indigenization, and reconciliation. Allyship demonstrated empathy and solidarity from participants to the Indigenous peoples of Canada; paradoxes shone light on the contradictory attitudes, beliefs, and actions to the participants' Indigenous allyship; and barriers explained factors that contribute to the paradoxes and hinder participants from realizing true allyship with the Indigenous peoples. Ultimately, my findings suggest that racialized settlers face unique challenges in Canada, resulting in their lack of representation in the national conversations and commitments surrounding Indigenization and reconciliation.

Discussion

This section discusses the research assignment's findings and the literature to highlight themes that explore possible avenues to integrate visible minority voices in reconciliation, and to encourage stronger allyship from all settlers, including visible minorities, for decolonization, Indigenization, and reconciliation in Canada.

Contradictions Surrounding Visible Minorities

In the research assignment, all four participants indicated that a distance exists between their visible minority communities and the mainstream Canadian society's efforts to Indigenize and pursue reconciliation with the Indigenous peoples. Two participants from the research assignment questioned if reconciliation and Indigenization were necessary in modern Canada, while another participant recounted their parent demonstrating indifference to the issues concerning Indigenous peoples. However, this was contrasted when all participants demonstrated solidarity and desire for allyship with the Indigenous peoples. For instance, all participants

mentioned the injustices of poor living conditions on Reserves and voiced empathy for the tragedies surrounding Residential Schools.

The participants reported instances of racism from their own lives in modern-day Canada as well, such as receiving unfair treatment from retail workers due to their race, becoming a target of bullying from classmates for bringing cultural food for lunch, and witnessing harmful stereotyping from their teachers in lessons based on cultural misappropriations. In particular, one participant reported that visible minorities and immigrants in Canada must adapt and assimilate to the mainstream Eurocentric ways in order to survive.

In regards to the naturalization process to become a Canadian, Ramirez (2021) reported that Eurocentric knowledges were the majority of information included in the Canadian citizenship test, which then further colonizes newcomers to become participants of the dominant White/European culture in Canada. In the research assignment, two participants speculated that it was impossible for Canada to step away from Eurocentrism, especially since the modern education system was deeply rooted in European industrialism while countless Indigenous cultures and languages have already been lost. Together, the participants and the literature demonstrated the Canadian government's historical and continuing practices that prioritize Eurocentric assimilation at the expense of non-White Canadians. This targets visible minorities and Indigenous peoples alike and situates visible minorities in allyship with the Indigenous peoples due to a common adversary that is Eurocentric colonialism in Canada.

Despite the academic literature having established that racialized immigrants, settlers, and refugees are victims of colonialism in Canada, visible minorities were also described as beneficiaries of settler privilege (Sefa Dei, 2018). This notion of settler privilege in visible minorities and racialized immigrants was identified by all participants in the research

assignment, as they understood that immigrants were modern-day settlers in Canada. Chung (2016) and Datta (2020) further elaborated that visible minorities exercised varying degrees of settler privilege in Canada by assimilating the Eurocentric Canadian mainstream, and then perpetuating it to demonstrate stronger belonging in Canada. The participants from the research assignment expressed similar sentiments by describing any immigrant's instinct to continue practicing one's own culture and traditions in Canada and instinctively helping others from the same racial and cultural community rather than those from other communities, which resulted in an unintentional lack of regard for Indigenous cultures, traditions, and peoples. Ramirez (2021) further argued that participating in Canadian institutions such as post-secondary education, visible minorities and even newcomers who were not White could afford Eurocentric settler privilege in Canada. The subject of higher educational attainment of visible minority immigrants in comparison to that of Indigenous peoples was also reported by the participants in the research assignment, which further demonstrated settler privilege in visible minority and immigrant communities. Thus, the literature and the findings asserted that all settlers, no matter their race or ethnicity, were implicated in colonialism, as visible minorities benefit from settler privilege.

Decolonization of Canada

Hiller (2017) conceptualized that Canadians must work to decolonize individuals as well as institutions, involving the inward reflections and personal commitments toward decolonizing one's own thoughts and attitudes. Similarly, Arrows (2019) and Chung (2016) advocated for confronting the settler within oneself, juxtaposing any thought and attitude with the Indigenous worldviews to reveal harmful colonial ideas embedded within the self. Chung further emphasized that visible minority settlers could channel their sense of being 'othered' by racism and transform that experience into decolonizing the self from Eurocentric oppression and

internalized racism. Chung elaborated this process required ongoing and repeated introspection, which is a sentiment shared by Datta (2020) that decolonizing oneself is a lifelong process. This was reiterated by the participants in the research assignment, as they expressed numerous classes and professional development on Indigenous teachings in the context of education were still not enough to incorporate meaningful Indigenous knowledges into their teaching practices consistently. The participants also questioned the impact of campaigns that promoted Indigenous knowledges such as the annual Orange Shirt Day in September and the National Indigenous Peoples Day in June, as they wished everyday could be centered on teaching and bringing awareness to Indigenous knowledges. One participant spoke at length about Canada's intercultural relationships using the notion of the multicultural mosaic and wished for the Indigenous 'tile' in the mosaic to be greater in size and centered in the middle compared to all of the other cultural tiles. Such imagery of centering Indigeneity in Canada could offer inspiration for all settlers, including visible minorities, to Indigenize themselves appropriately with respect and reciprocity for the first inhabitants. Therefore, the literature and the research assignment point to the need for an intentional and repeating framework that requires visible minorities and all settlers in Canada to commit to reconciliation.

Gyepi-Garbrah et al. (2014) documented how racialized settlers became Indigenous allies after repeated intercultural exchanges with Indigenous peers and attending educational workshops on Indigenous knowledge systems. Similarly, one research participant told of their experiences teaching Indigenous students, and how repeated exchanges in the classroom led to shared understandings and reciprocal insights between the visible minority teacher and Indigenous student. Similarly, Arrows (2020) emphasized that we must remember we are all related somehow, focusing on our shared humanity, while Restoule and Chaw-win-is (2017)

asserted that everyone is Indigenous somewhere on the planet, and thus focusing on Indigeneity led to a necessary condition of human survival globally in light of planetary issues such as climate change and pollution. Several participants attributed this unifying force of humanity as a reason for why they felt empathy and solidarity for the Indigenous peoples. Further, Restoule and Chaw-win-is emphasized we must exercise humility and return to our Indigenous beginnings as peoples, to decolonize ourselves to reconnect with our ancestral Indigeneities, ultimately to become true allies in decolonization and Indigenization. Overall, these reminders prove crucial for the visible minority Canadians to engage and take stronger steps towards decolonization, reconciliation, and Indigenization.

Personal Implications

In this section, my reflections and key learnings from the Master of Education in Educational Studies (MES) program are explored, with three main themes: (a) my renewed understanding of reconciliation as a racialized settler, (b) my expanded perspective on the role of the teaching profession, and (c) my appreciation for reflective practice and lifelong learning as an educator. I will discuss these reflections by incorporating academic literature, the findings from my research assignment, and reflections on my experiences from my teaching practice to demonstrate my professional growth and transformation.

Reconciliation in Education

When I began my journey in the MES program, I wanted to help immigrant students of colour find their place and belonging in Canada's pluralistic and multicultural society. As a Korean-Canadian immigrant who often translated between Korean and English for my parents, I wished to pass down to my students my life philosophy of being fluent in both home and professional languages and cultures. I hoped that they would benefit from being comfortable in

multiple spaces for deeper understanding and improved connections. Brophey and Raptis (2016) explained that such adaptability and respect for others is essential even in academic research, particularly when non-Indigenous researchers work in Indigenous contexts as relationships must be built and maintained across cultural differences. As such, I gained an appreciation that my immigrant students of colour were better positioned to learn about and practice such intercultural fluency at a young age, and that they may utilize such skills in their futures. Brophey and Raptis further explained that the Indigenous stakeholders in their studies strived to become "strong like two people" (p. 248) and to be able to code-switch between their home community and the wider Eurocentric Canadian society, allowing them to gain intercultural fluency as well. This validated my desire to help encourage my students to become bridge-builders between their culture(s) and not only the mainstream culture in Canada, but also its diverse communities. I was also inspired by Addams (1908) and how she transformed her school in Chicago to better serve her Italian immigrant students by recognizing that public education should not only prepare immigrant youth for their current communities via proper socialization at schools, but also validate and foster the learner's pre-existing experiences by furthering studies in their ancestral and home cultures and languages. This confirmed for me the importance of developing intercultural fluency in immigrant students of colour, as I regularly encounter students who harbour animosity and feelings of embarrassment toward their immigrant parents who do not speak English fluently. Addams described that such situations illustrate the widening gap between immigrant students and their parents, and she identified colonial schooling as the culprit for failing to meet students from where they came. Further, Addams found that such alienated youth gave rise to delinquency in her school and the wider community. Considering this, and the reality that Canada's students come from all corners of the world with diverse cultures and languages, I

realized that teachers are more than just professionals who instruct the curricula. Instead, teachers have a greater role in our pluralistic society to facilitate intercultural dialogue and harmony. With this responsibility, I wished to learn how our education systems could accommodate such a great diversity of students to ensure that all learners, both locally-born and immigrant alike, could receive truly well-rounded educations that were appropriate for their cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Restoule and Chaw-win-is (2017) discussed that traditional ways are the way forward to decolonize and to reconnect with the ways of our ancestors and our Indigenous selves. Therefore, when multiple cultural traditions come face-to-face in my classroom, centering various Indigenous worldviews would be crucial, rather than relying on the Eurocentric colonial worldviews, as Hiller (2017), Madden (2019), Purewal (2019), and Sefa Dei (2018) have all suggested. As an educator with a passion for social justice, I have always believed in being action-oriented, which prompted me to implement Indigenous ways of knowing in my teaching practice. This was further justified by the Teaching Quality Standard required by Alberta Education (2018), as foundational Indigenous knowledges are necessary for all teachers in the province. However, from reading the works of Armstrong (2013), Arrows (2019), Battiste (2013), Hiller, Madden, Purewal, and Sefa Dei, I have since learned to pause and become more intentional about incorporating Indigenous ways of knowing in my classroom because decolonization must occur before Indigenizing, in order to deter neo-colonialism from taking hold. Altogether, I have transformed my understanding of my role as a teacher where my focus must be on decolonization rather than on Indigenization, as I am a settler and not Indigenous. Similarly, several participants in my research assignment reported being uncomfortable with being assigned the task of teaching Indigenous content when they themselves were not

Indigenous, which resulted in fears that they may teach it in an inappropriate or incorrect manner. While I initially judged these claims as mere excuses, the literature helped me to understand that, indeed, caution is warranted when teaching about a culture that is not my own, no matter how confident I was in my training and education on the topic. Therefore, the literature and my reflections validated my efforts in this area to help bridge the gap between visible minority Canadians and the Indigenous peoples as a racialized teacher myself, with improved understandings on decolonization, Indigenization, and reconciliation in education.

Professional Context

McLean (2010) explained that in Canada, the lack of a federal ministry of education has led to the prevalence of "surrogate" national organizations, such as the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), to historically take on the task of educating students on topics such as citizenship, social justice, and equity. Such subject areas have traditionally been left out of formal curricula in schools, which dealt with literacy and numeracy. However, Egan (2012) argued that today, schools must adhere to child-centered and teacher-as-facilitator approaches to fill the need for humanistic education. As teachers are asked to increasingly take a backseat in students' education by acting as guides rather than experts, Kanu (2006) and Chambers (1999) have both advised looking to the past and focusing on the local and the historic to make teaching meaningful to our students. However, I worried this may not be enough to entice the short attention spans of our rapidly paced and pluralistically adapted students today. Social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok have assumed the role of guiding our youth outside of the classroom and teachers are not able to compete with such powerful online algorithms, nor can we combat the reliance and the addictions of our students to social media. Bogotch, Miron, and Biesta (2007) noted that the learners themselves had a huge role in their own schooling

because the learners determine how a teacher's instruction is received. They argued that educational curricula must include the learner's individual, vertical, and horizontal cultures. Individual culture refers to the learner's personal interests and motivations, similar to Montessori's (1912) depiction that scientific approaches to traditional schooling resulted in the imprisonment of the child both physically and mentally, such as the scientifically engineered desks causing spinal mal-developments in students and the production of graduates without creativity and independent thought because traditional education did not take the child's unique biology and ideas into account. Vertical culture refers to ancestry and family, which includes the learner's cultural and linguistic backgrounds, which Dewey (1925) argued was necessary to center learning on existing knowledge from home. Horizontal culture refers to the learner's peers, such as the example of scientific pedagogy used by Bobbitt (2017) to demonstrate that schooling and curricula must serve the needs of society to prepare youth for their futures. Altogether, this framework of addressing the learner's individual, vertical, and horizontal cultures could provide the tools for teachers to effectively compete with social media algorithms and to better address the holistic education our students increasingly require. Such a framework would also empower the teaching profession to become more relevant to the students' modern contexts. This information from the literature has strengthened my understanding of how to better exercise my role as an educator to make learning more meaningful and personable for my students.

Beyond Balkanization

Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) discussed the notion of balkanization, a term coined after the isolated Balkan states in Eastern Europe, to explain that a balkanized school harbours pockets of insular subgroups of teachers that do not collaborate with one another. My understanding of

teaching was largely influenced by my professional context, a charter school in Alberta. While I appreciated and was grateful for the stability and the opportunity to teach in the same classroom, grade, and subject areas to hone my craft over the past six years, I realized that my professional experience existed in a balkanized bubble that was vastly different from other colleagues with experiences in larger school districts. My participation in the MES program's cohort model truly allowed me to come face to face with teachers from all walks of life, who were working in diverse communities across the province and beyond. This helped me to broaden my perspectives on teaching and to contextualize my own practice in the overall education system in Alberta. Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) explained the way forward from balkanization and a polarization of subgroups was to offer more respect and trust to others, directing more effort and focused energy to improving one's own professional practice by being open to collaborating with all colleagues. As a grade five English Language Arts and Social Studies teacher in a charter school, I realized this combination of labels had seeped into my sense of identity for the past six years to become a solidified and permanent pillar of my being. However, my transformation in my perspective from an insular bubble to a wider and more universal teaching profession which existed in such diverse and varied iterations, was what allowed me to expand my reach and successfully apply to the provincial committee on diversity, equity, and human rights. With such experience and my focus on visible minorities and decolonization in the MES program, I ultimately envision myself becoming an educational leader on diversity and inclusion, supporting schools and districts as our society becomes increasingly pluralistic.

Becoming a Leader

Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) explained that teachers become leaders in various ways by inspiring and inching toward improvements that benefit the entire school community. I have

experienced this in the past few years in my own professional context, as the MES program motivated me to advocate for diversity, equity, and inclusion. Regarding leadership, Hargreaves and Fullan also discussed the importance of distinguishing between managing and leading, as a manager merely deals with the day-to-day operations, while a leader is able to inspire and guide the organization towards positive change. As someone without a formal title in school administration, I wish to become such a leader that can still affect my community beneficially. According to the Leadership Quality Standard by Alberta Education (2020), there are numerous facets to school leadership. It was intriguing that managerial duties of a principal constituted just one out of nine standards required of a school leader, indicating that to truly lead a learning community, one must be able to exercise many more qualities than simply operating a school. Cranston (2018) supported this implication that school leaders must manage and lead simultaneously by balancing these two possibly competing interests, and Eacott (2011) advocated that school leaders must exercise their power and privilege to implement equitable change in their school community based on ethics. Shields (2014) further explained that ethical leadership is about challenging the status quo and making decisions for social justice and equity. While my coursework in the MES program encouraged me to develop my competencies in fostering relationships, including learning Indigenous knowledges and developing leadership capacity, the biggest takeaway for me regarding school leadership was that a leader must be flexible and capable of using all leadership styles and qualities instead of always relying on just a few styles. Bush and Glover (2014) explained this with the notion of contingent leadership, which is a dynamic, flexible category of school leadership that can employ elements from all other types of leadership, including managerial, distributed, ethical, and instructional. Bush and Glover also emphasized that contingent leadership may still be flawed due to its lack of overall

cohesive vision, as this style could become highly reactionary without foresight. Therefore, an effective leader must build and maintain an overall vision for the school community and understand when to lead from the front, the back, and the middle, by accurately assessing which style of leadership to employ for a particular situation for the greatest good of the community. As a budding teacher-leader, this was a lesson I will remember for many years after my time in the MES program. This also helped me to understand that effective leaders listen carefully and widely to gain full comprehension of a situation and undergo much reflection before making decisions that would affect the future of the community. In such a way, Harris, Carrington, and Ainscow (2018) described that data and information may be used to inform, diagnose, and inquire about school performance, rather than simply being used for accountability and judging performances. They further insisted that leaders must support others using data and information, rather than to demand tasks, in order to build an effective school community. This has led me to reflect on Spillane (2005), who explained that democracy and authority in a community must be delicately balanced by leaders in a form of distributed leadership, which is different from simply delegating tasks and sharing leadership responsibilities. Rather, distributed leadership is about carefully choosing which decisions to make with others and which ones to make alone. These learnings about leadership from the MES program and my certification in LQS have greatly informed my potential roles in the future, as I continue to explore avenues to bring about improvements to education regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Lifelong Learning

Zimmerman and Sommers (2020) emphasized that school leaders must create a culture of professional learning by encouraging teachers to share their thoughts and reflections openly in a safe space with their colleagues. Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) also discussed the need for

teachers to engage in continuous improvement and seek out feedback on their teaching practices. Throughout my teaching career, I have been reminded of the joys of learning and developing professionally. The Teacher Quality Standard (Alberta Education, 2018) outlines lifelong learning as one of the pillars of the teaching profession. My years in the MES program have affirmed that committing to learning and developing results in beneficial outcomes in countless ways. For instance, I used to believe that academic research was boring and too technical when I was an undergraduate student. However, the capstone research assignment in the MES program showed me the fascinating world of qualitative research, where I found myself enjoying the process, and willingly committed to ensuring its successful completion.

The qualitative research process in the MES program also taught me to take the source of information into more careful consideration, as Marshall, Rossman, and Blanco (2022) described that choosing a research topic was like taking a standpoint about an issue and the research often comes from personal experience and commitments to learn more about the topic. They further insisted that the positionality of the researcher matters and that the researcher should look deeply into how their own identity made certain topics appealing to them. From being a Social Studies teacher, I had always known and taught that sources of information matter. However, I had not considered the same in terms of academic research, as I had believed that all peer-reviewed journal articles were empirical and universal truths. However, the MES program and my first-hand experience of conducting a research assignment demystified academic research and its processes. If I had not had this opportunity, I would have forever believed in the unquestionable authority of academic research journal articles.

I was also refreshed when Creswell and Guetterman (2019) advocated that a societal problem was worth researching if its study gave voice to anyone who was silenced, ignored, or

rejected in mainstream society. As I wished to become more focused on ethical leadership with regards to diversity, inclusion, and equity, I realized that my research assignment could explore the relationship between visible minority Canadians and the Indigenous peoples in a loose context of education. From learning that research does not always have to be numerically focused, I became empowered to engage in the research process enthusiastically as a novice researcher. Further, Steinhauer (2002) advocated for relational accountability and for the researcher to situate the self in their research context by sharing about who they are to develop a trusting and honest relationship with participants and the audience. This further demonstrated the importance of lifelong learning after I had decided prematurely that academic research was not for me, previously. Thus, lifelong learning and continued self-improvement has uncovered newly found joys in life, as I found myself aligning with constructivism in my own research assignment. Guba and Lincoln (1994) explained that constructivists are passionate researchers who facilitate multiple voices to open new interpretations, thus constructing more informed and sophisticated understandings of existing topics. This was what I wished to deliver in my research assignment by exploring the notion of reconciliation from the lens of a racialized immigrant settler. Combined with my desire to become an educational leader and consultant on diversity, equity, and inclusion, I came away from the MES experience having a recent and valuable memory of the benefits of lifelong learning and academic research.

Conclusion

My journey in the MES program transformed my professional practice in three major ways. Firstly, I have gained a deeper understanding of Indigenous worldviews to influence my intercultural fluency, which has shifted my focus from implementing Indigenization to instead laying the foundation first with decolonization. This shift to focus on decolonization will affect

my professional practice to explore diverse traditions of various cultures that are present in my teaching contexts. Next, I now see education and the role of teachers from a much broader perspective, which encompasses qualities of a dynamic intercultural facilitator, ethical change-maker, and a visionary leader. Finally, through seeking out ongoing opportunities for learning and in my commitment to lifelong self-improvement, I will strive to ethically empower and give voice to those marginalized by society's institutions, including public education. As I reflect on these transformations, I am reminded of Robinson (2006), who advocated that school leaders must focus on instruction and learning rather than on managing. This is precisely what I wish to do as an emerging teacher-leader as I continue my focus and interest area on diversity, inclusion, equity, and ethics.

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