

DIASPORA THROUGH IDENTITY TEXTS: A TRI-AUTOETHNOGRAPHY FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THREE EDUCATORS NEGOTIATING IDENTITY AND LANGUAGE IN VARIOUS DIASPORIC COMMUNITIES IN CANADA

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Abstract

This tri-autoethnography explores the complexity of teacher identity of three educators and how they negotiate language and identity within various diasporas within Canada. Each writer presents a brief narrative to illustrate how their identities do not remain constant but shift and are in conflict as they take up new positions in their various imagined communities. Given our positionalities, we decided that a tri-autoethnography would be the most useful genre to represent our lived experiences.

Keywords: imagined communities, teacher identity, autoethnography, identity text, diaspora, renegotiation

Introduction

This tri-autoethnography explores the complexity of teacher identity of three educators and how they negotiate language and identity within various diasporas within Canada. Each writer presents a brief narrative to illustrate how their identities do not remain constant but shift and are in conflict as they take up new positions in their various imagined communities. Given our positionalities, we decided that a tri-autoethnography would be the most useful genre to represent our lived experiences. Canagarajah (2012) breaks down the definition of autoethnography into three parts: *auto*, *ethno*, and *graphy*. He defines *auto* as “a form of research conducted and represented from the point of view of the self, whether studying one’s own experiences or those of one’s community” (Canagarajah, 2012, p. 260). Next, he defines *ethno* as “the objective...to bring out how culture shapes and is shaped by the personal. In turn, one’s experiences and development are perceived as socially constructed” (Canagarajah, 2012, p. 260). He goes on to define *graphy* as the writing, in this case narratives, that provides one’s knowledge and experiences which can then be used for analysis. For Canagarajah (2012), writing his own autoethnography helped him to explore his “hidden feelings, forgotten motivations, and suppressed emotions” (p. 261). Similarly, we have chosen this genre to help us to explore in depth some of the emotions that we experience on a daily basis as we negotiate and re-construct our teacher identities in diaspora. Besides helping us to explore emotions, the autoethnography genre can also help us to confront the conflicts and tensions in our multiple, complex, and diverse identities. Therefore, we have agency as we are the ones telling our stories from our own experiences rather than from the perspective of an outsider. As such, this act can be empowering for marginalized members of diaspora like ourselves. Finally, as educators positioned in diaspora, it can serve as a “valuable form of knowledge construction” as we are able to “represent [our] professional experiences and knowledge in a relatively less threatening academic manner” (Canagarajah, 2012, p. 262).

Narrative perspectives

Tazin

I lived in Bangladesh and worked at a university as a full time senior lecturer in the faculty of English. The universities in Bangladesh follow a North American curriculum; the teachers are encouraged to have North American higher education for promotional and other career prospects. The inclination of the university authorities towards teachers having North American degrees is made explicit in the advertisements seeking teachers where candidates ‘with North American degrees’ are preferred. Therefore, I got my admission in a North American University to secure and prosper in my job. I have been living at Canada for the past year and during my stay I have undergone diasporic experiences at a regular interval. As such, I found it important to put my experience in writing so that this works as an ‘identity text’ for my students and my colleagues. I want to draw on various research works which explore similar experiences as mine to explain the complex situation I face as a diasporic member and how it constitutes an

‘imagined community’. I also want to mention the utopian ‘imagined community’ that international students like me buy into and how it is different in reality. Lastly, I will differentiate between students’ ‘imagined community’ and an ‘imagined community’ created as diasporic members once in Canada.

‘Imagined Community’ can represent an individual’s dream to be in a place in some point in time in his/her life (Kano, 2000, 2001 as cited in Carroll, Motha, & Price, 2008, p.167). Like many other students of Bangladesh I also believed that coming to Canada would open doors of opportunities for me. This buying into a utopian world where everything seemed alluring was not only an individual misconception but it was embedded by the community of which I belong to. In other words, the ‘imagined community’ was shaped in me through the society that I lived in. Foucault asserts “particular images that are socially inscribed and re-inscribed upon individual consciousness until they are thought of as normal or simply uncontested truths” (Foucault, 1980, as cited in Carroll, Motha, & Price, 2008, p. 167). However, once I entered Canada I realized that certain aspirations that I had before coming to Canada were very hard to attain: getting a skilled job for instance. This gap between dreams and reality is what Foucault calls ‘regime of truth’ and it is engraved in the minds of an individual because it is socially constructed. Foucault (1980) states “[i]n order for an assumption to become a regime of truth, it must be accepted as fact by the community in which it exists. It then becomes unquestioned and unquestionable, and its arbitrariness becomes invisible” (as cited in Carroll et. al., 2008, p.167). So, I want to first explain how the ‘imagined community’ I built before coming to Canada was different than I had imagined back in Bangladesh. Next, I will move on to discuss how diaspora constructed another form of an ‘imagined community’ which is slightly different than what I created before coming to Canada.

Disillusionment of Regime of Truth after coming to Canada:

My first preference was teaching because of my prior experience and expertise in the field. I was shortlisted and called for interviews at a few educational institutions but never heard from them after the interview. I grew anxious and started following up to know what had gone wrong but no one responded to me. I tried to get in touch with the international student body at SFU but all in vein and no one could figure out the reason for my joblessness. This is when I realized the ‘imagined community’ that I dreamt of getting a job at Vancouver was in reality different than what I had perceived. I thought I had enough ‘linguistic capital’ before coming to Canada. My many years of teaching experience was not counted nor were my academic publications. I started applying randomly to other places and finally got an offer for the post of shift supervisor at one of the branches of a famous coffee shops .The district manager seemed very pleased interviewing me and the store manager told me that I did great in the interview. I joined the store as a shift supervisor from October 12, 2017 where I encountered racism to its fullest. After I started my job at the shop I was handed over to another shift supervisor who was supposed to train me. However, the trainer seemed very annoyed to have to train me from the start and always had various excuses and trained me as little as possible. One of her first

expressions when she was introduced to me was ‘How did you get in here as a shift supervisor right from the beginning?’ The fact that I was a newcomer from Asia and somehow got a post above team member or Barista, surprised her and made me feel uncomfortable. Negative stereotypes can, of course, be acquired without discourse, by mere gaze (Hill, 2008). I was made uncomfortable not only by her but other team members who were getting an hourly wage little below than what I was getting. They all used to gang up and make gestures that made me feel intensely uncomfortable. They even approached me to tell me to inform the store manager that I was not ready to be in charge of a shift and rather I should restart as a Barista but I was ready and was hired because the management thought I had the potential. The racism that I faced at the shop represents ‘forms of discourse that do not reproduce racist stereotypes by conventional reference, like explicit stereotypes’. Instead the racism I faced are what Hill (2008) describes as, “they communicate by absence and silence that invite inferences” (p. 41). As days passed by I was treated unjustly and I faced discrimination when it came to distribution of workload, time of the day etc. These kinds of ‘covert racism’ are prevalent in every walks in the society but it goes ‘unnoticed’ (Hill, 2008, p 41). I could not help but decide to choose my dignity and self-respect over money. I became ‘de-classed’ in this developed nation whereas I had much reputation in my home country but I had chosen to be a part of this world so I had no choice but to bear this ‘racism’.

Renegotiation of identity as a diasporic member affecting teacher identity

After leaving the job at Starbucks I again shifted my attention to the teaching jobs. I gradually grew resistant to the system of hiring and started to self-research and study the profiles of the teachers who work in educational institutions. I soon discovered that I needed a TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages) diploma; having an MA in TESOL and being enrolled for a second MA at SFU in a related program was not sufficient for the language schools of Vancouver. They required me to have a TESOL because I came from an underdeveloped country, but no one informed me that I needed that certification. Finally, I received my TESOL diploma and secured a job as an ESL teacher in a language school in Vancouver. I also ‘negotiated ‘my ‘identity’ and connected to diasporic communities. According to Anderson’s (1991) theory, “members of a nation, while not knowing each other personally, have a common understanding of their community. Novels, newspapers and other cultural products offer citizens shared experiences and allow them to understand themselves as members of the same community” (as cited in Gorp & Smets, 2015, p. 72). For instance, I do not see my Bangladeshi citizens in Vancouver; yet, I know what is happening in my country through internet and other means of communication. I am not actually connected to my country but only virtually connected in an ‘imagined’ manner.

I feel connected to my country people because I share a common past with them. The sense of past makes me nostalgic in present and everything I miss now about my home, is because of my past shared social or cultural activities with my countrymen. Tsagarousianou (2004) asserts “[i]n this light, diasporic identities are ‘imagined’, and diasporas constitute

‘imagined communities’ in which the sense of belonging is socially constructed on the basis of an imagined and symbolic common origin and mythic past” (as cited in Gorp & Smets, 2015, p.72). Before coming to Vancouver, I had the knowledge that none of my acquaintances or relatives lived here which meant: I had to live a socially secluded life. When I knew no one of my community I searched for my community people and became successful in getting affiliated with them because I was in constant search of my ‘identity’ in Vancouver. I feel a lot happier than when I first came to Canada because I was able to ‘renegotiate’ my positionality from being ‘unemployed’ to ‘employed’ from being ‘alone’ to be a part of a ‘community’. I lost ‘economical capital’ because I used to lead a better life in my home country and avail to all luxuries. So in a way I became ‘de-classed’ yet I feel mentally happy to be a part of a country which is safer and better in terms of living.

Sophia

I was convinced that Canada was a place where I could fulfill my dreams of achieving academic, professional and economic success. In addition, I envisioned that my children would be able to obtain a world class education and live in a first world country renowned for its superb quality of life. Thus, the idea of an ‘imagined community’ began to take shape. Imagined community is best defined by Kanno (as cited in Carroll et. al., 2008) as “communities that represent an individual’s dreams for the future at a particular point in his or her life” (p. 167). I also reference Norton (2000, 2001) and Wenger (1998) in defining imagined communities as “groups, intangible or not readily accessible, to which an individual desires to belong” (as cited in Carroll et. al., 2008, p. 167). Therefore, moving to Canada was a dream for my future; a dream of upward mobility and success for my family and a desire to belong to an imagined community.

‘Before and after Canada’ Teacher Identity

Prior to coming to Canada, I had carefully considered how my teacher identity would help me into realizing my imagined community. I had acquired three undergraduate degrees with distinction in the field of education. I was trained to teach elementary education (general studies), secondary education (Spanish as a foreign language), and communication disorders and deaf education. I had nineteen years of experience teaching elementary, middle, and secondary school students. Furthermore, I had distinguished myself by capturing various teaching awards, like the Teacher of the Year Award. To add to this, I had exemplarily served in a leadership capacity, as the Head of the Humanities department at my school, for the nine years prior to my departure. In terms of linguistic capital, I am a native English speaker and fluent in Spanish as a second language. Therefore, as far as I was concerned and based on Bourdieu’s (1997, as cited in Norton, 1995) theorization of cultural capital I possessed a great deal of linguistic capital. So, I imagined Canada as the ideal country to realizing my imagined community. However, upon arriving I soon discovered that I had to become recertified as my qualifications alone could not help me to secure a teaching job. To make matters more complicated, I soon encountered conflict in my teacher identity. Appleby (2016) states “as teachers move from one national context to

another and encounter different sorts of interpersonal and institutional relationships, they may experience a corresponding shift in both their own status and identities and in the identities ascribed to them in the new context” (p. 3). This shift in teacher identity, which she speaks of, has also been my experience over the past year in Canada.

Norton (2000) defines *identity* as "how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is structured across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future” (p. 5). Seeing that individuals use language in diverse social acts, identity is conceived as being fluid, unstable and subject to change (Norton, 2000). In view of Norton’s definition, the creation and construction of identity is a lifelong process. Of specific interest to me, is how identity changes from one social context to another can result in individuals within diasporic communities being marginalized in their new setting and highly valued in their home setting. Although it can be argued that individuals hold a certain degree of agency in negotiating their own identities, they are also limited by the institutions that surround them. Therefore, to better understand how my language teacher identity has experienced conflict and shifted, I am guided by two theoretical perspectives of language teacher identity; social identity theory and image text theory (Varghese, Morgan, Johnston and Johnson, 2005). Varghese, Morgan, Johnston and Johnson (2005) inform us that social identity theory views identity as based on social groups created by society. Therefore, it is a theory of self - perception shaped by the groups one is situated in. Although this theory sees self- perception as a continuous process it also advances stereotypes of self because of its emphasis on group membership. Individuals construct identities in large part based on the social categories they belong to. A prime example is that of the hiring preference of native English speaker teachers over non- native English speaker teachers.

Varghese, Morgan, Johnston and Johnson (2005) tell us that “there is little question that the social category of native English speaker still enjoys power and status that the category non-native English speaker does not” (p. 25). Indeed, this is true, however to be a highly prized native English speaker, you need to be a member of inner circle countries such as Canada, USA and Britain (Appleby, 2016). This is indicative of the widespread globalization of white English and white racial power. Therefore, a native English speaker is equated with being white. Consequently, this also leads to the racialization and discrimination of native English speakers of color. Given my mixed- race identity (British and African), I found that my move to Canada removed me from a position of privilege to a position of oppression. As such, I was confronted with questions of good English versus bad English. Although Lippi-Green (1997) tells us that all spoken languages and linguistic variations are equal linguistically, the reality is that socio-linguistically they are not. This was a stark realization for me. As such, I was led to consider that for many learners, English language learning is associated with “becoming white” (Kubota, 2014, p. 7) and in turn only a specific type of teacher (white) is legitimate. Therefore, when my students ask me on a daily basis what my native language is, I often conclude that they have categorized me as a non-native English- speaking teacher based on the social group that they have assumed I belong to. The image text theorization (Varghese, Morgan, Johnston & Johnson,

2005) views identity as pedagogy of the image text. This helps us understand how identity emerges through and within language. For instance, Morgan used his own 'image text' to influence his students' traditional viewpoints on gender, culture and interpersonal relationships. Identity as pedagogy through image text is not easily adjustable and may have a negative bearing on teacher self-identity. Such has been the case for me. Having to contend with being a native speaker of a less valued English variety has made me self-conscious about my accent. As a result, since moving to Canada my confidence as a language teacher has diminished significantly. Furthermore, it has led me to question my legitimacy as an ESL teacher. An incident that I experienced recently speaks directly to this. Being a substitute ESL teacher in a private language school, I was covering a class for another teacher. I was giving a pronunciation lesson on 'ough' and 'augh'. I said the word 'bought' as 'bawt' and a white male student from Belgium challenged my pronunciation. He directly told me in front of the class that their teacher who is from England does not pronounce it like that. He said that he pronounces it like 'bawht.' Right away, I felt that he believed that his teacher from England was the authority expert on English pronunciation. I did not let it pass. I saw it as a teachable moment and as a moment to promote social justice and squash such stereotypical ideas. I asked him if he could understand what I had said. His response was yes. Then I told him that there are many varieties of English but that does not mean that one is better than the other and what matters is that the goal of communication was achieved. I don't think he was buying this though because later in a speaking activity, I heard him talking about his homestay family. He was complaining that he had been placed with a Filipino family who had very strong accents and that he had come to Canada to hear and learn Canadian English. Of course, I intervened. I asked him if he could understand them. He said, 'yes.' I then said, 'well if communication took place, I don't see what the problem is as everyone has an accent.' After saying this, I silently prayed he wouldn't go to the director and report me. Needless to say, he continued to challenge me for the remainder of the lesson. I'm sure had he known his teacher from England would have been absent that day, he wouldn't have bothered coming to class. This incident of this student's ideology about accentedness made me pause and consider what I had learned about accent thus far in my graduate classes.

According to Lippi-Green (1997), accent is difficult to comprehend much less define; there must be something to compare it with. Therefore, what the listener hears and understands takes precedence over what a person says. The general belief held by linguists is that one cannot completely replace a native accent with that of another. Even though people may attempt to modify their accents, it is considered an inauthentic way of speaking. As is expected, this adjustment is temporary and can break down easily when under stress. It does not matter how rehearsed or how composed a person seems, it is a difficult feature to maintain over a long period of time. Despite the fact that accent reduction is temporary, accent reduction classes, according to Lippi-Green (1997), make an overt promise: "Sound like us, and success will be yours. Doors will open, barriers will disappear" (p.50). Out of curiosity, I began investigating and was surprised to find numerous accent reduction centers throughout the greater Vancouver area.

Quite a few made similar claims to what Lippi-Green had stated. These types of language ideologies seem to support the view that discrimination is purely a matter of language. Seemingly, the right accent is the only thing that stands between marginalized diasporic societies and a dazzling, racist and prejudice free world (Lippi-Green, 1997).

I believe that accent discrimination is a serious problem for TESOL teachers of diasporic communities in Canada. In fact, Lippi-Green (2012) tells us that some accents (White) are appraised more positively while other accents (Asian, African or Caribbean) are considered in a more negative light. Communication is the main argument that has been made for discrimination against non-mainstream accents. However, in the incident with the Belgium student this was not the case. He was able to understand but he was simply resistant to a foreign accent and perceived it as being inferior. Lippi-Green (1997) explains that when speakers encounter a foreign accent, they are forced to decide whether to accept their responsibility in the act of communication or not. In her case studies, she observed, that in most instances, speakers of the dominant language group have a negative social appraisal of the accent, reject the communicative burden and demand that a person with the foreign accent carry the bulk of the responsibility in the communicative act. Admittedly, this experience along with many others, has made me consider whether I should re-construct the image text that I bring to my classroom. I am capable of a North American accent so perhaps I should do that. Better yet, to avoid racialization perhaps I should straighten my hair and even dye it blonde. Perhaps I should also wear blue contacts for that added effect. Essentially, I should strive to be a passer. By doing so, I am certain I can make life a little more privileged. However, I have learned to accept that my accent is a central part of my identity, of the diaspora that I belong to and of which I am proud of. It links me to my country and my past and is something that I don't want to give up.

Amanda

Unlike Tazin and Sophia, I am a Canadian citizen who has lived in Canada my entire life. Yet, I too have struggled negotiating my identity personally, professionally, and within various Canadian communities. During my first year as a vice principal in a K-12 First Nations School, I recognized I lacked theoretical knowledge involving how to create equitable Aboriginal education; this was one of the reasons I decided to pursue a Masters in Equity Studies. When I entered my Masters, I thought I understood my identity; every course I enrolled in reiterates that this was not the case. My struggle identifying myself stems from the question of 'Indianness' or what Lawrence (2004) refers to as 'Nativeness' (p. 16). I am also Aboriginal as this word describes First Nation, Métis, and Inuit peoples. As per the Indian and Northern Affairs website, the term First Nation replaced the commonly used term 'Indian' to refer to Status and non-Status Aboriginals living both on- and off-reserve as the term 'Indian' can be offensive for some; so, I am a status Aboriginal person, more specifically, a status First Nation registered as an 'Indian' under the *Indian Act* to the Campbell River Indian Band. The *Indian Act* legislates 'Indianness;' moreover, it restricts and diminishes membership with the final goal being elimination (Lawrence, 2004, p. 16). Most of Canada still does not understand the cultural genocide in which

the country built itself as residential schooling remained an unspoken truth for Aboriginal peoples and non-Aboriginal peoples. Despite how the government identifies me, I have not always identified myself as being First Nations; instead, I felt more comfortable allowing others to misidentify me as White. I am of mixed-race; my mother is a mix of two different First Nations groups and my father is a mix of French, Swedish, and one First Nations group. I do not 'look' First Nations; I have white, freckled skin. I do have brown hair and eyes, but like the 1930s Hollywood actor Will Rogers, I don't "look Indian enough to play an Indian" (King, 2012, p. 41). I am a mixed-blood urban Aboriginal; a diaspora intended to eradicate Native peoples from their communities through forced removal such as loss of Indian status (Lawrence, 2004). When my mother married my father in 1982, her status was taken away as my father was a non-status Aboriginal. It wasn't until the passing of *Bill C-31* in 1985, when some of the discrimination against women in the *Indian Act* was addressed. In 1986, her status was reinstated making my sister and I status 'Indians' as well. The acceptance of my First Nations identity was gradual, and my identity continues to be fluid. As stated by Hill Collins and Bilge (2016): "individuals can be seen as having multiple 'subjectivities' that they construct from one situation to the next" (p. 124). In other words, people have many choices and considerable agency about who they choose to be. I use this privilege in job interviews that are not Employment Equity situations. It's common for mixed-blooded urban Aboriginals to desire assimilation; Whiteness provides wealth and privilege whereas 'Nativity' is unsafe and encompasses structural racism (Lawrence, 2004, p.10). In other contexts, I verbally disclose being First Nations; I am then viewed as being oppressed through my gender and race. I did this in my previous work environment, working in a First Nations school. This was an advantage for two reasons: 1) I was able to demonstrate First Nations women can be successful without jeopardizing my job, 2) I stopped wrongful discriminations as I was still initially misconceived as a White female. Disclosing I was First Nations eliminated being discriminated for being White, but it opened other discriminations: I did not live on-reserve and unlike many First Nations, my skin complexion allows me easier access into a dominant White group setting. My teaching journey began wanting to help students like my sister who faced disadvantages in school be successful; her experience was negative as she appears First Nations and has learning disabilities. I enrolled in the Indigenous Peoples Teacher Education Module at Simon Fraser University. Unsure of my own Indigenous identity, I hoped this program would help me learn how to be 'First Nation' a funny notion now.

Afterwards, I began my journey teaching in First Nation Schools trying to belong only to learn I did not belong there either. I was an outsider in a First Nations community and an outsider in the professional community where predominantly White female teachers taught. So, what is my role as an educator in a system where I do not belong on either side of the binary? As a mixed-blood urban Aboriginal, the tight restrictions dividing Native and White don't always apply to me; this is due to my appearance and not feeling completely at home in Native or in non-Native settings (Lawrence, 2004). Again, my diasporic experience differs from my peers in this paper. Accepting my diasporic identity as a mixed-blooded urban Aboriginal essentially

eradicates my ties to Native land and is not constructive to strengthening my First Nations identity. Native identity is an invitation to despair, assimilate, and inevitably vanish *as peoples* (Thorpe, 2005). Identifying as a mixed-blood urban Aboriginal moves me closer trying to fit into the dominant White group and away from my traditional identity and land. So, what diasporic community is acceptable for me to belong? When Thorpe (2005) interviewed Lawrence, she suggests a diasporic community that recognizes the other hidden half of the Native experience that occurs off the reserve and recognizes this group as an extension of Native communities, not separate entities that support the genocide of Aboriginal peoples.

According to Foucault's 'regimes of truth' construct presented by Carroll et. al. (2008), my desire to be recognized as a First Nations woman remains unachievable because it resists how my larger community understands me. I do not live on-reserve, I am not broken, I do not look Aboriginal; therefore, I am not recognized as such (Lawrence, 2004). Because the larger society in which I live do not recognize me as being Aboriginal, neither do most Aboriginals living on or off-reserve. It is not uncommon for me to be wrongly identified as Métis; this remark imply I am not Aboriginal. Taking Norton's 'imagined communities' construct presented by Carroll et. al. (2008), I want to exist concurrently in both First Nations and White communities. This was not always the case. Up until the age of 16, I wanted to belong to the White community only. Afterwards, I wanted to belong to both the First Nations community and the White community in different social contexts; when it benefited me. It could be said that I constructed a shifting identity that complied to dominant norms (Carroll et. al., 2008). Unfortunately, my imagined communities were not what I wanted; they represent regimes of truth. Carroll et. al. (2008) conclude "[a]s such, imagined communities can become oppressive or, at least, sources of disappointment, disillusionment or alienation when our lived experiences do not correspond to the world and identities we have imagined for ourselves" (p. 174). Being a First Nations teacher in a First Nations community did not mean I was accepted into the community with open arms; I was still treated like an outsider. I am accepted as White in a White community until my 'Whiteness' wears off.

Re-telling teacher identity in a diaspora

In this paper, all three of us talked about how we constantly changed our positions in Canada to establish a new position. Positions are not fixed; they are 'fluid' and changeable. So, sometimes we 'resisted' an 'ascribed identity' that was imposed on us like 'unemployed' to 'employed' in Sophia and Tazin's case. In other words, we constantly changed our positionality as a member of a diasporic nation. This is what Block (1997) describes as "when individuals move across geographical and psychological borders, immersing themselves in new socio-cultural environments, they find that their sense of identity is destabilized and that they enter a period of struggle to reach a balance" (p.864). Again, all of us can heavily draw from Yosso's (as cited in Oropeza & Varghese, 2010) analysis of 'capitals'. For instance, when we were subject to 'marginalization' and not finding a job, we did not lose hope but constantly tried to navigate through our present 'capital' to gain the facilities offered by the Canadian job market. This is

what Yosso terms as ‘aspirational capital;’ “[a]spirational capital refers to the ability to sustain high aspirations even when one’s circumstances make them seem impossible to achieve” (as cited in Oropeza & Varghese, 2010, p. 219). For instance, when we struggled in various ways from ‘racism’, and ‘marginalization;’ we were frustrated yet found a way to ‘navigate’ our way to what we wanted to achieve. Yosso terms this ‘Navigational capital; “[s]uch capital consists of a combination of an ‘individual’s’ inner strength and the social networks they access to overcome a hostile environment” (as cited in Oropeza & Varghese, 2010, p. 219). Some of us also ‘resisted’ the identity that was imposed on us by using resistant capital. Resistant capital “highlights minority individuals’ ability to challenge the status quo by resisting negative stereotypes and labels and claiming counter identities of their own” (Yosso as cited in Oropeza & Varghese, 2010, p. 220). As stated by Ladson-Billings and Donnor (2009), a racialized person will always have ‘the call’; that instant where one’s status nor their accomplishments can save them from the social construction of their race. For this reason, the student/teacher power dynamic will be different for a White instructor than it is for a racialized instructor (Ladson-Billings & Donnor, 2009). Racialized teachers will always have their authority and legitimacy called into question because of their identity; this is something a White teacher will never experience (Ladson-Billings & Donnor, 2009). Another way in which racialized teachers differ from White teachers is their possession of a divided self, also known as DuBois’s concept of ‘double consciousness’ (Ladson-Billings & Donnor, 2009, p. 64). Although they too are knowledgeable of the dominant paradigm, they will be viewed as a racialized teacher concerned with their racial paradigm by the dominant group (Ladson-Billings & Donnor, 2009). This is what makes it justifiable to question a racialized teachers’ authority or legitimacy. In Amanda’s case, disclosing her identity may mean being narrowly positioned to work with Aboriginal students instead of her interests, strengths or concerns being considered (Burgess, 2017). Non-disclosure means as a ‘white looking’ Aboriginal she can escape essentialized categories; although this can be an advantage, it’s a disadvantage proving herself as a ‘real’ Aboriginal (Burgess, 2017). Amanda will need to stop trying to fit into First Nations and White ‘imagined communities’ and embrace the mixed-blood urban Aboriginal diaspora. As a mixed-blood urban Aboriginal teacher, she needs to present this other half of Aboriginal history and current issues that result from colonial policies that continue in Canada today (Lawrence, 2004). Her role in the public school system in which she now teaches will be to educate about the forced urbanization and assimilation that she herself has faced along with the urban Aboriginal students she teaches and their families (Lawrence, 2004). Lawrence (2004) states “...these diasporic experiences that individuals and families carry must be seen as part of their nations’ history, rather than the individual ‘accidents’ they are usually assumed to be: Being adopted is a Native experience! Being mixed-race is a Native experience!” (pp. 203-204). Applying these theories is in vain as Aboriginal survival depends on their ties to their homeland. Urban Aboriginals must live in a diaspora that extends from First Nation communities or they face extinction as Aboriginal people.

Praxis/Pedagogical Implications

Drawing on the narratives of Tazin and Sophia's autoethnographies, we see how "...language teacher identity is...dynamic, multifaceted, negotiated, and co-constructed, the processes of identity negotiation being highly individual, but also shaped by teacher's socio-professional environment" (Duff & Uchida, 1997; Tsui, 2007, as cited in Edwards & Burns, 2016, p. 735). As such, these writers took on this task to become more aware and informed about their own complex teacher identities within the diaspora communities they are positioned in and how it impacts their classrooms and their praxis. For we are reminded by Waller, Weathers and De Costa (2017) that "students' multiple identities and experiences may influence language learning, but a teacher's background, ideologies, and language learning experiences also come into play in the classroom" (p. 5). Therefore, the question then is how do we as educators with complex and shifting identities within diaspora "effectively and creatively incorporate identity issues into lessons and create classrooms where students feel safe to experiment and become comfortable with their identities?" (Waller et. al., 2017, p. 5) As asserted by Waller et. al. (2017), educators must first realize that identity matters. Therefore, we must become critical educators who know who we are and who our students are. Canagarajah (2004, as cited in Waller et. al., 2017) suggests developing a critical praxis/pedagogy to create safe spaces for our students while Hawkins (2011, as cited in Waller et. al., 2017) advises us to provide a social justice agenda.

A promising critical praxis is that of identity texts. Identity texts refers to texts (whether in the form of written, spoken, visual, musical or a combination) that students produce and take ownership of after having invested their identities in them. Pedagogical they can serve the needs of diverse students and marginalized students. Cummins, Hu, Markus, and Montero (2015) argue that there is a direct relation among social groups between identity negotiation, investment and affirmation to patterns of achievement and underachievement. Cummins et. al. state "(i)n short, multimodal identity text repudiates the devaluation of identity that low SES, multilingual, and marginalized group students have frequently experienced in their interactions in schools and in the wider society" (p. 577). Also, it is important for teachers to write their own identity texts and share with their students as a powerful activity in revealing their own biases, beliefs, and experiences. More importantly, by doing so, teachers would reveal their own vulnerabilities which would in turn go a long way in helping to create a safe and trusted interpersonal classroom space.

Providing a social justice agenda requires teachers to employ praxis that is more inclusive. As such, Kumashiro's (2000) approach of *Education for the Other* can be useful. It seeks to improve the experience of Othered students by creating not only safe spaces but also affirming spaces, therapeutic spaces, supportive spaces, and empowering spaces. Similarly, Dei (1996), also a strong proponent of inclusive education, powerfully asserts: "the goal of inclusive education is to bring all minority students onto the stage of the drama as major actors, not merely as players supporting an all-White European cast" (p. 83). Thus, critical pedagogy can be particularly helpful for urban Aboriginal students to understand their identities as it "empowers learners through creating dialogue that questions the legitimacy and history of the power

relations that try to define their agency” (Freire, 1972 as cited in Chodkiewicz, Widin & Yasukawa, 2008, p. 65). Consequently, rather than assimilating into the dominant culture, they will be able to belong to a diaspora that keeps them connected to the First Nations communities they were stripped from.

A powerful praxis and one of the five principles of critical pedagogy is reflexivity (Hawkins and Norton, 2009, as cited in Waller, Wethers & De Costa, 2017). Reflecting on their teaching is useful in helping teachers to become more aware of classroom practice ideologies and to ensure academic student identity development. Some strategies that teachers can easily incorporate into their praxis include videotaping themselves, keeping a critical self-reflective journal, and ongoing student evaluations (Waller, Wethers & De Costa, 2017).

For the tri-auto-ethnographers, we recognize that it is imperative for us to develop critical praxis as we strive to be critical educators in increasingly globalized and transnational contexts. Like Pennycook asserts (2012), although we may sometimes fear “letting go of our power” it “does not mean that we give up control of a class” (as cited in Waller et. al., 2017, p. 20). However, by doing so, it allows us to let go of our preconceived notions of what an ideal lesson is and ultimately allows us to be more open to teachable or critical moments that arise (Pennycook, 2012, as cited in Waller et. al., 2017). For example, in Sophia’s case she used the incident with the Belgium student to address ideologies about good vs. bad English varieties and who are the legitimate speakers of English. Therefore, we firmly believe that by adopting a critical praxis we can transform our classrooms into sites of change.

Conclusion

This tri-autoethnography highlights the inclusivity and exclusivity for the diasporic writers making it an interesting yet complex topic to explore. On one hand, a diasporic member encounters a unique situation where he/she can use his/her ‘agency’ to move forward towards a future which is more inclusive, global and reflexive. On the other, as is the case with mixed-blooded urban Aboriginals, their diasporic membership was created by government policies created to cut them off from their Aboriginal communities. In Tazin and Sophia’s diasporic narratives, they use their transnational connections and citizenships, and all the other advantages these afford, to influence or radically alter the politics of home and host nation-states in their favour (Axel, 2008).

For them, rather than looking at diaspora as a problem, it can actually work as a solution to many socio-cultural research as studying closely how the members of the diaspora ‘negotiate’ and make their way toward a more cosmopolitan future. This leads researchers to many answers like how they do something and what makes them do something in a diasporic situation. In other words, those who stay in diaspora, play a transformative role in which on one hand they are balancing their national ethics and emerging into a human society which is contemporary. Diaspora touches globality in the minds and hearts of even those people who are against the culture and ethics of the diasporic members and drives the world to what Beck (2002) calls ‘cosmopolitanization.’ Therefore, we argue that more studies may be directed to how the

diasporic members negotiate and cooperate in the host nation. As for mixed-blood urban Aboriginals, diasporic membership needs to be studied more outside of postcolonial theories. Alongside the work of Reconciliation between Canada and Aboriginal peoples, work must be done mending the relationship between First Nations communities and mix-blooded urban Aboriginals diasporas. Also, we find it adept to make our experiences in the imagined community as teachable moments for our students so that they understand the pragmatics of it and imagine a real ‘imagined community’ rather than being disillusioned and frustrated later. We agree diasporic education can bring about an awareness amongst potential diasporic members which then can become their diasporic capital. Yes, diaspora can create conflict and confusion but that may arise in the same community too. Diaspora can be a place where the excess amount of nationalism can be overthrown, and recreation of cognizance and implementation may be adopted to transform self into global human – to become part of the whole world rather than a small part of a nation.

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