BEING PREPARED: PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS' EXPECTATIONS OF ADDRESSING INDIGENOUS STUDENTS' NEEDS IN A CRITICAL LITERACY FRAMEWORK

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ABSTRACT. The education of Indigenous students in Ontario's publicly-funded schools remains concerning. Given the socio-historical marginalization of Indigenous student epistemologies in public education, it is necessary for teachers to address Indigenous students' learning needs while critically examining their own assumptions as teachers. Prospective teachers also need to be aware of and responsive to Indigenous students' experiences in public schools. This mixed-methods study focused on the expectations of over 200 prospective teachers prior to any practicum-related experiences in the classroom. It investigated prospective teachers' perceptions of the extent to which they believe their professional teacher education program is preparing them to address Indigenous students' learning needs. Using a critical literacy framework, the research also examined their assumptions as teachers of bicultural students.

EN COURS DE PRÉPARATION : LES ATTENTES DES ENSEIGNANTS FUTURS EN MATIÈRE DE RÉPONDRE AUX BESOINS DES ÉLÈVES AUTOCHTONES ; UN CADRE DE LITTÉRATIE CRITIQUE

RÉSUMÉ. L'éducation des élèves autochtones dans les écoles publiques de l'Ontario demeure préoccupante. Compte tenu de la marginalisation sociohistorique des épistémologies des étudiants autochtones dans l'éducation publique, il est nécessaire que les enseignants répondent aux besoins d'apprentissage des étudiants autochtones tout en examinant de manière critique leurs propres attentes en tant qu'enseignants. Les futurs enseignants doivent également être conscients des expériences des élèves autochtones dans les écoles publiques et être en mesure d'y répondre. Cette étude à méthodes mixtes s'est concentrée sur les attentes de plus de 200 futurs enseignants avant toute expérience de stage pratique en classe. L'étude a enquêté sur les perceptions des futurs enseignants quant à la mesure dans laquelle, selon eux, leur programme de formation professionnelle à l'enseignement les prépare à répondre aux besoins d'apprentissage des élèves autochtones. À l'aide d'un cadre de littératie critique, la recherche a également examiné leurs attentes en tant qu'enseignants d'élèves biculturels.

The education of Indigenous children and youth in Ontario's publicly-funded elementary and secondary schools remains a significant concern. Indigenous content and practices have been systematically ignored in the standardized curriculum of public schools at the expense of Indigenous worldviews (Kanu, 2011; Madden, Higgins, & Korteweg, 2013). The Ontario Ministry of Education's (OME) 2007 publication, *The Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework* (hereafter called: the Framework) constitutes a public commitment to serve the needs and interests of the approximately 64,000 Indigenous students enrolled in publicly funded K to 12 schools across the province. Since 2007, the OME has published various reports related to the Framework policy document, including: *Solid Foundation: Second Progress Report on the Implementation of the Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework* (2013), the *Implementation Plan: Ontario First Nation, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework* (2014) and *Strengthening Our Learning Journey* (2018). The respective documents re-state the OME's commitment to improve Indigenous student achievement and engagement in public schools by having principals and teachers respond to Indigenous students' unique learning needs and preferences. Given the socio-historical marginalization of Indigenous student epistemologies in public education, combined with the increase in Indigenous student enrolment in Ontario, it is necessary for teachers to account for not only Indigenous students' cultural diversity and learning needs, but also to examine their own biases (Wiltse, 2015). The literature points directly to the significant influence teachers have on student achievement, and how classroom practices impact student learning (Sarra, 2011).

Prospective teachers completing teaching-practica in a variety of schools and in different classrooms also need to be aware of and responsive to Indigenous students' experiences in public schools. This mixed-methods study focused on the expectations of over 200 teacher candidates prior to any practicum-related experiences in the classroom: specifically, the extent to which they expected the teacher education program to prepare them to address Indigenous students' learning. The study comes in response to the calls to action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015) that identified teacher education programs as needing prospective teachers to "engage in deep reflection about the perceptions they hold for Aboriginal students" (Whitley, 2014, p. 176), and especially, the perceptions they hold in light of the effectiveness of their pedagogy and practice with Indigenous learners (see Bennet & Lancaster, 2013). The study investigated prospective teachers' perceptions of the extent to which their professional teacher education program prepares them to address competently and successfully Indigenous students' learning styles and needs (as reflected in the 2007 policy Framework), while also examining their own biases and assumptions as teachers of bicultural students. Given that the vast majority of teacher-candidates in the study identified as White and hence reflect the broader demographics of the teaching profession across Canada, combined with

the fact that the student population in public schools is becoming increasingly diverse, it is important to examine prospective teachers' perceptions during their professional teacher education program (Banerjee, 2019; Lewis, 2018).

CONTEXT

The literature recognizes the challenge of 21st Century teacher education programs to equip prospective teachers with the necessary skills and capacities to successfully and equitably meet the diverse needs of Indigenous students in public school classrooms (Riley, 2019). According to some scholars, the refusal on the part of educators to contribute actively to issues of decolonization constitute acts of willful denial through avoiding uncomfortable and difficult thoughts and actions (McLaughlin & Whatman, 2015; Riley & Pidgeon, 2019). Studies have pointed to the resistance of female White teacher candidates to engage in authentic and critical conversations about anti-racist education, for instance (see Lynch, Swartz, & Isaacs, 2017). The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015), an outcome of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, addresses the need to decolonize contemporary education practices and policies by meaningfully encompassing Indigenous culture and norms (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). The process of decolonization involves identifying the systemic racism that exists in education and that contributes to Indigenous students often experiencing feelings of alienation and marginalization (Feir, 2016; Gunn et al., 2011), which contributes to their disengagement from the mainstream discourse, teachers' classroom instruction, and standardized means of assessment and evaluation (Cherubini, 2014). While it may be easier, and probably far more comfortable, for teachers to assume traditional classroom practices where difference is celebrated only on specific days of the school year, fragmented from other learning topics and activities, decolonization requires educators to examine the complex relations of power and equity that have historically been left unexamined (Cherubini, 2019; Kostogriz, 2011). The examination of political and economic socially constructed hegemonic relations based largely on privileging white, Eurocentric, and middle-class norms calls for a critical literacy approach (Freire, 1993; Nichols, 2018).

Teacher-directed classroom discussions around difference and diversity can address topics related to critical literacy and contribute to the examination of prevailing stereotypes and taken-for-granted assumptions related to Indigenous values and worldviews (Ball, 2012 Hamilton, 2014; Smythe, 2015). Such an approach to Indigenous students' bicultural needs, teachers' pedagogy, and implicit teacher and student biases positions literacy in a broader context, understood as "more than the ability to read and write [since] it involves the knowledge, skills, and abilities — the competencies — that enable individuals to think critically...develop their knowledge and potential, and participate fully in society" (Government of Alberta, 2009, p. 6; see also McKenna & Robinson, 2014; Orr, Kukner, & Timmons, 2014). A critical literacy approach prioritizes Indigenous students' knowledge in the context of their unique worldviews, and

not simply in juxtaposition to mainstream curriculum and standards. Such an approach is critical of commonplace educational practices that fail to consider how power and equity can significantly limit Indigenous students' engagement in public school education. As Deer (2013) states, "there is evidence that suggests that pre-service teachers experience apprehension with the prospect of integrating Aboriginal perspectives in their training practica and prospective teaching careers" thereby inhibiting their willingness to adopt critical literacy frameworks in their classrooms and stifling the means of decolonization discussed in the TRC Report (p. 180).

Hence, there is a need to better understand how prospective teachers perceive their professional education programs as successfully preparing them for effective practices (Dillon et al., 2011; Hoffman et al., 2011; Zeichner & Conklin, 2008). Among the components of successful teacher education programs are those that focus on exposing prospective teachers to critical discourses related to race and diversity in order to better equip them to implement critical literacy approaches (Hayes, 2019). However, such programs must first aim to raise teacher candidates' critical consciousness by providing opportunities for them to thoughtfully and reflectively consider their biased and distorted beliefs respecting racial identity and inequity (Lewis, 2018). As an example, by incorporating Critical Race Theory (CRT) into teacher education programs of study, teacher candidates can benefit from better understanding how mainstream education practices can have adverse implications on Indigenous students' beliefs and epistemologies (Riley, 2019). This would appear to be especially relevant when one considers that teacher candidates generally prefer to teach students with similar backgrounds as their own and have lower professional and academic expectations for diverse students (Andrews & Gutwein, 2017). The literature makes clear that prospective teachers are often not familiar with Indigenous student experiences and epistemologies and thus resort to creating "their own image of what they want Aboriginal people to be, and this is manipulated by the 'Imaginary figures'" created by the media and Western historical romantic influences. CRT can serve as a constructive critical method to raise teacher candidates' consciousness and establish the necessary context for the implementation of critical literacy practices in their own practice.

Methodology

The online survey was administered to teacher candidates enrolled in the professional teacher education program at an Ontario university in September 2017, prior to candidates' practicum-related experiences in public schools. The survey was completed by 212 teacher candidates enrolled in the concurrent (year 5) and consecutive (year 1 of 2) teacher education programs.

The Concurrent Education program consists of students that have already completed the first four of a five-year program of study. The fifth year consists solely of teacher-education courses. The Consecutive Education program includes students that have already earned a bachelor's degree and have been admitted

to the first of a two-year Bachelor of Education program. Both the concurrent and consecutive programs offer teaching qualifications in one of the primary / junior (kindergarten to grade 3), junior / intermediate (grades 4 to 6), and intermediate / senior (grades 7 to 12) streams.

The survey consisted of 20 Likert-scale statements (ranging from Strongly Disagree — 1 to Strongly Agree — 5) and four open-ended questions. The research under discussion focuses on teacher candidates' responses to the first six quantitative statements, and the comments to the first open-ended question. The six Likert-scale statements included:

My professional teacher education program will...

1. Prepare me to address the bi-cultural needs of Aboriginal students.

2. Prepare me to meaningfully represent Aboriginal students' values and worldviews in my teaching.

3. Encourage me to examine my own biases and dispositions in terms of my teacher identity and teaching practice.

4. Prepare me to adopt a variety of instructional methods to teach Aboriginal students effectively.

5. Prepare me to develop an awareness of the learning styles of Aboriginal students.

6. Prepare me to implement a variety of assessment strategies to evaluate Aboriginal students effectively.

The qualitative open-ended question asked teacher candidates to reply to the following: Describe in detail the kinds of issues that you believe the Aboriginal students in your classroom will find most challenging.

The teacher candidates' demographic information was analyzed by frequency and mean and compared across categories. The qualitative data was subjected to a systematic coding process using Grounded Theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The responses were coded on a line-by-line basis and considered by theme. The patterns and codes between themes and across responses were discussed at length by the principal investigator and an independent researcher. Both analysts considered the qualitative data independently at first and proceeded to include descriptors of key words and phrases into the margins of the responses. The specific properties of each descriptor were compared and discussed between researchers. Each response and set of descriptors were analyzed a second time and coded by category. Only those themes and categories that were determined to contribute towards the theoretical saturation of the data were identified (Charmaz, 2006).

Results

Most respondents (72%) identified themselves as White Canadian, as shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1. *Frequency by Category to Which the Participants Identify Themselves*

CATEGORY	FREQUENCY	%	VALID %	CUMULATIVE %
Aboriginal	1	0,5	0,5	0,5
Canadian-Black	2	0,9	0,9	1,4
Canadian-White	152	71,7	72,0	73,5
European	21	9,9	10,0	83,4
Caribbean	1	0,5	0,5	83,9
Middle Eastern	6	2,8	2,8	86,7
South Asian	7	3,3	3,3	90,0
East Asian	7	3,3	3,3	93,4
Southeast Asian	2	0,9	0,9	94,3
South and Central American	4	1,9	1,9	96,2
Other	8	3,8	3,8	100,0
Total	211	99,5	100,0	
Missing	1	0,5		
Total	212	100,0		

Of the 211 respondents, there were 169 females (80%) as shown in Table 2.

TABLE 2. *Frequency by Gender to Which the Participants Identify Themselves*

GENDER	FREQUENCY	%	VALID %	CUMULATIVE %
Female	169	79,7	80,1	80,1
Male	41	19,3	19,4	99,5
Other (please specify)	1	0,5	0,5	100,0
Total	211	99,5	100,0	
System	1	0,5		
Total	212	100,0		

Considering socio-economic status, 82,5 percent identified themselves as middle class (Table 3).

TABLE 3. *Frequency by Socio-Economic Class in Which the Participants Identify Themselves*

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CLASS	FREQUENCY	%	VALID %	CUMULATIVE %
Lower socio-economic	16	7,5	7,6	7,6
Middle socio-economic	174	82,1	82,5	90,0
Upper socio-economic	19	9,0	9,0	99,1
Other	2	0,9	0,9	100,0
Total	211	99,5	100,0	
Missing	1	0,5		
Total	212	100,0		

The most frequently occurring response about program enrolment were from candidates in the Consecutive Education – Primary / Junior program (P / J) (32%) followed by prospective teachers enrolled in the Concurrent Education stream (I / S) with almost 20 percent of the total, as illustrated in Table 4.

TABLE 4. *Frequency by Program in Which the Participants are Enrolled*

PROGRAM OF STUDY	FREQUENCY	%	VALID %	CUMULATIVE %
Consecutive Education – Primary / Junior (P / J)	68	32,1	32,2	54,5
Concurrent Education (I / S)	42	19,8	19,9	74,4
Concurrent Education (P / J)	30	14,2	14,2	100,0
Consecutive Education – Junior / Intermediate (J / I)	26	12,3	12,3	22,3
Concurrent Education (J / I)	24	11,3	11,4	85,8
Consecutive Education – Intermediate / Senior (I / S)	21	9,9	10	10
Total	211	99,5	100,0	
Missing	1	0,5		
Total	212	100,0		

In response to the first statement, *My professional teacher education program will... prepare me to address the bi-cultural needs of Aboriginal students*, the 62 respondents (34.4%) indicated that they were indifferent towards believing that their professional teacher education program would prepare them to address the bicultural needs of Indigenous students. The indifference response represented the highest frequency. Those who responded with "Strongly Agree" (18) and "Strongly Disagree" (5) represented 10% and 2.8% of the respondents respectively. The second most frequent to the first statement response was "Agree" accounting for 56 teacher candidates (31.1% of the total N). The frequency of responses to the second statement, *My professional teacher education program will prepare me to meaningfully represent Aboriginal students' values and worldviews in my teaching*, reflected the same ranking as the first question. The highest frequency of responses was from those teacher candidates who neither agreed nor disagreed with the second statement and were indifferent to the expectation that the teacher education program would prepare them to represent Indigenous students.

The Likert-scale responses to the third statement, *My professional teacher education program will encourage me to examine my own biases and dispositions in terms of my teacher identity and teaching practice*, were not consistent with the ranking of responses to the previous two statements. The expectation of teacher candidates was quite high that the teacher education program would encourage them to examine their biases. In response to the fourth statement that asked teacher candidates to rate their expectation that their teacher education program will prepare them to adopt a variety of instructional methods to teach Indigenous students effectively, there were nearly as many teacher candidates that indicated their indifference as there were those that agreed with the statement. Like the responses to statement four, the highest frequency of teacher candidates "Agreed" with the statement that asked about their expectation that the teacher education program will prepare them to develop an awareness of the learning styles of Indigenous students, while only 15 fewer teacher candidates indicated their indifference. The frequency by answer responses for the sixth statement, *My professional teacher education program will prepare me to implement a variety of assessment strategies to evaluate Aboriginal students effectively*, matched the ranking from the responses to the first and second statements since the highest number of respondents were "Indifferent" to the statement.

In terms of the qualitative results to the open-ended question, which asked teacher candidates to describe the kinds of issues that they believed the Aboriginal students in their classroom would find most challenging, two core categories were elicited, grounded in the data. The categories were considered across the variables of race, gender, socio-economic status, and program in which the teacher candidate participants were enrolled. The first category was Indigenous students' "Epistemic Conflict with Curriculum" and the second, "Sense of Marginalization in Schools."

Findings

It is important to consider that in the demographic question that invited teacher candidates to identify themselves, all the sample sizes (except for Canadian-White) are relatively small. As a result, the presentation of their findings can be potentially misleading and lead to flawed results, especially for Aboriginal, Canadian-Black, and Southeast Asian, which include one/two teacher candidates. When asked about their expectations regarding the program preparing them to address the bi-cultural needs of Aboriginal students and to meaningfully represent Aboriginal students' worldviews in their teaching, the teacher candidates' most frequent answer for both statements was Indifferent (34,4%). However, as shown in Tables 5 and 6 respectively, 41.1% and 40.6% reported agreeing with those statements.

TABLE 5. *Frequency by Answer (1. My professional teacher education program (faculty of education) will prepare me to address the bi-cultural needs of Aboriginal students.)*

STATEMENT	FREQUENCY	%	VALID %	CUMULATIVE %
Strongly Agree	18	8,5	10,0	100,0
Agree	56	26,4	31,1	90,0
Indifferent	62	29,2	34,4	58,9
Disagree	39	18,4	21,7	24,4
Strongly Disagree	5	2,4	2,8	2,8
Total	180	84,9	100,0	
Missing	32	15,1		
Total	212	100,0		

(41,1% annotated over Valid % column)

TABLE 6. *Frequency by Answer (2. My professional teacher education program will prepare me to meaningfully represent Aboriginal students' worldviews in my teaching.)*

STATEMENT	FREQUENCY	%	VALID %	CUMULATIVE %
Strongly Agree	21	9,9	11,7	100,0
Agree	52	24,5	28,9	88,3
Indifferent	62	29,2	34,4	59,4
Disagree	40	18,9	22,2	25,0
Strongly Disagree	5	2,4	2,8	2,8
Total	180	84,9	100,0	
Missing	32	15,1		
Total	212	100,0		

(40.6% annotated over Valid % column)

These findings suggest that a significant number of the teacher candidates have high expectations that the teacher education program will equip them with the necessary skills and capacities to address both Indigenous students' bicultural needs and meaningfully represent Indigenous worldviews in their pedagogy. Teacher candidates expect that the program will foster a means for them to create the necessary professional capacities to center their practice in these regards. It can be further implied that they expect the teacher education program to assist them in serving the learning needs, values, and traditions of the Indigenous students in their classroom. The favourable responses to these statements may attest to prospective teachers' general awareness of Indigenous students' distinct learning styles and worldviews.

When asked about whether the program encourages teacher candidates to examine their own biases in terms of teacher identity and teaching practice, Table 7 shows that 86% of the respondents agreed that it does, either agreeing or strongly agreeing (see Table 7). Here, too, it is significant to note that the agreement to the statement implies their recognition of their biases as they begin their professional teacher education program.

TABLE 7. *Frequency by Answer (3. My professional teacher education program will encourage me to examine my own biases in terms of my teacher identity and teaching practice.*

STATEMENT	FREQUENCY	%	VALID %	CUMULATIVE %
Strongly Agree	68	32,1	38,0	100,0
Agree	86	40,6	48,0	62,0
Indifferent	16	7,5	8,9	14,0
Disagree	6	2,8	3,4	5,0
Strongly Disagree	3	1,4	1,7	1,7
Total	179	84,4	100,0	
Missing	33	15,6		
Total	212	100,0		

In terms of cross-data analysis, it is interesting that the sole participant that identified as Indigenous indicated that they "Agreed" with statements one and two concerning being prepared to address the bicultural needs of Indigenous students and meaningfully representing Indigenous students' worldviews in their practice, while those who had identified as Black Canadians (N = 2) and South Asian (N = 7) indicated disagreement. While all three demographics represent racialized identities, the expectations concerning their preparedness to account for Indigenous students' unique learning needs and worldviews differ significantly. Moreover, those who identified as Indigenous (N = 1), European (N = 21), East Asian (N = 7) and Southeast Asian (N = 2) were more likely to agree with the first statement in comparison to all other categories, while the teacher candidates that identified as Indigenous, European and Middle Eastern (N = 6) tended to agree with the second statement in comparison to the other

categories. It is interesting that those identifying as European had consistently high expectations that the teacher education program would prepare them to address Indigenous students' distinctiveness as learners and individuals. There is a clear recognition that they will have to critically consider these differences in light of their teaching practices.

For statement two (Aboriginal worldviews), the most frequently occurring response for those that identified as White Canadian (N = 152), East Asian, Southeast Asian, and South and Central American is "Indifferent." Quite intriguingly, this suggests that for most respondents, and namely those that identified as White Canadian, there is no expectation that the teacher education program will prepare them to be attentive to Indigenous students' worldviews. What remains in question, given this finding, is whether teacher candidates are indifferent to the prospect of their professional education supporting their pedagogy, or if they recognize Indigenous students' worldviews as a credible and worthwhile topic in mainstream classrooms. This finding has implications in the research literature that discusses the significant role of teachers' practice on student engagement. When students are provided with the opportunity to speak to the issues that matter most in their lives, their sense of self-affirmation is strengthened, as are their perceptions of being recognized in mainstream classrooms (Daiute, 2010; Janks, 2010; Medina, 2010). It is somewhat problematic that the sample of respondents that identified as White Canadian (N = 152) remain non-committal to the implications raised by this statement. It may be that the White Canadian respondents (73% of the total N) might be merely "Indifferent" to the possibility of becoming better prepared to shape their pedagogy in a manner that is more responsive to the historically marginalized demographic of Indigenous students.

In terms of the third statement (Teacher biases), all the categories (apart from Middle Eastern — N = 6) reported "Agree" or "Strongly Agree." As for a comparison of gender, female survey respondents were more likely to agree with the third statement, but the reverse is true for statements one (Bicultural needs) and two (Indigenous worldviews). Here, too, it may be premature to infer the significance of these trends. At first glance it can be surmised that male teacher candidates have higher expectations of the professional teacher education program. One could speculate that females are more receptive to the process of introspection and to the possibility of admitting to predetermined biases regarding their professional identity and practice. Yet, more substantial findings may reside in comparing means and frequencies across gender for all three statements. In that instance, the initial inferences related to expectations and agreeableness may be examined more thoroughly.

The teacher candidates enrolled in the J / I professional certification stream across both concurrent (N = 24) and consecutive (N = 26) programs of study were more likely to agree with the first statement (Bicultural needs) than those teacher candidates from all other programs. The respondents from the consecutive I / S

(N = 21) and consecutive education P / J program (N = 68) were more inclined to agree with the second statement (Indigenous worldviews) in comparison to those enrolled in the other programs of study. These trends based on teacher candidates' expectations prior to any teaching-related practicum experience seem to be more random than informed by research. A more detailed and possibly telling finding emerged when the results from the category of teacher candidates' program of study were tallied in the post-survey responses (collected at the end of the same academic year) and subsequently cross-examined with the same data from the pre-survey under discussion. The post-survey results based on the teacher candidates' experiences during their teaching practicum yielded a more accurate representation of teacher candidates' perceptions considering their actual experiences in the classroom and the extent to which each program of study influenced teacher candidates' abilities and capacities to account for the unique needs and traditions of Indigenous students. It will be noteworthy to compare if the same trends of those more likely to agree with the respective statements remain consistent, or if indeed teacher candidates' experiences in schools alters their initial expectations. The same may hold true for the cross-comparison results based on socio-economic status (SES), where those respondents that identified as having an upper SES (N = 19) were more inclined to agree with the second statement than those that identified as being from the lower (N = 16) and middle (N = 174) SES.

In respect to the fourth statement (Methods), nearly half of the total number of teacher candidate participants indicated a favourable response of their expectation that the teacher education program will prepare them to adopt a variety of instructional methods to teach Indigenous students efficiently. The literature attests to the importance of teachers' implementing pedagogical practices that create the necessary spaces for students to speak about the issues of greatest relevance to their lives (Schroeter, 2013). To engage students in critical conversations facilitates their development and growth and allows them to examine concepts of identity and belonging (Schroeter & James, 2014). This may be especially relevant for students who do not identify with mainstream culture (Freire, 1993; Mahiri, 1998; Morrell, 2002). An encouraging preliminary trend is that the teacher candidates expected that the teacher education program will enhance their competency to teach Indigenous students, and that they recognize that significant pedagogical differences exist to more appropriately reach these students.

Conversely, however, the second most frequent response to this statement related to adopting a variety of instructional methods to teach Indigenous students effectively was "Indifferent" (31.8%). This result will be particularly important to further scrutinize in a comparison with the post-survey data to consider how respondents' experiences in the program heightened or minimized their sense of indifference. The same observation holds true for the results of the fifth statement (Learning styles) since 49.7% of respondents either "Agreed" (38%)

or "Strongly Agreed" (11.7%) that the teacher education program will develop their awareness of Indigenous students' learning styles. Nearly 30% of the teacher candidates, though, were "Indifferent" to this expectation. In the sixth statement (Assessment), the most frequent response was "Indifferent." Over 35% of the teacher candidates were indifferent to the expectation that the teacher education program will prepare them to implement a variety of assessment strategies to evaluate Indigenous students effectively. Teacher candidates seem to be more apprehensive about the topic of assessing Indigenous students fairly, perhaps in part because assessment and evaluation practices may feel ambiguous for prospective teachers, especially at the beginning of their career. Here as well the post-survey data will be useful, especially in light of their practice teaching with Indigenous students.

The cross-data analysis for statements four (Methods), five (Learning styles), and six (Assessment) also yield some noteworthy findings. The participant that identified as Indigenous, 50% of the total N of 7 that identified as Southeast Asian, nearly half of the total of 152 White Canadian teacher candidates, and the majority of the Europeans and East Asians "Agreed" or "Strongly Agreed" with the fourth statement (Methods); however, both of the Black Canadian teacher candidates "Disagreed" or "Strongly Disagreed" with not only the fourth statement (Methods), but with statements five (Learning styles) and six (Assessment) as well. For the Black Canadian respondents, there is little to no expectation that the teacher education program will prepare them to develop appropriate and successful instructional methods to suit the diverse learning needs of Indigenous students, just as there is a diminished expectation that the program will provide them with the professional capacities to assess effectively this demographic of learners. These pre-service teacher candidates did not perceive their pedagogy to be in line with the strength-based perspectives of the diverse students in their classrooms (see Gay, 2010; Sleeter & Owuor, 2011).

European teacher candidates (N = 21) showed the highest percentages of agreement for statements five (Learning styles) and six (Assessment) (61% and 56% respectively). This demographic had the highest expectation that the program will heighten their awareness of Indigenous students' learning styles and prepare them to assess these students appropriately.

The concurrent student respondents came with substantial exposure to education-related courses offered in the second, third, and fourth years of the undergraduate program. In the fifth year of study the course offerings are exclusively education-based. It is interesting that for the category labelled as Program, respondents from all the programs (except for concurrent P / J and concurrent I / S) tended to "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" with the fourth (Methods) and fifth (Learning styles) statement. Students from the concurrent P / J and concurrent I / S programs were more likely to "Disagree" (rather than "Agree") with the sixth statement (Assessment) as well. Their disagreement might suggest that their

skepticism about the program's potential to prepare them in these key areas stems from their experiences and learning in the education courses throughout the concurrent program. It may also imply that a focus on Indigenous student learning and learners was not considered a viable component of their program to date, and as a result, they do not anticipate it being salient in future coursework.

The qualitative findings (centered on the two core categories of Indigenous students' "Epistemic Conflict with Curriculum" and their "Sense of Marginalization in Schools") complemented many of the findings from the quantitative section of the survey.

1. Epistemic Conflict with Curriculum. Teacher candidates anticipated overwhelmingly that the Indigenous students in their classrooms would experience epistemic conflict with the provincial curriculum. Typical of many others, one participant suggested that Indigenous students would have difficulty "identifying with the curriculum being covered" (concurrent I / S), while another anticipated that these students would have trouble "relating to the curriculum [and] seeing themselves represented in class materials" (concurrent I / S). Respondents consistently suggested that Indigenous students will not have the same access to curriculum resources as those afforded to mainstream students. Others anticipated that Indigenous students would experience profound tensions "dealing with histories that are heavily influenced by western colonialism and discourse" (consecutive I / S), and with "relat[ing] to a curriculum that is not built for all cultures" (consecutive P / J).

Teacher candidates anticipated that Indigenous students would struggle with the epistemic differences between western and Indigenous paradigms of learning, including "knowledge that is valued" — understood as dominant Eurocentric paradigms (consecutive I / S) — in their classrooms. Many teacher candidates suggested that Indigenous students would feel tension in having to "conform to the western curriculum" (concurrent P / J) therefore experience "difficulties connecting to the activities taught [during] placement because the Ontario curriculum supports Westernized culture and values" (concurrent P / J); similarly, as different prospective teachers indicated, they believed that Indigenous students would have to negotiate "rigid class structures [including] the white belief-systems present in the curriculum" (concurrent I / S) as well as negotiate "connecting with the content, texts and teaching practices that are used" (concurrent P / J). Teacher candidates cited Indigenous students' distinct learning needs, inferring Indigenous students' preferences for more holistic paradigms of teaching and learning (Preston, 2016), such as the interconnectedness of all living things as a belief that is central to Indigenous peoples' worldviews (Andrews, 2004; Atleo, 2004). Such paradigms, the teacher candidates anticipated, are not necessarily a meaningful component of public education. In the curricular and pedagogical spaces of mainstream classrooms, teacher candidates anticipated that Indigenous students would have to overcome these difficult circumstances to benefit from

their learning. Foreseeing that these epistemic discrepancies would exist in their classrooms, teacher candidates believed that they would have to be particularly attentive to the nexus of curriculum and knowledge in relation to the distinct learning needs and preferences of Indigenous students.

For some teacher candidates, the main tension resided not only in the misinformed "expectation that they [Indigenous students] will learn the same way as the other students" (concurrent P / J), but in not having their "culture reflected accurately in classroom lessons and literature" (concurrent P / J) and in the further unlikelihood of "having educators understand [Indigenous students'] specific needs" (concurrent J / I). Some respondents questioned how Indigenous students in their classroom could be expected to "relate to literary works describing post-colonial life" (consecutive J / I), especially since subjects like history are often "taught incorrectly or without proper emphasis" (consecutive P / J) on Indigenous perspectives. Without "accurate representation in the course content" (concurrent I / S), many respondents struggled with how Indigenous students would deal successfully with the "barriers in interpreting different representations" (consecutive P / J) of themselves in the classroom. Grounded throughout the responses were references to Indigenous students' struggles in being expected to "assimilate to a curriculum that was written with the intent to ensure all students, regardless of their diversity, are taught to the same standard" (consecutive I / S). Teacher candidates appeared to recognize that structural barriers may indeed exist for Indigenous students, and that these will have genuine implications for their practice as future teachers. Teacher candidates perceived that Indigenous students have had "their history overlooked, misrepresented [and] simplified in a way that makes them feel unwanted or unimportant" (concurrent P / J) and as a result, will struggle with "acquiring and maintaining a passion for school when the education system has failed their family members" (concurrent P / J).

Relatedly, a student commented that "it will be difficult for Aboriginal students to avoid developing a resistance to learning through an education system designed by white people that places value on skills and knowledge traditionally valued by white society" (concurrent I / S). Teacher candidates expected that significant differences will exist for Indigenous students in the discourse of mainstream classrooms. These critical perceptions are consistent with the fact that such epistemic tensions have not been adequately addressed in teachers' normative practices. Many acknowledged the difficulty of being a prospective and then practicing teacher in an Ontario "system of education that looks favourably on students who self-identify with a higher socio-economic status and who suit the Eurocentric values [of] our education system [at the risk of those Indigenous students] who will not have any connection to subject areas and be susceptible to low-interest and low-grade correlations" (concurrent I / S).

2. Sense of Marginalization in Schools and Classrooms. The second category grounded in the data related to teacher candidates' expectations that the Indigenous students in their classrooms would experience learning on the proverbial margins of the mainstream. Many anticipated that Indigenous students' low "representation in literature, media, history and in teachers" (concurrent I / S) would leave them "feeling isolated" (consecutive P / J) in the curricular and social environments of their classroom. Other teacher candidates expected that Indigenous students would have difficulty "fitting in with [other] students" (consecutive J / I) as well as with the lack of "equity in education" (consecutive P / J). Respondents expected that Indigenous students, in feeling disconnected from the traditional values and social experiences of mainstream schools, would feel less engaged, their historical consciousness of education (including concepts related to oppression and isolation) disruptive of genuine engagement in school. Typical of other participants, one respondent stated that Indigenous students "will struggle specifically with [non-Indigenous] students who are ignorant of Indigenous history" (consecutive I / S), which will contribute to preventing them from "having a voice" (consecutive P / J) in learning environments that "stereotype and erase their history" (consecutive P / J). Many teacher candidates suggested that Indigenous students "might lack a sense of identity in the classroom" (concurrent J / I) and will "have difficulty relating to a culture that is not theirs" (consecutive P / J). Quite intriguing, however, was the relative absence of prospective teachers' comments related to perceiving themselves as agents of change (see also Sailors, 2019). While teacher candidates noted the struggles they expected Indigenous students to experience in their classrooms, far less attention was invested on their part in describing their ability to create invitational learning spaces that would honour Indigenous students' unique learning preferences and needs.

Teacher candidates' expectations speak to what they anticipate being the human toll that the effects of marginalization will have on Indigenous learners. They anticipated that the Indigenous students would be positioned differently, from a social perspective, than non-Indigenous learners. These perceptions are supported by critical literature on the hegemonic practices that serve to marginalize certain demographics of students (Pirbhai-Illich, 2013). Teacher candidates considered this position of difference as controversial since it would negatively affect the way Indigenous students perceive themselves and are perceived by others. The prospective teacher respondents seemed to consider closely the outcomes of this marginalization, as they tried to grapple with what they expected would be a very complex issue in their classrooms. Teacher candidates speculated that these potential difficult and marginalizing issues will contribute to Indigenous students' negative "self-image [and] self-concept of academic potential" (consecutive P / J). According to the teacher candidates, the marginalization that Indigenous students will experience would hinder dramatically their development of a positive mindset towards school, never mind the troubling implications for

Indigenous students' self-image. There was an implied understanding on the part of teacher candidates that contemporary teacher practices are not necessarily intentional in addressing the marginalization that they perceive Indigenous students will experience.

Many respondents cited the "hidden curriculum" (concurrent J / I) as yet another source of marginalization, since Indigenous students may feel "as though their culture is not of importance" (concurrent P / J), which included references to classroom discussions around social justice issues and the oppression of Indigenous peoples as being potentially "personal and emotional topics" (concurrent J / I) for Indigenous students. Teacher candidates cited issues of "racism" (concurrent P / J), "isolation" (consecutive P / J), and "bullying" (consecutive J / I) as well as difference "in relation to belief statements, daily practices, appearances, and family origins" (concurrent P / J) as direct outcomes of a hidden curriculum that positions Indigenous learners in a discourse of difference. Some teacher candidates anticipated that other students will default to "stereotyping" Indigenous students based on inaccurate perceptions "that have been distorted over the years" (consecutive J / I), thus further complicating Indigenous students' attempts at "finding a sense of belonging" in public schools. Indigenous students will experience "teasing by others," and especially from "culturally-insensitive students," contributing to their feelings of marginalization.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Research suggests that creating invitational and safe learning environments that are inclusive can strengthen students' motivation to be engaged in their learning (Preston & Claypool, 2013; Yearington, 2010). This is not to suggest that doing so is an easy task for teachers, let alone teacher candidates. Teacher candidates expected that Indigenous students would not be able to adapt easily to the challenges presented by "their" Indigenous difference. There was a recognition that feelings of marginalization may be realities that are experienced daily by Indigenous students in public schools, and that these feelings will have wide-spread implications for the various relational and situational contexts of the teachers' future classrooms. The post-survey administered to the same sample of teacher candidates after their teaching practicum assignments in different schools yielded significant observations in the context of the pre-survey data discussed in this paper. Namely, teacher candidates' experiences in public school classrooms led to more negative interpretations of their professional ability to adopt, in culturally appropriate and sensitive ways, Indigenous students' traditions, customs, and worldviews. Teacher candidates, based on the ranking of the Likert-scale statements, did not feel prepared to meaningfully account for both Indigenous students' epistemologies, and their own abilities to assess and evaluate Indigenous student learning. Moreover, the testimonials in their post-practicum reflections referred specifically to the disconnect they anticipated Indigenous

students to experience across the curricular and social spaces of public schools and classrooms.

Most teacher candidates, across all comparisons, groups and categories in the study, framed their responses in the language of "difference" to describe their anticipations of Indigenous student marginalization. Like the majority of teacher candidates in this study, preservice and in-service teachers across Canada are largely white, monolingual, and middle-class, even though student diversity is on the rise and that Indigenous student enrolment in provincially publicly funded schools continues to increase (Richards, 2008; Ryan et al., 2009).

Based on the findings of this study, a number of key recommendations can be made. First, it is noteworthy that the large sample size of White Canadian teacher candidates reflects the traditionally homogenous nature of the teaching profession in Ontario and Canada. While it is beyond the scope of this discussion to consider the merits of tailoring admission policies to include more culturally diverse students and hence, a culturally diverse teaching body in public schools, at the very least it captures the growing pressure on what is often a tenuous issue. The demographics around the homogenous nature of the profession may provide faculties of education and governing professional bodies with justification to approach the issue of teacher diversity more strategically. This recognizes, however, that diversity is a multi-dimensional concept and arguably, not a consideration that can be based on race alone. For example, diversity of opinion may also be considered, in both conceptual and operational terms, as an equally significant variable.

Second, preservice teacher education programs need to invest significant time and energy in developing systematic approaches to prospective teachers' critical consciousness. Specific and planned opportunities for teacher candidates to examine their perceptions and experiences with racist and oppressive education practices would be instrumental in their negotiation of the competing tensions between their assumptions and the lived experiences of the classroom. Such approaches may include inquiry practices, scaffolded critical reflections, and safe supported spaces in which to have these discussions. The research results also point to the importance of professional teacher education programs' providing school-based placements that expose teacher candidates to classroom climates and learning that include diverse Indigenous student populations (Civis et al., 2019). Such placements can be instrumental in developing prospective teachers' abilities to create the necessary learning climate in their classrooms to sustain meaningful conversations about race and inequity—something that the literature identifies as a rare occurrence in public school (Sosa, 2019), due in part to the difficulty prospective teachers experience adopting pedagogical practices that are not necessarily culturally familiar (Black & Hachkowski, 2019).

Third, by positioning anti-racist and anti-oppressive education practices as a prominent component of teacher education, prospective teachers can participate regularly and consistently in identifying and deconstructing the structural inequities that marginalize Indigenous students in publicly funded classrooms. The process may require prospective teachers to consult with the relevant anti-racist and decolonizing literature and incorporate their findings in the context of the schools and classrooms where they complete their teaching assignments. An embodied practice and research model would help illuminate prospective teachers' awareness of specific practices that impact Indigenous students' learning, traditions, and community (Freeman, 2007).

Lastly, Indigenous knowledge and histories needs to be meaningfully incorporated into teacher education curriculum as a mandated part of the program. While it is recognized that most teacher education programs across Canada offer prospective teachers elective courses of study, it behooves universities to offer programs that successfully embed comprehensive perspectives that enable teacher candidates to disrupt their assumptions and biases through decolonizing lenses (DiGiacomo & Gutiérrez, 2017). It is particularly important for decolonizing and anti-oppressive education strategies to align course-based readings and assignments to the realities of Indigenous students in public school classrooms (Battiste, 2019; Louie et al., 2017).

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