

*Transcultural Perspective Development:
Implications for Cultivating Our Well-being as
Emerging Academics*

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ABSTRACT: It is important that PhD students be provided opportunities for holistic growth and development within a university's increasingly multicultural environment. This article explores the transcultural journey of five doctoral students as they host their colleagues from other cultures, during a doctoral seminar designed to provide collaborative opportunities for the support of the intellectual, emotional, physical, and spiritual dimensions required to cultivate students' well-being as emerging academics. Linkages are made between transculturalism and well-being as the authors use the transcultural framework and an autobiographical lens to explore students' reflections and to extract ideas critical to the support of students' well-being. At the same time they highlight the criticality of institutions offering occasions for students to develop their transcultural competencies throughout their PhD journey.

Keywords: well-being, transcultural journey, holistic development

RESUMÉ: Il est important que l'on fournisse aux étudiants au doctorat des occasions de croissance et de développement au sein de l'environnement de plus en plus multiculturel de l'université. Dans cet article, nous explorons le parcours transculturel de cinq étudiants au doctorat qui ont accueillis leurs collègues d'autres cultures pendant un séminaire doctoral. Celui-ci a été conçu pour fournir des occasions de collaboration en plus de soutenir les dimensions intellectuelles, émotionnelles, physiques et spirituelles qui sont nécessaires au développement du bien-être de futurs universitaires. Les auteurs se servent d'un

cadre transculturel pour faire des liens entre la transculturalité et le bien-être des étudiants. Une lentille autobiographique servait à explorer les réflexions des étudiants pour enfin soutenir leur bien-être. Les auteurs indiquent qu'il est important pour les institutions d'offrir aux étudiants des occasions de développer leurs compétences transculturelles au cours de leurs études.

Mots clés : le bien-être, le parcours transculturel, le développement global

Overview

This paper examines the transcultural journey of five doctoral students as they explore how cultivating a transcultural perspective on research impacts them as emerging scholars and contributes to their individual well-being. Transcultural learning is a process in which individuals from different cultures meet and, through transcending their cultural perspectives, are able to interact with each other and ultimately derive a better understanding of themselves and others, as they learn to know, to do, to live with others, and to be (Aldridge, Kilgo, & Christensen, 2014; Wulf, 2010).

First, we will outline the criticality of a focus on the well-being of emerging academics within the context of a community of scholars comprised, in this instance, of two professors and five PhD students who participated in an international doctoral research seminar. Next, in the theoretical framework, we provide information about the context of the study, grounded in transcultural literature. The research methodology and design are followed by students' individual accounts of their holistic growth as emerging students. The discussion explores and analyzes the student accounts, extracting indicators of student growth and change as they interact with each other and with others, and derive new understandings of themselves and each other within the multicultural context. Finally, the conclusion summarizes the main ideas covered and presents implications for the doctoral journey.

On the doctoral journey there is often a singular focus on intellectual development, at the expense of the needed emotional, physical, and spiritual dimensions required to cultivate our well-being as emerging academics. Indeed, Palmer and Zajonc (2010) argued that the emphasis on intellectual development for both students and faculty members comes at a high price, where academics work in relative isolation with little hope of finding connection or community with each other. Research has shown

that greater engagement in learning experiences within the academic community impacts students' well-being; increasing their self-confidence, personal growth, quality of health, wholeness, resiliency, flourishing, self-efficacy, self-esteem, and self-understanding (Field, 2011, Keeling, 2014). The benefits go beyond economics and employability to attitudinal and behavioural influences, which directly impact individuals' well-being (Field, 2011). We argue that a critical dimension of well-being for us, as emerging academics, is manifested in the opportunity to experience a genuine community of scholars, beyond those in our area of research, where we have time to offer our personal stories and share our experiences and ideas (Palmer & Zajonc, 2010).

Recently, we, as five doctoral students accompanied by two faculty members, had the opportunity to participate in an event where we experienced such a community. The International Doctoral Research Seminar, held at the University of Calgary in the Werklund School of Education, brought together culturally and linguistically diverse doctoral students from Queensland University of Technology and Beijing Normal University. This multicultural environment provided opportunities for us to connect on a cultural-emotional level as we related with each other and with others, culturally, socially, and personally. We spent a week exploring how cultivating a transcultural perspective on research could have an impact on us as emerging scholars. Developing a transcultural perspective is "rooted in the quest to define shared interests and common values across cultural and national borders" (Slimbach, 2005, p. 205). Further, Palmer & Zajonc (2010) extended the description of a community of scholars by inviting us to bring our knowledge of relationships within our own culture to the process of cultivating relationships across cultures (Slimbach, 2005). Indeed, the ideas encapsulated in these propositions mirrored our experience and reminded us that the development of our own transcultural perspective was about so much more than a cognitive understanding of this concept. While we did spend time deepening our theoretical understanding in small group discussions and listening to lectures, we also travelled to the Blackfoot Nation and to our nearby mountains. These field trips allowed us to explore our Indigenous history and culture, as well as deepen our connection to nature, adding to our understanding of our own cultures and history in relationship with others. In addition, as we ate meals together, shopped together, and went for walks, these shared experiences allowed us to discuss, understand, and make sense of each other's experiences as doctoral students. In this paper, drawing on transcultural learning (Epstein, 2012; Slimbach,

2005; and Wulf, 2010), and utilizing an autobiographical methodology, we will explore how our experiences in this seminar moved well beyond intellectual development toward building a community of scholars that cultivated our holistic growth and well-being as new scholars.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that informs this research is the transcultural model of learning, and transculturalism, with their connection to well-being as an integral part of one's holistic development. The central concept in a transcultural model is an understanding that cultural interactions contribute to our holistic growth by allowing us to experience difference and alterity through our exchanges with each other (Wulf, 2010), which ultimately develops our transcultural competence. As a new way of seeing the world and understanding ourselves, the transcultural model expands cultural and ethnic boundaries, interactions, and meaning-making, where learners and educators are both products and producers of culture (Aldridge, Kilgo, & Christensen, 2014; Lewis, 2002; Slimbach, 2005). Taking further the notion of transcending cultures across and beyond their traditional borders, Epstein (2009) noted that this is the next step in the ongoing human quest for freedom from one's language(s) and culture(s) in which one was born and educated and is a new emerging sphere in which humans position themselves, freely choosing elements of transculture. The notion of transculture is a continuum, encompassing all cultures, and the gaps and blank spaces between them. *Trans* brings the notion of dynamics, moving through space across borders (Kraidy, 2005), expanding the limits beyond a single identity, switching between cultures and languages as a mode of being, and having a sense of continuum, discourse, and transformation (Berry & Epstein, 1999; Epstein, 2012).

The question then is—how do we create a dynamic learning space where there is a possibility for individuals to develop transcultural competencies? In his essay, “The Transcultural Journey,” Slimbach (2005) proposed a cognitive “map” for developing transcultural learning, including six broad categories: 1) perspective consciousness, 2) ethnographic skills, 3) global awareness, 4) world learning, 5) foreign language proficiency, and 6) affective development. His holistic approach to transcultural learning borrows heavily from existing research in social anthropology and international education. The innovative part of his model is its recommendation to learners and educators to move

beyond the traditional classrooms and structured presentations to the community—engaging oneself in fieldwork, in a real space that is immersed, immediate, and emotional. Slimbach argued that this model of education invites learners to bring their knowledge within their own culture to the process of creating and cultivating relationships and interactions across cultures. In the case of the seminar, this meant providing opportunities for participants from different cultures to meet, interact, and collaborate both within and beyond the classroom. Not only were the participants from different cultures, but they also were immersed within other cultures through their field work, such as visits to the Blackfoot reserve and through trips to various sites. The experience of doing so creates opportunities for acquiring a set of personal attitudes, social sensitivities, and intellectual skills—all the elements of transcultural learning that rarely can be attained solely in the regular classroom. Slimbach suggested that the attainable ideal of the transcultural person is one who is able “to question constantly the source of one’s cultural assumptions and ethical judgment, leading to the habit of seeing things through the minds and hearts of others” (Slimbach, 2005, p. 206).

Consideration of this holistic approach reveals that transculturalism offers a space where an individual’s intellectual growth and well-being can be achieved through social interactions in an environment that supports physical, mental, social, and spiritual development and understanding (Cohen et al, 2013). Thus, the holistic multi-dimensional context provides a lens through which scholars communicate, interact, and position themselves in a dynamic environment, while developing their potentials and contributing to the community. Furthermore, Keeling (2014) reinforced the necessity for multi-dimensional aspects of development and growth by defining well-being as a holistic quality, essential for human flourishing and sustainability in higher education. Indeed, Gabb (2006) connected transcultural interactions and well-being in her exploration of cultural and psychosocial dynamics in higher education, specifically the multicultural classroom. She posited that a transcultural approach is a useful framework through which to develop awareness, knowledge, and skills required for the support and management of the multicultural classroom. In turn, Keeling (2014) broadened the scope beyond the classroom, asserting that well-being in an academic environment is achieved in engagement and interaction between staff and faculty, inside and outside of the classroom. Herein, the core value of well-being coincides with the holistic model of transcultural education: inviting learners to bring their

knowledge of relationships within their own culture(s) to the process of cultivating relationships and engaging in the community, as well as experiencing and exchanging ideas with each other (Slimbach, 2005; Wulf, 2010; Palmer & Zajonc, 2010). This reinforces the connection between a transcultural model of learning and well-being, providing us with the theoretical framework to analyze these doctoral scholars' experiences in the International Doctoral Seminar. In turn, we reveal that this experience represents an exemplar of how a holistic process of learning can, by cultivating intellectual growth, resilience, relationships, and community engagement, positively enhance the well-being of doctoral students.

Research Methodology and Design

Our research methodology and design was guided by autobiography, described as “texts, written from a first-person perspective, that provide the history of one’s life” (Mathias & Smith, 2016, p. 205) or, in this instance, our respective interpretive reflections of it, and how the International Doctoral Research Seminar cultivated our well-being as emerging scholars. A particular advantage of the insider perspective offered by an autobiographical approach, as opposed to a biographical approach and/or interpretive qualitative research methodology, which relies upon “the other’s” interpretation of events or experiences, is that we, the authors, had a chance to reflect upon and write about the complex intertwining of the experience of the seminar and the associated impact this had on ourselves from a more holistic, multi-layered perspective (Mathias & Smith, 2016). However, autobiography has also been challenged for the likelihood that individual accounts of an experience will not be accurate records of what transpired; in fact, our memories can often distort what has occurred. Freeman (2012) posited that, “their notorious unwieldiness as ‘data’ (how, after all, can autobiographies be measured and ‘contained’ and transformed into suitable objects of social science inquiry?), has led to their occupying a questionable place in qualitative research” (p. 48). Yet, Freeman (2012) went on to say that autobiography has the ability to explore the human experience in all of its complexity, serving as a more honest and authentic portrayal of the human experience embedded within the broader culture.

Prior to, during, and after the week-long seminar, each of us, as doctoral students, reflected upon the impact of this experience upon us as emerging scholars by keeping a reflective journal. We shared pieces of our writing with each other in an online platform

and met several times to dialogue and explore the connection between our experiences and cultivating a transcultural perspective within a community of scholars. This process has resulted in five autobiographical accounts that were developed in response to the following question: Has my experience in this seminar—focused on developing a transcultural perspective as a researcher—moved beyond intellectual development toward building a community of scholars? If so, how and why did this occur, and has this contributed to my holistic growth as a scholar and my sense of well-being?

After offering the autobiographical accounts of our experiences and perceptions of the International Doctoral Seminar, the three first authors of this article separately analyzed these accounts, drawing on our theoretical frameworks of transcultural development and well-being, with the intent of unpacking the “learnings” that emerged from these accounts. As well, they, during their individual process of analysis, returned to the focus of our study (Merriam, 2000) to guide their work: a) how to create and sustain spaces within higher education that offer the potential of developing a community of scholars through the process of developing transcultural competencies and; b) to reflect on how these spaces contribute to our well-being as emerging scholars. In turn, the first three authors met to share their respective preliminary analysis of the five autobiographies and, refined and deepened their thematic analysis of five autobiographical accounts, ensuring that they not only highlighted similarities across the experiences of the five scholars but also unique perspectives and areas of engagement.

Context of the Study

In order to contextualize our autobiographical reflections and the ensuing findings and analysis, we first offer a brief overview of the International Doctoral Seminar. The preparations for the International Doctoral Seminar, held at the Werklund School of Education, in Calgary, began with several meetings and discussions regarding how to be a good host. It was interesting to discover that no one from the hosting group originated in Calgary, or Canada for that matter, and that we would participate in the activities of this week-long event from an outsiders’ point of view. In one of the meetings, we divided some of the hosting tasks for the week. For example, some of us would welcome our guests at the airport and take them to the hotel.

On the first day of the actual seminar, we were put into small groups of three scholars (one group of four) from the three different universities and we, as students from the hosting

institution, were responsible for the well-being of our colleagues in our group. The goals for our small group interaction were to talk about our research methodologies, how we saw research as new scholars, and to prepare a symposium that we would present to our colleagues on the closing day. We also wanted to build a community of scholars, a transcultural space in which to cultivate our well-being. To do so, we needed to get out of the classroom context and experience outdoor activities and other settings. Our first trip was to Johnson Canyon and the town of Banff, where we spent a full day hiking, walking, and shopping together. A few days later, we visited two schools in the Siksika Nation, followed by a stop at the Blackfoot museum. At the Siksika elementary school, children welcomed us with a traditional dance in which we were invited to participate. Music, dance, and exchange of gifts were part of the celebration. In addition to these visits and the classroom discussion in small groups, we welcomed guest lecturers—two faculty members and a PhD student from the Werklund School of Education—who spoke about the Canadian educational system, Indigenous education in Canada, and research methodologies associated with specific epistemologies. All these activities allowed us to reflect on ourselves as scholars, not only from an intellectual point of view, but also as complex cultural human beings.

Our Accounts of Holistic Growth as Emerging Scholars

Ayman

For me, my learning experience in the International Doctoral Seminar was a continuous source of happiness and satisfaction, spirituality, and mindfulness. Thinking back on my journey in the doctoral seminar together with a group of students and faculty members and trying to highlight some of the learning experiences during this journey, I will concentrate on our practice of caring that shifted our focus to understanding the needs and cultures of others and to think and act accordingly. An important starting point was the pre-seminar workshop on hosting. For example, one of our interesting conversations following this workshop was about the meaning of “home.” The diversity of perspectives and responses within the group enriched our conversations and experiences, and new understandings of ourselves and others started to emerge and evolve.

In order to be well, feel well, and do well, we need to understand and appreciate the diversity of our communities, to be able to transform ourselves and to communicate with others. For

example, before participating in the International Doctoral Seminar as a Canadian participant, I never thought about what “home” might mean to me. My immediate and trivial answer to such a question was “family.” Although since then, this hasn’t changed, a new understanding of “what family means” started to evolve. Journeying together with such a caring and thoughtful group of scholars was a precious spiritual experience of feeling and being home with my caring family. Feeling safe, effective, connected, heard, and a sense of belonging were the essence of such feelings.

Fanny

“Intercultural experiences pose inevitable challenges to one’s personal identity and communication skills [...we] learn how to deal with unexpectedness, ambiguity and otherness” (Lázár, 2003, p. 7). The Werklund group of students embodied Canadian diversity; none of us were born in Canada and this commonality cemented our unity. English being a second language for almost everyone, negotiations started right away. I quickly understood that I could take risks without being judged, creating a certain sense of well-being. At first, I felt that conversations were messy, going in many directions at once. However, progressively adapting to the musicality of our Englishes, we were able to create common spaces of understanding: we trusted each other enough to share cherished memories and we recreated “our home” in Calgary. Pre-seminar meetings improved my abilities as a host as I displayed empathy to people struggling with the Anglophone communication style. What I thought were tensions at the onset were in fact cultural differences in communicative practices based on the low context communicative culture prevalent in Anglophone Canada. The workshop on “hosting” had actually taught us a certain fluidity in approaching others’ cultures. I was able to put these ideas into practice by finding commonalities between cultures, relating to my own experience, and gradually building a sense of belonging. Working collaboratively in a transcultural setting promoted my well-being and contributed to an overall feeling of wholeness.

An anecdote will illustrate the irony of self-identity negotiation. Here I was, French (from France), yet I was a de facto “Canadian” and visible Westerner. I was designated to order pizza for the newly arrived Chinese delegates, an activity I had never done before, and which made me feel quite uncomfortable. For me there were slippages in the idea of “home.” Home for me is France, my country of origin, but hosting implicitly conveys the idea of being “at home,” a notion that constantly evolves when you are a newcomer, and these shifting positions require constant negotiations, including with oneself as I moved in this instance to

consider Canada home. The seminar has definitively made me grow holistically as a person and emerging scholar, who now understands how critical the balance between intellectual development and well-being can be.

Xueqin

There is a well-known saying by Confucius: “when walking in the company of other men, there must be one I can learn something from.” This well summarized the experiences I had in the doctoral seminar. Learning took place not only during the workshops, but also in our field trips and personal conversations. The whole event enriched our life experiences and expanded our worldviews, which then effectively sustained our academic pursuit.

I would like to highlight two experiences from the seminar. The first is my interaction with the Chinese doctoral students. I had more conversations with the Chinese students because of my own Chinese background. We chatted in Mandarin on both academic issues and general topics; such as the relationship between doctoral students and their supervisors, employment opportunities, funding, or even air pollution in Beijing. For example, I learned that one of the criteria for Ph.D. holders to obtain a Beijing Hukou (registered permanent residence) was to have obtained the degree before the age of 35. I also remember how a Chinese student was surprised at the differences in the purposes of pursuing the doctoral degree between Chinese students and the students from Canada and Australia. For my own part, these conversations made me cherish more the opportunity of doing the doctoral research in Canada, the freedom to choose my research topic, and the support from my colleagues and professors.

The other experience was associated with the learning experiences focused on the Indigenous people and culture in Canada. Although I have been in Canada for more than four years, I have very limited knowledge about Indigenous people and their culture. Thus, the presentation on Indigenous education given by an Indigenous doctoral student, the field trip to the Blackfoot Crossing Museum, and schools, were very impressive and educational to me. It pointed to the importance of direct communication in building understanding and empathy between different cultures.

Sinela

For me, participating in the seminar was a true experience, interconnecting my academic knowledge, teaching, learning, and personal life with my relationships and my well-being. I experienced this connection in every single activity, whether I was

in my small group, or with all participants in the seminar. I felt very comfortable in this learning environment, feeling that it engaged all facets of my being; intellectually, spiritually, physically, and emotionally. In my small group, consisting of doctoral students from all three universities, we were very conscious of how our lived experiences are a vital part of our research, and how developing transcultural competence can transform us, our participants, and the community. We also had a similar social status—we are three middle class, female PhD students, and two of us are parents. The member from QUT has three adopted children from different ethnic backgrounds. I am a mom of two grown young adults. While the member from BNU was the youngest one, she spoke about her parents and the Chinese child-parent relationships. The seminar atmosphere created a space for intimacy where we felt comfortable and secure to share our personal stories, and biases that restrict us.

The seminar coincided with a painful moment for me—my son experienced an emotional trauma after a failed relationship with a Chinese girl, which caused me to hold some negative attitudes toward Chinese girls. Although I realized it was not good and against my cultural values to hold onto these perceptions, it was hard for me to deal with. That first morning of the seminar, when I met the group in the hotel, my negative feelings started to melt out as soon as I saw my new friend from BNU, with her big smile. The next day, we had a trip to Banff planned but unfortunately her luggage was delayed and she did not have any clothes. I brought a jacket for her and I also shared my story regarding my son with her. She was very empathetic and respectful and it helped me to overcome my negative feelings. Likewise, my friend from QUT and I talked a lot about parenting in Canada, in Australia, and in Bulgaria; as well as the challenges of being a mom of adopted kids, kids with disabilities, and raising kids as an immigrant. When she was choosing gifts for her kids, she told me a story about each of them. We still keep contact, exchanging messages and pictures on Facebook, updating each other about our families and our research.

Dorothea

The transcultural journey taken during the seminar has been a multi-dimensional interweaving of physical, spiritual, intellectual, and emotional experiences that have broadened the lens through which I view others, and will influence my approach to research. Our visit to the Blackfoot reserve was a pivotal moment for me. Although we (black people and Indigenous peoples) have a shared experience of suffering and marginalization, negative perceptions

of the “Canadian Indian” had framed my vision. I was forced to move beyond the stereotypical labels of Indigenous peoples I had learned, and see history from another’s perspective, to appreciate other forms of expression, and to empathize with the experiences of others. Communication through dance is a critical form of expression in my community. I was privileged to observe other types of dance and to learn the symbolic importance in Indigenous culture. Each dance told a story and we joined in another telling of a story as we participated with them. I realized that even though we were all different, we had so much in common.

My spirituality was always deeply rooted and connected to religion; however, on the Johnson Canyon walk that we took as part of our visit to the nearby mountains, someone noted that it was for him not just a walk, but also a spiritual experience. Somehow, I had always placed the emotions I felt when faced with nature’s beauty in a separate compartment from the spiritual. Both came together for me that day and was concretized by a presentation, offered by one of Werklund’s PhD students, focused on Indigenous history and worldviews. I experienced such a spiritual and emotional connection as she explained her histories and the importance of spirituality to the Indigenous worldview. Exploring our common histories, I felt that she spoke for all oppressed and marginalized peoples everywhere. So, this experience further reinforced my respect for the spiritual experience of the “other.” Their beliefs are different from mine, but I recognize the common faith in something bigger than us. The visit to the Blackfoot reserve further confirmed these ideas. I felt their pain and their need to be reaffirmed, to be acknowledged, to be listened to, and to be given voice. There is something to being heard, and this aligns with my intent to allow a space for the voices of participants to be heard through my research.

Findings

This section presents the key findings obtained from the five autobiographical accounts of the seminar participants from the Werklund School of Education. Three major themes emerged:

1. The seminar created a space for participants to understand themselves and others through different activities and cultural interactions that enhanced their transcultural competence.
2. Working in a collaborative, diverse environment, sharing ideas and experiences, allowed participants to transcend cultural barriers that restrict interaction, and contributed to participants’ well-being.

3. The seminar provided an empathetic supportive atmosphere that facilitated the development of a community of scholars, within which participants felt a sense of belonging and comfort.

The five students' accounts reveal that the seminar was an opportunity for them to develop their transcultural competencies, and contribute to their well-being as emerging scholars. Although participants have different cultural backgrounds and research interests in the field of education (i.e., languages, adult learning, leadership, learning sciences), they expressed similar reflections about their experiences in the seminar. All five agreed that this was an opportunity for them to understand themselves and others, which fostered their transcultural competence. However, they also identified different aspects of transcultural learning. For Ayman, this was a "practice of caring for others" and "understanding the needs and cultures of others," as well as a reshaping of the meaning of family and home. Fanny pointed out the importance of finding commonalities between cultures and communication styles that "dealing with otherness" improved abilities for "empathy to people struggling with the Anglophone communication style." Xueqin, who has a Chinese background and used mostly her mother tongue to communicate with Chinese students, described how these conversations made her "cherish more" the opportunity to do her PhD in Canada. In addition, the seminar expanded her knowledge about Indigenous people and other cultures through direct communication. Sinela described how the transcultural setting helped her to overcome her biases and build connections with others. Similarly, Dorothea depicted how the seminar forced her "to move beyond the stereotypical labels of Indigenous people," to broaden the lens through which she views others, to respect and appreciate them, while experiencing emotional and spiritual connections. Thus, we see the participants transition from their previously restrictive worldviews to one more holistic and inclusive of others and accepting of difference.

The second theme is closely related to, and emerges from, the first, in the way the transcultural environment of the seminar provided opportunities for collaboration and shared experiences that contributed to the scholars' well-being. One of the scholars defined well-being as "feeling safe, effective, connected, heard, and a sense of belonging." For others, well-being is akin to "taking risks without being judged," "trusted each other enough to share cherished memories" (Fanny), "feeling comfortable to share personal emotions" (Sinela), or related to spirituality (Dorothea).

The third theme—building community of scholars—is interwoven with the first two. All participants acknowledged that they felt connected and belonged in these spaces that accommodated different cultures, ways of interactions, and learning beyond the academic classroom. This atmosphere of cohesion and support, where there was ease of interaction between faculty members and PhD students, as well as deep engagement in small groups as well as the large group, represented their understanding of the community of scholars. Ayman compared his experience of "journeying together with such a caring and thoughtful group" as "being home with my caring family." Indeed, the notion of community of scholars moved beyond the academic interaction and gaining intellectual knowledge, to also include cultivating a shared spirit and holistic growth, while enhancing participants' transcultural competence and well-being. Thus, the three findings intertwine and we, as emerging scholars, argue that our unique experience supported by the literature review above can serve as a model in higher education.

Analysis

The analysis is intended to provide a broader perspective on a) how to create and sustain spaces within higher education that offer the potential for developing a community of scholars through the process of developing transcultural competencies and; b) to reflect on how these spaces contribute to our well-being as emerging scholars. The discussion takes into consideration the findings from the five autobiographical reflections revealed in the previous section and is supported by the literature on transculturalism (Epstein, 2012; Slimbach, 2005; Wulf, 2010) and well-being (Gabb, 2006; Keeling, 2014).

Theme one aligns with Wulf's (2010) concept that experiencing others through cultural interactions contributes to transcultural development. All scholars mentioned their changed views of themselves and others through seminar interactions. This underscores the idea that transcultural learning is facilitated when individuals transcend their cultural inhibitions, interact with each other, and arrive at new understandings (Aldridge, Kilgo, & Christensen, 2014). Further, participants described how their experiences with other cultures made them move beyond their culture and language of origin, integrating different views, and thus creating a new emerging sphere—a community of scholars, within which they felt comfortable and self-confident, free of their stereotypes and biases. This process, similar for all, and at the same time having specific elements that impacted transcultural

competence of each student, corresponds to Epstein's (2012) description of transculture, where the elements are freely chosen by people rather than dictated by rules and prescriptions within their given culture.

Further, the scholars' holistic growth through this transcultural journey links to Slimbach's (2005) map for developing transcultural learning. The first of his six propositions, perspective consciousness, challenges us to question our cultural assumptions, stereotypes, and judgments, leading us to the opportunity of seeing things through the minds and hearts of others, which has been described in students' reflections. His next series of recommendations, regarding the development of transcultural competencies and intellectual growth, could also be supported by scholars' autobiographical reflections as they discuss gaining historical and cultural knowledge, broadening their learning horizons, and research approaches to own studies, while establishing friendships and close connections across cultures. In this way, seminar participants follow Slimbach's model of the transcultural person, described earlier in this article.

Having different ethnic and linguistic backgrounds facilitated communication and so made it easier for the scholars to transcend their cultural barriers, make connections across cultures, negotiate cultural identities, mirror themselves with others, and derive new understandings (Epstein, 2012; Wulf, 2010). Thus, navigating smoothly through cultures cultivated their well-being as a holistic quality (Keeling, 2014) and a core value of transcultural learning (Gabb, 2006), which corresponds to the second theme in the findings.

In fact, cultivating well-being is the one of the most significant characteristics of transcultural learning that participants developed through this seminar. To accommodate this, they built a space where they felt connected and where they felt they belonged. As a result, they shared their experiences and personal stories, supported each other, experienced empathy, comfort, and wholeness, as outlined in the third finding and manifested in the work of Palmer & Zajonc (2010). Then they began to realize that this outcome is possible beyond the traditional classroom of learning and education. The reflections illustrate how engaging in a very dynamic space and time (i.e., the visit to Blackfoot reserve, the trip to Banff and Johnson Canyon, and having lunch together, shopping, and working in small groups) cultivated relationships across cultures and elicited true emotions and interactions in the genuine community of scholars. All activities together during the seminar, such as guest speakers, small-group work, and

presentations, were a valuable contribution to transcultural perspective development and building a community of emerging academics. The five PhD students from the Werklund School of Education confirmed that the dynamic format of the seminar increased their cultural sensitivity, openness, holistic growth, and well-being. Therefore, they felt motivated and obligated to share their experience, hoping that it will contribute to the development of a model for cultivating transculturalism and well-being of emerging academics in higher education.

Conclusion

This paper has examined the transcultural journey of five doctoral students as they explored how cultivating a transcultural perspective on research impacts them as emerging scholars and contributes to their individual well-being. Transcultural learning is a process in which individuals from different cultures meet, and through transcending their cultural perspectives are able to interact with each other and ultimately derive a better understanding of themselves and others as they learn to know, to do, to live with others, and to be (Aldridge, Kilgo, & Christensen, 2014; Wulf, 2010).

The transcultural journey of these PhD students, seen through their autobiographical accounts, underscores the importance of students seeking and faculty/institutions providing opportunities to participate in transcultural learning opportunities. Students who participated in this seminar were able to move beyond their cultural inhibitions to accept and understand others as they worked together within a supportive environment and derived new knowledge and understandings. Specifically, the seminar created a space for participants to understand themselves and others through different activities and cultural interactions, which enhanced their transcultural competence. Second, working in a collaborative, diverse environment and sharing ideas and experiences allowed participants to transcend cultural barriers that restrict interaction, contributing to their well-being. Finally, the seminar provided an empathetic supportive atmosphere that facilitated the development of a community of scholars, within which participants felt a sense of belonging and comfort. Further exploration of these themes in the analysis revealed that the development of multicultural communities, where students can interact among themselves and with others within and beyond the classroom, is critical to students' holistic development and well-being.

We are keenly aware that these benefits should not only be afforded to those select doctoral students who are able to

participate in this seminar. Rather we believe that it is important to create and sustain multiple opportunities in higher education that offer the potential of developing a community of emerging scholars through the process of developing transcultural competencies. At a formal level, we encourage doctoral students to participate in interdisciplinary doctoral courses, where possible, so there is an increased likelihood of bringing diverse perspectives together, beyond one's specialization. Informally, we suggest that the possibilities for engaging in "otherness" and a rich community of scholars are all around us if we choose to make this a priority.

Developing a community of emerging scholars, as part of our overall well-being, is an important part of the doctoral journey. But it needs to be a particular type of community that recognizes us not only intellectually, but also emotionally and spiritually. Such a community, realized through the growth of transcultural competencies, reaches across boundaries and borders and seeks to genuinely see and learn from the other and create the possibility for new ways of being in the world.

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