

Mount Saint Vincent University

How Diversity and Anti-Oppression Educators Handle the Emotional Challenges of Their
Practice

by

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Abstract

Diversity and anti-oppression education is a popular strategy used to negotiate the complexities of identity by trying to bring people together and raise socio-cultural sensitivity among employees, clients and citizens. This study investigates the perspectives of diversity and anti-oppression educators working in the non-profit, settlement and education sectors in Halifax, Nova Scotia and Toronto, Ontario. Using semi-structured interviews, the researcher explores how Canadian diversity and anti-oppression educators handle the emotional challenges of their practice especially when considering Mark Bracher's (2006) notion of identity needs within these emotionally charged learning environments. This paper explores how language, identity and teacher recognition impact the learning process, and highlights the imperfect yet courageous practice that the diversity and anti-oppression educators in this study embark upon when facilitating discussions about diversity and oppression.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Democratic principles of conversation, debate and dialogue are valued by most North Americans as a way to bring about a greater understanding of each other and our backgrounds. Education as a whole values these democratic principles and some educators seek to reinforce these principles in pedagogical methods of discussion and group activities (Brookfield, 2005). Specifically, diversity and anti-oppression education is an example of how education is looked to as an answer for bridging cultural, social and religious differences and divisions. In fact, some consider it as “one of the most widely used activities” (Carnevale & Stone, 1994, p. 29) when managing diversity in the workplace. Corporations, non-profit organizations and government agencies use this educational approach in an attempt to bring people together, improve productivity and raise sensitivity among employees, clients and citizens. This type of education is typically set up in a workshop format where learners engage in activities, group reflections and discussions about topics related to racism, classism, sexism, homophobia, ageism, and physical and mental ability, to name a few. Most diversity and anti-oppression educational settings are conducted for a limited period of time (from a few hours to a full day or week) and range in length according to the needs of the group requesting the training. People are drawn to diversity and anti-oppression learning settings for a variety of reasons that have to do with their own experiences of “muddling through” (Brookfield 2006, p. 1) their identity structure and how it relates to their peers, loved ones, co-workers, enemies and, most importantly, their students. The researcher has personally engaged in diversity and anti-oppression education as a participant and a facilitator and has often been left wondering if these

learning environments encourage us or even *allow us* to extend our understanding of others and of our 'selves'. Factors such as time constraints, facilitation methods and perspectives of the educators, as well as the highly sensitive and emotionally-charged topics of discussion, contribute to a challenging learning environment where developing a common understanding and shared vulnerability is difficult to achieve (Bracher, 2009). Indeed, sometimes the pursuit of understanding ourselves in relation to others is a messy, emotional and even violent experience for those who wish to (or who are required to) partake in this practice (Zizek, 2008).

The researcher's interest in this subject stems from interacting and engaging in feminist and critical theory in academic settings as well as practical work in the non-profit sector where issues of power, identity, and social justice are at the foreground of everyday interactions with service users and clients. Trying to educate the general public about the lived experiences of food bank recipients, for example, is a difficult task and one that relies heavily on changing belief systems through conversation and dialogue, with the ultimate goal of raising awareness and sensitivity to poverty issues. As a facilitator of diversity and anti-oppression education, I was never completely sure that the heated and challenging conversations in these educational settings were handled as effectively and as ethically as possible. Conversely, as a learner, I have experienced some educational contexts that have not significantly addressed identity issues in a real and meaningful way. As both a facilitator and a learner there was a missing element of the discussion – one that came to the forefront after reading Mark Bracher's (2006) text *Radical Pedagogy: Identity, Generativity and Social Transformation*. Bracher pushes feminist and critical theorists to move beyond the notion that identity is merely about social positioning. He encourages us to think about the identity *needs* of educators and brings the notion of teacher recognition to the

discussion about human identity. This missing element made perfect sense to me and helped to contextualize some of the challenges I experienced as an educator and learner in these complex and often emotionally volatile learning settings.

This research project stems from academic, professional and personal experience with diversity and anti-oppression education. The focus of this study is to investigate the experiences of six Canadian diversity and anti-oppression educators to gain a better sense of how they handle the emotional challenges of their practice, specifically when negotiating their own identity needs in these emotionally charged learning environments. As such, I frame diversity trainings in a light that focuses upon the complexities and constraints that diversity and anti-oppression educators experience in this learning context.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In the text that follows, I review the existing literature on diversity and anti-oppression education. Four major themes come to light in this literature review. First, I highlight the challenges inherent within defining key terminology along with the power of language, so as to emphasize the difficulty that educators face within these learning contexts. Second, I relate how diversity and anti-oppression education can be extremely emotionally charged environments for educators to negotiate. I highlight these challenges by discussing the needs of teachers in learning contexts, reviewing Mark Bracher's notion of teacher self-analysis and raising questions as to whether learners must experience a crisis or take risks in order to be learning. Summarizing what Bracher refers to as the pedagogy of resistance and empowerment – a framework where most diversity and anti-oppression educators position themselves – will also prove fruitful in this discussion about emotionally charged learning environments. Third, reviewing the literature brings to light other constraints faced by educators in these learning settings. A re-working of Bourdieu's concept of the *habitus* demonstrates some of the social forces that educators and by extension learners face in diversity and anti-oppression trainings. I also outline the process of learner's reflexivity and how educators negotiate these challenges in the workshop dynamic to highlight the complexity inherent in diversity and anti-oppression education. Finally, I investigate and make a case for the relationship between education and psychoanalysis. By addressing this subject matter, it becomes apparent that future study is required to gain a solid sense of exactly how diversity and anti-oppression educators are negotiating the challenges inherent in these Canadian learning environments (Holladay & Quinones, 2005).

Living with Contestability: Defining Terms and Concepts

Defining key terms is a necessary and yet extremely challenging component of diversity and anti-oppression education (Mobley & Payne, 1992; Overmyer Day, 1995; Arai, Wanca-Thibault & Shockley-Zalabak, 2001; Kumashiro, 2001). There is a confusion of terms when discussing issues raised by this type of education, primarily because most of the terms considered in these learning environments are contested concepts that are “bounded by normative considerations” (Connolly, 1993, p. 29; Mobley & Payne, 1992). Simply put, we attribute personal experiences and thought processes to the vocabulary being considered. In this sense, subjective experiences and interpretations of terms such as *diversity, anti-oppression, power, privilege, identity, discrimination, racism, sexism, homophobia* and *ageism*, for example, make it difficult to come to a common understanding of what these terms mean for a group of learners. This makes the job of educators difficult because the focus is more about consensus, negotiation and dialogue and less about setting up a unified and universal definition of each concept (Pring, 2000).

The challenges that diversity trainers face in defining key concepts is exacerbated by the fact that most learning environments are rooted in, or at least have been informed by, a positivist sensibility that focuses upon evidence-based practice and evaluation (Hammersley, 2001). Traditional educational settings such as school classrooms have primarily been constructed under the positivist frame of mind that sees reality as objective, measurable and understandable through a scientific method (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Education has leaned towards a universal curriculum where educators ‘deposit’ information into the heads of their learners (Woodhall, 1997; Pring, 2000; Grace, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Asking participants to step outside what they know and have come to

expect from learning environments is quite a challenging task indeed. Moving away from the foundations laid by a positivist framework means to ask diversity and anti-oppression teachers and participants to be more comfortable with fluidity and understand that there might not be one universal way to define a key concepts or issue. In this sense, “reality can never be fully apprehended, only approximated” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 11) which can be a terribly unnerving experience for those who have come to expect solid and objective answers about topics being covered.

It is important not to set ourselves up for an ontological and epistemological debate about the ‘positivist versus constructivist’ frameworks, such that if we reject a positivist standpoint we must then automatically understand the world as having multiple realities that are entirely socially constructed (Pring, 2000). Richard Pring (2000) names this deduction as a “false dualism” (p. 51) and encourages us to look beyond this either-or opposition when reflecting upon language, knowledge, and reality. Pring asserts that there is value in both ideologies: “there are stable and enduring features of reality, independent of us, which makes distinctions possible...[and yet]... how we conceive the world could be different, and indeed, is different from social group to social group” (p. 56). In this sense, it is important to problematize the “naive realism” (p. 56) of positivism while recognizing that most of us have “predictable emotions and capacities” (p. 56) that can be generalized to a common understanding about how humans operate. As a society, we do have communal responses that have been acquired and tested through our culture in an array of interactions that have occurred before our birth and because of this, it is possible to define terms and contested concepts in a diversity workshop (Plumb, 2008). This is not to say that a group will come to conclusive and objective perspective about the issues being discussed. It is only to point out that diversity and anti-oppression educators need to draw upon some

common understandings and viewpoints about the world that most people find to be acceptable.

People need to elaborate on and to re-negotiate terms while also maintaining the stance that, ultimately, there is not going to be one answer or one definition of a term/concept. Andrew Sayer (2005) suggests: “To be sure, we may relate to others in ways that imply double standards, but we do not operate with *totally* different standards in different contexts... moral thought involves a generalising moment which can cross the boundaries between social groups; indeed, it is to this that we owe our ability to criticise inequalities” (p. 50). Challenging oppression and inequalities ultimately leads us to believe that there are some common elements of humanity that we value to be authentic and legitimate. Criticising “domination, unfairness, hypocrisy and inconsistency” (Sayer, 2005, p. 50) connects humans and allows us to speak about our communal responses to injustices. Diversity and anti-oppression work attempts to bridge these subjects in a way that will allow humans to connect in order to find this common ground. Whether this common ground is entirely possible is up for debate. Clearly, however, the literature reflects the need for defining terms and well as the challenges inherent within this process.

With this in mind, it is important to consider how we have come to define diversity and anti-oppression. *Diversity* seems to be a more popular and accessible term as it is used in everyday communication amongst people, especially in the workplace (Carnevale & Stone, 1994; Overmyer Day, 1995). It “implies differences in people based on their identifications with various groups” (Carnevale & Stone, 1994, p. 22) and conveys the many ways in which people identify including: “race religion, age, personality attributes, working style, organizational department and many other factors” (Overmyer Day, 1995, p. 26). Interestingly, some people argue that when elements of people’s identity such as

educational background, values and working style are included in the term diversity, it waters down the definition of the term (Mobley & Payne, 1992). This camp of practitioners and researchers believe that diversity should strictly be attributed to groups who are “protected by law from discrimination – such as race, religion, sex, age and disabilities” (Overmyer Day, 1995, p. 26) and sexual orientation in the Canadian context. Most who believe in this ‘watering down’ effect have moved from using the term diversity to *anti-oppression* which primarily focuses upon the central place of power in interactions. The intersecting nature of oppression such as racism and sexism as experienced by women of colour, for example, focuses upon the role of institutions in creating and maintaining oppressive structures and the need for change through social justice initiatives (Whelehan, 1995; Graham, Delaney & Swift, 2000; Creese & Stasiulis, 1996; Kumashiro, 2001). Anti-oppression is a very academic term and is not commonly used in everyday communication (Moosa-Mitha, 2005). It has, however, filtered into the profession of social work as a type of social work practice (Barnoff & Moffatt, 2007; Dalhousie Social Work, 2008; McLaughlin, 2005). Indeed, many job postings in the social work field require candidates to have an understanding of anti-oppression concepts and adhere to principles of social justice. Overall, the term diversity tends to be more receptive to the type of groupings and identifications with which people identify, whether it is religion, sexual orientation or professional association. Diversity as a term seems to take on an umbrella approach to difference and what can be included within its boundaries whereas the term anti-oppression is primarily focussed upon intersection, institutions, and social justice initiatives (Moosa-Mitha, 2005; Barnoff & Moffatt, 2007).

The Impact of Language on Learning

Once we move past the fact that the majority of language used in diversity and anti-oppression trainings is value-laden and highly contestable, we must also consider the powerful nature inherent within language itself. As a symbolic representation of experience, language is one of the three key components in the creation and re-iteration of one's identity. Mark Bracher (2006) refers to Lacanian psychoanalytic theory when discussing the implications that language has upon the development of human identity elements. Bracher highlights that the interplay of "the affective-physiological, the imaginistic and the linguistic orders" (p. 13), both individually and conjointly, create an environment where humans develop a sense of their own selfhood as well as the selfhoods of others. Language, identified by Lacan as the Symbolic order, is the mode primarily used by humans to organize and communicate with one another, and has "the most evident impact upon our learning" (p. 16). In fact, Bracher asserts that language is a "major impetus for both learning and resistance to learning" (p. 24). In this sense, language can either support or threaten educational experiences depending upon the meanings attributed to "identity-bearing master signifiers, such as: "'man', 'woman', 'American', 'German', 'Christian', Islamic,' 'intelligent', and 'honest'" (p. 17), for example. In many formal and informal learning settings, humans need to act out and even protect the identity-bearing signifiers that they have come to understand as part of their selfhood. Learning, in this sense, becomes about living up to the language, and thus, identities that people have come to recognize as their *own*. Indeed, *being* a woman, or *being* honest has serious implications on how one communicates in a learning setting, especially when we remind ourselves that each learner

has a collection of identity-bearing signifiers that will be adhered to in various social interactions (Bracher, 2006).

Bracher (2006) also highlights the impact that class, gender, racial and ethnic master signifiers can have upon a student's learning and suggests that many students resist learning about their respective cultures because of the risk of discovering that they might not fully embody these respective master signifiers. Discovering contradictions in what these educators and learners have come to hold very dear to their own identity, can be threatening to their sense of selfhood. Thus, in many situations, the language used in diversity and anti-oppression workshops can jeopardize a person's capacity to digest and integrate new information, especially when they choose to resist permutations about how they can or should look (affective-physiological order), think/feel (imagistic order) and speak/write (linguistic order) about themselves and others (Bracher, 2006). Bracher suggests that students tend to resist new information about class, gender, racial and ethnic master signifiers or "they may hold it in isolation rather than integrating it and altering their cognitive maps of self and the world" (p. 20). Moreover, Stephen Brookfield (2006) raises the phenomenon known as "cultural suicide ...[where]...students are punished by their families, peers and communities for what appears to be an act of betrayal; that is, to be seen to be changing as a result of participating in learning" (p. 84). Cultural suicide occurs when a student begins to re-envision their identity because of new knowledge acquired in, for example, a university environment. Having the opportunity to engage in critical reflection about specific subject matter allows the student to learn about their own selfhood and perhaps re-formulate exactly what it means to be *living* and *being* certain master signifiers that they have not questioned up until this point in their lives. This new knowledge can then instil a sense of fear that students "will risk being excluded from the culture that has defined

and sustained them up to that point in their lives” (Brookfield, 2006, p. 84). Overall, the reactions that people have towards new knowledge about their identities and master signifiers – whether it be resistance, non-integration or fear – highlights just how interconnected language and identity is when we think about our ‘selves’ and others. This is certainly an important point to consider for anti-oppression and diversity educators when delivering their workshops.

Slavoj Zizek (2008) extends the notion that language is powerful and asserts that it is inherently *violent* because language reduces and simplifies things from an object’s organic matter to a symbol. Zizek believes that language is “the first and greatest divider” (p. 66) amongst people because of its ultimate symbolisation. In many ways, language has been looked to as the “medium of reconciliation and mediation, of peaceful coexistence as opposed to a violent medium of immediate and raw confrontation” (p. 60). Zizek argues that the notion of compromise is a falsehood and that language is inherently violent because of its over-simplification of objects, emotions and by extension, identities. In many ways, Zizek is asserting just how much complexity there is to our lives and that these complexities can never truly be expressed through the medium of language. This is evident when we take into account how elaborate master signifiers can be and how much they are intrinsically connected to our sense of selves.

Whether language is violent or merely powerful is certainly up for debate. In either scenario, the work of Zizek and Bracher highlight the significant role that language plays in our everyday existence. The impact that language has upon learning is best highlighted in an example given by Andrew Sayer (2005) when he analyzes the word *posh* in the British context and suggests that “posh is a marker of high class position, be it in the form of a posh accent, posh car, posh wedding or whatever... posh is not only equated with superior

goods but with people who are in some way supposedly superior” (p. 122). Consider how a student who identifies with this master signifier would interact in a classroom or workshop setting. I would endeavour to suggest that it could be entirely different from a student who identifies with a master signifier such as *low income* or *working class*. Indeed, language has an impact when considering how students identify their sense of self and by extension, how they are either open or closed to learning new information about themselves and others.

Similarly, language has the same impact upon educators and how they respond and negotiate the needs of their students within the diversity and anti-oppression learning environment. This element makes the work of diversity and anti-oppression educators extremely complex because the conversations in these workshops have so much to do with re-negotiating master signifiers in our language. Educators must be able to be very comfortable with student’s resistance to new information and also recognize that new knowledge will likely not be integrated into a students’ identity, as suggested by Bracher, or even worse; that a student could be setting themselves up for cultural suicide, as noted by Brookfield. Sayer, Bracher and Brookfield give us a solid sense about how much power there is in the language we use on a daily basis. People tie themselves to words because it is part of their identity - these words are lived, felt and experienced by all of us and we are not likely to give up the meanings associated to these words without defending them. Indeed, the challenges faced by diversity trainers are exponentially greater when we also consider how most of our master signifiers are contested concepts that can be subjectively experienced and limited by normative assessments and conclusions (Connolly, 1993). By hearing from Canadian diversity and anti-oppression educators, we will be able to gain a deeper understanding of how educators negotiate the aforementioned challenges inherent within our language and within these learning contexts.

Emotionally Charged Environments

Another major theme that arose in the literature has to do with trainers requiring “a high level of skill” (Watson, 2008, p. 3) at handling challenging and often volatile topics where learner’s emotional responses take centre stage (Overmyer Day, 1995; Mobley & Payne 1992). Learning often stimulates a level of emotionality and fear when learners take risks, extend themselves and become open to new and often conflicting information (Rogers, 1993). Diversity and anti-oppression training is particularly bound to the emotional responses of learners and educators because of the level of risk and openness being asked of workshop participants about sensitive issues such as discrimination, identity and power relations.

Facilitating these workshops is a demanding task and many people tend to shy away from taking the lead in engaging in deep conversations about identity and selfhood. Kumashiro (2001) asserts that part of this avoidance has to do with the fact that taking on conversations about diversity and anti-oppression “trouble[s] who we think and feel about not only the Other but also ourselves... we resist learning what will disrupt the frameworks we traditionally use to make sense of the world and ourselves” (p. 5). Kumashiro highlights a connectivity between the fear of learning something new about ourselves and emphasizes how closely linked the identities of educators and learners can be in this dynamic. Consequently, the identities and master signifiers that an educator holds dear can have a direct impact upon the learning that occurs within a diversity and anti-oppression workshop setting (Holladay & Quinones, 2005). Ramsay (1996) asserts that “trainers need to be aware of... the role their personal identities play in... training... as participants get in touch with their own confusion, guilt and anger they are likely to direct these feeling towards the

leader who has evoked them” (p. 6). These responses often occur because the workshop setting is a microcosm of how power dynamics play themselves out in everyday life (Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 1998). Johnson-Bailey & Cervero (1998) have conducted a study on two adult education classrooms and highlight that these power relations “directly influence the teaching and learning process” (p. 397). This research leads us to consider that identity and master signifiers by which educators adhere have serious implications for the type of education that will occur, the topics covered in a workshop as well as how the group dialogue is facilitated.

If we extend beyond the notion of power dynamics inherent within a classroom and in society as a whole – an issue well analyzed by feminism and critical theory (Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 1998; Brigham & Gouthro, 2006; Moosa-Mitha, 2005) – there is another factor to consider regarding how a teacher’s identity can impact a student’s learning. Educators’ identities impact the identities of their students because of their unfulfilled identity *needs* in the classroom setting. These needs vary depending upon the instructor but are encompassed in such things as recognition, gratification and validation by students in a learning environment (Bracher, 2006). Bracher’s perspective is based in Lacanian and psychoanalytic theory that identifies “our most fundamental desire is [our] desire for recognition... [and that] we desire those desires that bring us the most gratifying recognitions” (p. 150-151). The human side of educators becomes especially clear in Bracher’s argument: fundamentally, we all need to be recognized for our actions and look to fulfill this recognition through our interpersonal relationships with others. This is especially true when we consider the dynamic between educator and learner. Bracher writes:

“All of us who teach have such a desire for immediate recognition and affirmation from our students, and this desire can produce many pedagogical

practices and reactions that undermine our efforts to facilitate student learning and development. A number of teachers have written about struggles in which their efforts to empower their students and/or help them develop were impeded by their need for immediate, express recognition from the students. bell hooks, who challenges her students and encourages them to 'relate the information they are learning to the personal identities they are working to socially construct, to change, to affirm,' recalls how her efforts were inhibited by 'that longing for immediate recognition of my value as a teacher, and immediate affirmation. Often I did not feel liked or affirmed and this was difficult for me to accept'" (2006, p. 144).

Indeed, by investigating the concept of teacher identity *needs*, Bracher forces us to consider exactly what educators seek and how they might benefit in the teaching-learning dynamic. These benefits might not be consciously recognized by the instructor but they exist nonetheless.

Interestingly, Bracher declares that teacher's identities and the needs they have when acting as facilitator can actually be an obstacle for students. He outlines the tension inherent within educational goals of student learning, development and empowerment along with assisting the student "develop in such a way that they will benefit society as a whole" (p. 76) and asserts that when we incorporate the identity needs of students and teachers into this mix of aims, there are "substantial discrepancies and even oppositions between... these factors" (p. 77). When considering a diversity and anti-oppression workshop dynamic, it is thus essential to outline the goals of the workshop as well as name the fact that students and teachers enter into this learning contract with identity needs of their own. Bracher calls upon educators to 'look within' and answer some very tough questions during

the self-analysis section of his text (see Appendix 1). Questions related to identity development, recognition on the part of the teacher (both conscious and unconscious) as well as analyzing the relationship that teachers have to their profession, encourages us to “ease the rigidity of our identity contents and begin to accept shameful or imperfect parts of ourselves” (Plumb, 2009, p. 19) so as to prioritize and support the needs of students over the needs of educators and move towards a more compassionate approach to learning.

Overall, this new idea about identity - one that moves past power and structural dynamics in the classroom - forces us to ask ourselves what needs educators are fulfilling when they stand up in front of a group of learners. If we extend these notions to the diversity and anti-oppression education setting, we can assume that trainers ought to be conducting a self-analysis and asking themselves *exactly what they get out of this dynamic*. This element is imperative for diversity and anti-oppression training as it encourages educators to move towards a compassionate approach to teaching and will hopefully create a ‘checks and balance’ scenario where the needs of a teacher’s identity is not impairing the ones of his or her students. At this point, the notion of self-analysis and identity needs for diversity and anti-oppression educators is one that requires more study so as to gain a deeper understanding of the specific experiences of this group of educators.

Risk-Taking and Pushing Students Towards Crisis

Another fundamental concept assumed within the literature is that emotion is *expected* and likely *sought after* because these responses generate an opportunity for debate and dialogue like no other, which is supposed to lead to more in-depth learning. Andrew Sayer (2005) raises the idea that emotion is an essential component of our learning when he asserts that emotions “such as pride, shame, envy and resentment, tell us a great

deal about class [and other identities] and the difference it makes to our lives” (p. 36). Sayer gives weight to a part of our selves that has not been highly sought after or traditionally viewed as important for learning environments. Indeed, emotions are deeply-rooted in our sense of selves and we react when our identities are being challenged or threatened. Emotions are “responses to and commentaries on our situations... they are cognitive and evaluative, indeed, essential elements of intelligence (Sayer, 2005, p. 36). They also “give meaning to experience, signify important interactions, create or destroy social relationships and facilitate agency for change” (Callahan, 2001, p. 82). This is an essential piece for diversity and anti-oppression training because it links our identity, our upbringing and our responses to our everyday thought, actions and feelings.

There is a debate as to what extent facilitators should ask learners to put themselves in vulnerable positions and express the emotions that are so closely tied to their identity. Some authors do not agree that people should be pushed to ‘testify’ about their belief systems, identity or upbringing. Sometimes this approach tends to backfire by raising defences, creating backlash and shutting down the openness required to access and accept new information (Watson, 2008; Mobley & Payne, 1992; Brown, 2001). Others insist that pushing people past their comfort zone is critical to real and transformative learning (Kumashiro, 2001; Ramsey, 1996; Arai et al., 2001). Kumashiro writes:

“learning that *the very ways in which we think and do things is not only partial but oppressive* can be a very discomfoting process, a form of ‘crisis’ and thus, is not what we typically desire. Yet, ‘education’ is not something that involves repeating what one already knows. Rather, education involves learning something different, learning something new, learning something that disrupts one’s common-sense of the world. The crisis that results from

unlearning, then, is a necessary and desirable part of anti-oppressive education” (p. 8).

There is no doubt to me that “significant learning is not easy” (Plumb, 2009, p. 16), indeed, it is tremendously difficult. However, this researcher is unsure if it is ethical to expect learners to go through a public crisis in order to learn. Having participated in these workshop dynamics; some of which have not really gotten to the ‘core’ issues and some of which have asked participants to take major risks, I am still unclear as to what the most appropriate approach should be (if one exists), and if it is even possible to find a balance between these two ends. As such, further inquiry is required to get a more in-depth sense of how educators address issues of real concern while equally balancing the risk level and the experience of crisis for their group of learners.

Part of this conversation has to do with a pedagogical approach that Bracher has named as “resistance or protest: the discourse of the hysteric” (p. 95). The term hysteric has not been lost on this writer, especially considering the fact that hysteria was a blanket medical diagnosis used to question women’s mental health in Victorian times. It is, however, one of the four discourses of Lacanian psychoanalysis by which Bracher situates his own writing and analysis. As such, Bracher challenges feminist and critical theorist educators to consider their pedagogical approaches of exposing some parts of themselves that they have learned to alienate and to “acquire new master signifiers that would recognize and allow enactment of those parts of the self that the current identity-bearing signifiers reject” (p. 95). Bracher asserts that this pedagogical approach can be very empowering for the students who have learned to alienate parts of their identity (women for example). However, it can have the reverse effect on those students who might identify with the dominant’s group identity (such as, white, middle class men) by denying them the

opportunity to be vulnerable. He asserts: “our refusal to recognize and sympathize with their experiences of vulnerability constitutes another increment of trauma that makes their identities more vulnerable and thus more prone to violence” (p. 100). This herein lies one of the ultimate contradictions of the hysteric pedagogy, a framework where this researcher believes most diversity and anti-oppression educators position themselves. The effort and action of becoming more inclusive, excludes those in the dominant group. As such, the stereotypical oppressor – those whose master signifiers are primarily connected to the dominant group – is excluded by their mere association with this group. By extension, this means that this group of learners are forced to deny parts of their identity – something that feminism and critical theorists have been fundamentally denouncing about marginalized identity bearing signifiers for decades.

Overall, the literature provides examples of how these learning sites are emotionally charged environments, why educators’ identities impact the identities of their students as well as the inherent challenge of risk and expectation of crisis in education. It does not, however, reflect the extent to which these dynamics occur within a diversity or anti-oppression workshop environment nor does it give us a solid understanding of this particular group of educators and the needs that they bring to this learning environment. As such, further study to investigate the perspectives and motives of diversity trainers, in particular, is required. Why are these educators drawn to the subject matter? What motivates them to be involved in such challenging and emotionally charged learning environments? What kind of expectations do trainers have when it comes to pushing learners past their comfort zone? These are all questions that require further investigation.

Other Challenges Faced by Educators

The call to further research is even more pressing when we consider that the pedagogical settings of diversity and anti-oppression have an incredible amount to do with the upbringing of educators. Bracher's pursuit of teacher self-analysis is directly linked to the work of Pierre Bourdieu and the concept of *habitus* because it encourages teachers to look at their individual histories and upbringings (Sayer, 2005). Andrew Sayer (2005) investigates the work of Bourdieu and asserts that:

“*Habitus* refers to those deeply engrained dispositions which are the products of socialisation, particularly in early life, and which orient individuals at a subconscious level towards the world around them.

The dispositions have a structure which reflects that of the corresponding habitat in which they were formed. This habitat is not merely a milieu but a position with a wider *field* of social relations, including relations to both similar and different others, for example to members of both the same and different gender or class” (p. 24).

This concept relates to both teacher and learner identity structures and those master signifiers to which we hold so dear. Keeping in mind that our identity is composed of our bodies, our drives and our language, it is also developed early on in life and is assembled in various ways because of our social relations with others (Sayer, 2005; Bracher, 2006). The *habitus* must be activated by us, is always dependent upon the context in which we live and is most recognized by us when we are out of place or in an environment that is unfamiliar to us (Sayer, 2005). Imagine a person who has been born and raised in a middle-class urban environment and who visits a lower-income rural outpost. Language and colloquialisms,

smells, spaces and human interactions would likely be different and unusual for this traveller; to the extent that recognition of his/her own *habitus* would be much easier to grasp.

Interestingly, Sayer extends Bourdieu's concept by asserting that a *habitus* can be modified and changed based on our "internal conversations" (2005, p. 29) about our upbringing. Sayer also expresses that resistance is an essential component to the formation of our *habitus*: that our subjective emotional capacities is a central feature in developing our sense of identities (p. 32). Sayer's extension is important to recognize because it gives room for people to change and modify what they have come to know as their selfhood. This is an essential element for education and the democratic rhetoric that calls upon conversation, debate and dialogue as imperative for greater understanding amongst humankind. Modifying our *habitus* means that, in essence, we are active participants who can change. As such, we are not completely constrained by the upbringing that we have experienced.

Being an active participant means that as subjects we must consider our surroundings and make appropriate decisions based on our environment. Margaret Archer (2007) investigates the ways in which humans "muddle through" (Brookfield, 2006, p.1) their independent, internal thoughts and analyzes how they come to decisions about their lives. She calls this process *reflexivity*. Archer identifies three groups of thinkers – communicative reflexives (people who value confirmation from those around them before they take action), autonomous reflexives (people who come to decisions on their own) and meta-reflexives (people who critically think and evaluate the world around them before making decisions) (Archer, 2007). All three groups negotiate the relationship between their own internal power of thinking and decision making with the resistant forces of the world

such as social relationships, hegemonic discourses, cultural expectations, language, habitus, etc. The end result of their decision making varies but the process of coming to decisions is encapsulated in the “interplay between people’s nascent ‘concerns’ (the importance of what they care about) and their ‘context’ (the continuity or discontinuity of their social environment)” (Archer, 2007, p.96). This process is of notable importance to diversity and anti-oppression educators because the underlying goal of changing people’s thoughts is evident in the literature surrounding this type of education (Arai et al., 2001; Overmyer Day, 1995; Mobley & Payne, 1992; Ramsey, 1996; Breland & Miller, 1999; Hardiman & Jackson, 1997; Lazarus Stewart & Peal, 2001). Diversity and anti-oppression educators want to change people’s belief systems or stereotypes about specific groups of people with the ultimate goal of developing a higher level of empathy. Teaching about diversity and anti-oppression assists learners to recognize:

- “ 1. That the Other is suffering significantly
2. That the Other does not deserve to suffer, because his or her condition and/or faults are the result of forces beyond her control, and,
3. That this suffering matters to me, because my being in some way overlaps, or is implicated in, the Other’s being” (Bracher, 2009, p. 367).

This recognition of “Self-Other overlap” (Bracher, 2009, p. 370) on behalf of the learner is a challenge to teach and very difficult for educators to express to a group of learners. Every person in a workshop dynamic balances their own internal and independent thoughts with the communal thoughts of the group as well as those of the facilitator. Ultimately, educators can never fully access the independent and private thoughts of the workshop participants,

which can be an extremely challenging situation to handle. Moreover, the difference between changing behaviour and changing thoughts will always add to the complexity that diversity and anti-oppression educators face. For example, it would be very difficult to negotiate a dynamic where learners develop a politically correct stance about the material and learn to understand what behaviour is expected and acceptable, without changing their underlying stereotypical thoughts or belief systems. This is especially true if the educators' ultimate goal is to change people's underlying thoughts about the subject matter. Evidently, the educator's needs have a serious role to play within this dynamic. Is it possible or even ethical to expect that diversity and anti-oppression educators must impact the internal conversations of their workshops participants? Researching about how educators manage these challenges will give us a deeper sense of how their own evaluative goals and motivations can impact the outcomes of the workshop as well as allow us to see how learners and educators negotiate the process of reflexivity in a collective learning environment.

A Note on Psychoanalysis

The fact that Bracher's perspective is fundamentally based in a psychoanalytic perspective is likely to raise concerns for some readers. Public perceptions about psychoanalysis typically involve negating its validity because it is viewed as being strange, confusing and out of touch with reality. The image of Freud asking an analysand to 'tell me about your mother' is the comical and popular public interpretation of this body of knowledge. Feminist scholars have critiqued Freud and psychoanalysis, offering a perspective that questions "female moral inferiority" (Tong, 1989, p. 143), as presented by Freud in his notion of penis envy, and highlights the challenges of biological determinism

that ensues from this psychoanalytic concept. Despite much jest and critique, it is without a doubt that psychoanalysis has added to the public discourse by encouraging us to consider the power of subconscious thought and our own physical and psychological drives. As Tong (1989) states: “to free herself from what is holding her back, a woman must do more than fight for her rights as a citizen; she must also probe the depths of her psyche” (p. 172).

Most educational scholarship does not draw upon psychoanalysis as an influential canon of work. Education is a discourse that is fundamentally bound to practice and it tends to shy away from inquiry focussed upon the psyche, learners’ and teachers’ subconscious and the world of dreams. Evidence-based practice encourages educators to focus upon the tangible and measurable results of learning, something that is often not easily attainable when working within the field of the human psyche (Hammersley, 2001). And yet, there are important connections between education and psychoanalysis that have been overlooked. Deborah Britzman (1998) highlights these connections when she investigates the relationship between learning and psychoanalysis. Britzman suggests that education is by definition, a process of interference; a psychic event when “the subject that is the learner meets and uses the object that is knowledge.” (p. 3-4). She pushes us to consider that “bits and pieces of knowledge may be terrorizing to students and teachers” (p. 2) and points to “university classrooms that center the contested histories of civil rights, identity politics, social change and cultural discontentment” (p. 3) as pedagogical sites of anxiety. This anxiety and tension is founded in the “force of the social bearing down upon [individual] subjects” where students learn from their “own difficulties and pleasures” along with the learning that occurs from the “difficulties and pleasures of others” (p. 4). The interplay between individual and group learning is what Britzman refers to as the “weight of

the social” (p. 5) which can produce “repressed resistance, resentment and accusation” (p. 5) within and amongst learners. Britman writes:

“When the psychoanalytic definition of education is brought to education, education may begin the slow acknowledgement of its own ethical implications: education must interfere. There is nothing else it can do for it demands of students and teachers that each come to something, make something more of themselves. The problem is that the demand can be felt as too much and too little. The demand can come too early and too late. After all, consider what education asks of students: to listen, to pay attention, to stop talking, to hold the whisper, to stay with the subject, to concentrate, to risk a mistake, to correct a mistake, to talk in front of their peers, to take a test, to go play, to be serious, to stop laughing, to consider things which would not occur to the self, to debate a belief, to encounter strange theories; indeed, it asks students to confront perspectives, situations and ideas that may not be just unfamiliar but appear at first glance as a criticism of the learner’s view. In all these demands, education seems to be asking selves to risk their resistance even as educators have difficulty tolerating the forms working through resistance takes” (1998, p. 11).

Clearly, the dynamic between, within and amongst learners and teachers is well presented by Britzman. Psychoanalysis strongly reminds the discourse of education about human vulnerability in learning environments (Plumb, 2009). By extension, psychoanalysis reminds educators and learners about the need to act ethically given the interplay between individual and social responses to our identity.

Chapter 3: Method

The literature review outlined the challenges and constraints inherent in the diversity and anti-oppression learning context. By reviewing the literature, the case for conducting empirical research was developed so as to gain a broader understanding of the specific experience of this group of educators. I now describe and justify the research rationale, research paradigm, research question, research design, data collection and data analysis procedures employed within this study.

Research Rationale

When considering the research method, Noreen Garman (1996) emphasizes the importance of needing to state the philosophy behind the method and elaborate on “logical issues and concepts and ultimately, on the justifications that inform the inquiry” (p. 20). Indeed, research rationales and paradigms guide the researchers along their path of discovery or understanding (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The ontological and epistemological debate surrounding the nature of reality and whether it is objective or subjective, directly relates to and motivates future steps in the research process – that of design, data collection and analysis. As mentioned in this study’s literature review, the positivist versus constructivist debate can limit the way we look at the human condition by establishing a binary viewpoint about reality. This notion can be extended to how we look at research itself – either reality and knowledge are objective and measurable or they are fluid, uncertain and subjectively constructed to the point that no common understanding can be determined (English, 2006; Pring, 2000). In the midst of these two oppositions, lies the author’s perspective that recognizes the challenges of asserting a scientific and technocratic

approach to acquiring knowledge about human beings, while also identifying the limitations of a post-modern sensibility that reduces individual experiences to specific and subjective reality and ignores “predictable emotions and capacities” (Pring, 2000, p. 56) of humanity.

Some might consider this a critical realist perspective that:

“rejects methodological individualism and universal claims to truth.

Critical realists oppose logical positivist, relativist and antifoundational epistemologies. Critical realists agree with the positivists that there is a world of events out there that is observable and independent of human consciousness. They hold that knowledge about this world is socially constructed. Society is made up of feeling, thinking human beings and their interpretations of the world must be studied” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 13).

Instead of limiting ourselves to two options, it would be useful to envision a continuum of understanding knowledge and reality, with raw positivism at one end and pure constructivism or essentialism on the other. The possibility of these ‘pure’ forms existing is unlikely but necessary for the conversation about a continuum. In this case, we can position ourselves on the continuum and begin to foresee an ontological and epistemological understanding that simultaneously allows for the questioning of objectivity and a science-based approach while also recognizing that there are some truths in the world.

Mathematical and medical discoveries such as air flight and brain surgery, for example, exist because of a distinct, physical world (Pring, 2000). The expression of emotions in humans, the likelihood that humans experience conscious and unconscious thoughts, as well as our connection to works of art and literature also highlight that there is a common human

understanding about the world we live in. Evidently, these are not the only realities or constructions but they are part of the ontological fabric which informs and influences our study of human nature and of knowledge. Similarly, we must recognize that “positivist and postpositivist traditions linger like long shadows over the qualitative research project” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998 p.9). Researchers must consider the social and historical contexts of research participants in order to acknowledge their subjective and socio-cultural positioning in the world. This is of utmost importance because it means we are continually negotiating meaning with each other depending upon our social context, historical location and identity formation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Knowledge, in this case, is never neutral and is produced and reinforced by power relations that tend to value certain types of knowledge over others (Strega, 2005). As Pring (2000) suggests: “it is not that there are multiple realities... rather that there are different ways in which reality is conceived” (p. 52). Recognizing this grand debate and placing it on a continuum allows for us to acknowledge the best of both schools of thought. As a society, we have some common understanding about the world (although some might not be grand narratives or universal truths) and yet we must recognize that power and social positioning impacts the type of knowledge that is created and the value placed upon that knowledge (Strega, 2005; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Research Paradigm

Considering my position on this philosophical continuum – leaning towards the constructive end but understanding that some commonalities amongst humans exist – the research paradigm employed throughout this study is a qualitative mode of inquiry that “attempts to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 3). Qualitative researchers typically collect information

or data through the forms of observation, personal experience, field notes, case study, participatory inquiry, life history, interviewing, ethnography and visual methods such as cultural texts and artefacts (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). They also frequently employ multiple methods to enrich the data collection and analysis of information gathered (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The goal behind using a qualitative approach is to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon in question which in this study is the emotional challenges faced by diversity and anti-oppression educators (Garman, 1996).

Grounded theory as a method was introduced by Glaser and Strauss in 1967 in response to extreme positivism because these researchers “rejected the notion that scientific truth reflects an independent external reality” (Suddaby, 2006, p. 633) and suggested that “empirical ‘reality’ is... the ongoing interpretation of meaning produced by individuals engaged in a common project of observation” (p. 633). In this sense, grounded theory is about the production of meaning amongst a group of actors and is not about testing hypotheses or making universal scientific claims (Suddaby, 2006). Suddaby (2006) asserts: “most significantly, Glaser and Strauss offered a compromise between extreme empiricism and complete relativism by articulating a middle ground in which systematic data collection could be used to develop theories that address the interpretive realities of actors in social settings” (p. 634). This middle ground is of importance to the study of anti-oppression and diversity educators because I endeavour to build theory about their educational experiences by simultaneously acknowledging their life circumstances and understanding that some common experiences occur within this group of educators. Further tenets of grounded theory include no distinct break between data collection and data analysis as these processes occur concurrently and inform one another, as well as the

notion that the researcher is fundamentally implicated in the research process (Suddaby, 2006). I locate myself in this dynamic, as a person with a specific socio-cultural history and acknowledge that all parts of the research – from selecting participants, collecting data, setting a tone and level of trust with research participants, to transcribing, coding and analyzing data. This research is “guided by the researcher’s set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 22).

Overall, accessing the conversations that diversity and anti-oppression educators have will be of utmost importance to the value of this study. Qualitative research is about the “essences of people, objects and situations” (Huberman & Miles, 1998, p.182) and allows for an opening up of the research so that a “quest for understanding (not for truth)” ensues (Peshkin, 1993, p. 28). Using the qualitative approach limits the expectation that “one piece of work will give us all the answers, or indeed, all of any one answer” (Becker, 2002, p. 81) but it does allow the reader to develop a more profound sense of the research topic at hand, which is especially important when the subject matter has become stagnant or requires further development. This is certainly the case with this study, as not enough specific information is available regarding Canadian diversity and anti-oppression educators and the challenges they face within their practice.

Research Question

Research attention will be concentrated towards the themes in this literature review; language, emotion and teacher’s identity needs in diversity and anti-oppression education.

As such, the principal question for this research will be: what emotional challenges do Canadian diversity and anti-oppression educators face in their practice?

Research Design and Data Collection

Collecting data for this study takes the form of semi-structured interviews and corresponding field notes from the interviews, with six educators who have experience facilitating diversity trainings in the non-profit, settlement and education sectors. The decision to interview research participants was one that was not taken lightly. There are definite challenges in collecting data in this manner, despite the fact that “the use of interviewing to acquire information is so extensive today that it has been said that we live in an ‘interview society’” (Fontana & Frey, 2003, p. 62). Mass media has compounded the notion that we live in an interview society to the point where interviews are viewed as routine procedures of life where interviewees are asked to “divulge life accounts in response to interview inquiries” (Fontana & Frey, 2003, p. 63). Interviewing is indeed one of the most popular methods of accessing information about people and yet there have always been challenges in acquiring information in this manner. First, we must consider the interview as an exchange between two people; one that is not neutral or one-sided. As mentioned before, the interaction is as much about the researcher as it is the participant. Second, the interview is localized to time, place, mood, location, and other nuances such that “the result is as much a product of this social dynamic as it is a product of accurate accounts and replies” (Fontana & Frey, 2003, p. 64). Third, the exchange itself can be viewed as a ‘moment in time’ for all involved parties. Time spent with the research participants in this study is brief in comparison to the lived experiences that have informed participants and the researcher about the subject matter. Connected to this concept of time is the idea that

people can learn, think about the subject matter and change their opinions with more lived experience and more opportunity to engage in their practice. Focus groups and follow-up interviews were beyond the scope of this study, and although these techniques might have enriched the data, we would still have been bound by similar limitations of time spent *explaining* experiences versus time spent *living* experiences as well as the notion that learning is a continual and ever-changing process. In sum, the interview is a brief snap-shot of a participant's lived experience and it is imperative to position it as such. This chosen method is far from a 'window to the soul' (Fontana & Frey, 2003).

Despite these limitations, there is a thorough level of information that can be drawn upon by engaging with participants in an interview setting, especially when we consider an interview to be a "negotiated text" (Fontana & Frey, 2003, p 90). This notion rings especially true for the research participants selected for this study because diversity and anti-oppression educators are continually called upon to verbally justify their opinions about sensitive material in their practice. Asking questions of these participants is something that has been normalized in their work contexts and is not external to their lived experiences. This group of educators is accustomed to being asked questions (some more difficult than others) and because of this, it is possible for us to acquire a respectable level of information about their experiences. Furthermore, semi-structured interviews allow for a guided discussion to happen so that participants and the researcher are able to stay focussed about the subject in question. Most importantly, there is a reason why interviewing is such a widely-used technique for qualitative researchers – because it works to the extent that gives us some (not all) information about the research subject.

All interviews were conducted in person so as to gain a heightened sense of tone and non-verbal cues from research participants as well as to make it easier to develop a rapport with participants. All interviews were audio-taped with the use of a digital recorder. I aimed to establish an “active interview” set up where “the interviewer attempts to activate the respondent’s stock of knowledge” (Holstein & Gubrium, 2002, p. 121) as opposed to the traditional image of an interview where “the social scientific prospector casts the interview as a search-and-discovery mission” (p. 114). Active interviewing “eschews the image of the vessel waiting to be tapped in favour of the notion that the subject’s interpretive capabilities must be activated, stimulated and cultivated” (p. 120). Activating these capabilities requires establishing a warm and authentic relationship with the interviewees so as to establish the interview as an “interaction between participants... [where]... alternate perspectives and stocks of knowledge” can be explored (p. 123). Overall, this style of interviewing is a philosophical approach that allows for the interview to be akin to a conversation as opposed to an interrogation where an exact or correct answer must be sought after (Holstein & Gubrium, 2002).

The reality of establishing this active interview was more difficult for the researcher than I had expected. Establishing a warm and authentic relationship is certainly possible but had elements of difficulty, especially because it was the first time I had met five out of the six research participants. Also, engaging with participants was an ambiguous process for the researcher at times when it was unclear as to how much information I should reveal about myself and about my connection and interest in diversity and anti-oppression education (Fontana & Frey, 2003). Active interviewing is equally as challenging to uphold when time restraints and life is going on around you. I met one participant in a restaurant,

one at home while she was about to move houses and while her parents generously cared for her daughter, three research participants at their work and one participant at my work where deadlines and work-related tasks are looming for all involved. Furthermore, the impact of having an audio-recorder present made it slightly more awkward to establish an active interview for both participants and the researcher. The audio-recorder brought a level of intimidation to the exchange that might not have existed otherwise. This level of awkwardness and intimidation rang especially true when during the first interview the audio recorder stopped recording after fifteen minutes. Luckily, I was able to revive the device after fifteen minutes in order to capture the rest of the interaction. This experience is a perfect example of the difficulties in trying to perfectly “control” a person-to-person exchange. Issues (technological or otherwise) will arise and the researcher must be adaptable and creative in how to deal with these situations.

Field notes were written by the researcher to record observations about the participants’ reactions to the subject matter. These notes highlighted how the interviewee responded to the questions and if, for example, there were non-verbal cues that the researcher is attuned to during the interview that could not be easily identified in the transcription. The goal of these notes was to ensure that the tone and mood of the interview did not get missed in specific wording or during the transcription process. Margorie DeVault (2002) encourages researchers to “develop methods for listening around and beyond words” (p. 94) and it was my hope that taking notes during the interview would allow for more of the emotionality or tone of the interview to come to the foreground throughout the documentation process. In reality, the field notes addressed more about the interview content and less about the tone and emotionality. This has something to do with the fact

that during the first interview, the audio recorder stopped working for a period of time and so I became focussed on ensuring I had a second set of data in case this occurred again. There are references to this in the transcriptions because I shared this story with some of the research participants. Some of the tone and emotionality of each interview was observed in the field notes but this would be an area that I would improve upon in the future. I also believe that my professional experience of working in career counselling and social work settings has made me more adept at remembering and processing the tone of an interview, without having to document it. Furthermore, informal conversations with colleagues and my thesis supervisor allowed me to process “how the interviews were going” and also solidify the tone of individual interviews. It should be noted that participant and organization anonymity was always maintained in these conversations.

Prior to the interviews, a list of teacher self-analysis questions, modified from Bracher’s original questions was sent to the research participants (see Appendix 2). Most participants had between five to fourteen days to digest and review this information. The pre-interview questionnaire allowed research participants to start thinking about their relationship to the teaching dynamic and where their identity needs, as diversity and anti-oppression educators stem from. Participants were asked to think about these questions prior to meeting with the researcher in the interview setting. Each participant was assured that that I would not be asking specifics unless they felt comfortable sharing this information. This questionnaire helped guide the interview itself and allowed for the participants to have some preparation for the type of questions that I was going to ask in the interview context.

The interview questions asked of participants can be found in Appendix 5. I used a semi-structured format for the interview and came prepared with an original list of eleven open-ended questions for participant's consideration to ensure that all areas related to the research were covered. The researcher primarily followed the guideline set out by the interview questions but I learned through the process to ask other questions if I needed more clarification or if the respondent did not cover a topic that was addressed by other participants. For example, the theme of co-facilitation came up organically with all of the participants except one so I directly asked this question to the HAL3 respondent to see if they used this facilitation approach. I also drew upon the grounded theory approach to interviewing as I learned through the process of data collection and analysis and then applied this new knowledge to further interviews. For example, when conducting the first set of interviews in Toronto, I realized that after asking the eleven questions, participants were still interested in talking about their experiences. When I returned to Halifax and began the second set of interviews, I included a final question that asked: "is there anything else you would want me to know about this subject or about your experience?" so as to allow for the research participant to share any other information not covered in the list of questions that I asked the participants.

Participant Selection

Half of the interviews were conducted with educators living and practicing in Halifax, Nova Scotia and the other half with educators living and practicing in Toronto, Ontario. This geographical location is significant because most of the research to date has stemmed from the United States and from a human resource or corporate standpoint. My intent was to gain a Canadian perspective as well as a broader view of sectors where trainings have

occurred. Indeed, a wealth of information has not yet been heard about diversity trainings that occur within Canadian non-profit, settlement, and education sectors. Toronto, with a population of approximately 2.5 million, has been identified as “one of the most multicultural cities in the world” and “is home to virtually all of the world's culture groups...where more than 100 languages and dialects are spoken” (City of Toronto, 2009; Statistics Canada, 2009). On the other hand, Halifax is a smaller city, with a population of approximately 370,000 people and has a rich history and connection to Mi’kmaq, African Nova Scotian, Acadian and Scottish communities, although it does not boast the same level of cultural diversity as its counterpart (Multicultural Association of Nova Scotia, 2009). Although cultural diversity is not the only type of diversity, it is an imperative part of the conversation for the educators in question.

These cities were also chosen because the researcher has lived and worked in both Toronto and Halifax and I have professional and personal ties to these communities. I have built relationships with key contacts in approximately nine organizations in Toronto and seven organizations in Halifax. Because of time spent in these cities and developing strong relationships with key contacts in organizations, I have been able to gain access to educators who involve themselves in this type of education. Seeking out participants took the form of requesting that these key contacts inform diversity and anti-oppression educators who conduct trainings in their respective workplaces about the study. I also approached educators directly about participation in the study via email and phone.

Ethics, Confidentiality and Risks

With professional training in the field of social work, the researcher has conducted various intake interviews and counselling sessions with a diverse client base including newcomer youth, food bank recipients and the elderly. This is important to note because I have been trained to gather pertinent (and often emotionally charged) information, while simultaneously limiting the risk for clients and maintaining a high level of confidentiality about their experiences. These skills and adherence to a professional code of conduct, developed through six years of practice, were applied while I conducted these semi-structured interviews. This researcher adheres to a standard of confidentiality in my professional life and I applied the same level of confidentiality to this project. All information obtained from this study has been held in confidence by the researcher. Only the researcher and her supervisor have had access to the information provided by participants. Specific names and other personal information and associated organization information have not been and will not be released through the project, especially during the audio-taping and transcription process. When the research is complete, audio-tapes will be destroyed and transcripts (text or electronic records of interviews) will be kept in a secure location, accessed only by the researcher and her supervisor.

Participants signed an informed consent document (see Appendix 3) prior to each interview, along with the researcher verbally explaining this document to respondents. Where applicable, participants were also given information about the maintenance of organizational anonymity in a document called Third Party Information (see Appendix 4). I explained to participants that they were able to decline responding to any of the questions asked and that they were allowed to withdraw from the project at any time. Risks were

mitigated by the interviewer's ability to handle emotionally charged personal interactions, as well as by establishing a warm environment where researcher and participant engaged in a focussed conversation on the subject matter. Participants were not required to disclose any information from the pre-survey questionnaire to the researcher that they did not feel comfortable sharing during the interview. As Fontana & Frey (2003) suggest: "to learn about people we must treat them as people, and they will work with us to help us create accounts of their lives" (p. 99). This has been a guiding principle throughout this study – a respect for people's opinions and personal information has certainly lead me throughout the process.

Transcription

All interviews were transcribed verbatim by the researcher. DeVault (2002) asserts that "listening depends on various kinds of background knowledge" (p. 99) and urges qualitative researchers to "listen in ways that are personal, disciplined and sensitive to differences" (p. 99). I chose to transcribe all interviews to gain a better sense of the respondent's voices, pauses and individualized tone. This choice was more work but allowed for a better understanding of participant's word choices and responses as well as gaining the deepest possible understanding of the interview and transcription itself. Because of this choice, I can now 'hear' the voices of the participants when I read the transcription, which has made the coding and analysis process more personalized and relevant.

After the interviews were complete, the researcher sent an electronic copy of the transcription to the participants, to give them the opportunity to review the documentation and ensure the transcription was an accurate reflection of our conversation. Some

participants added, edited and clarified their perspectives through reviewing the transcript. One participant did not respond to my request for their revisions, despite three attempts via email.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was an interpretive and intuitive process to the extent that sometimes the researcher felt as though I was 'flying by the seat of my pants' throughout the process. As an inexperienced researcher, there were many times where analyzing the data felt like a daunting task. This is, apparently, a very common feeling for qualitative researchers. Fontana & Frey (2003) assert that: "no matter how organized the researcher may be, he or she slowly becomes buried under an increasing mountain of field notes, transcripts, newspaper clippings and audiotapes" (p. 87). Indeed, the notion of "drowning" (Suddaby, 2006, p. 639) in the data is a common experience in the data analysis process. This has certainly been the case with this study, although there is no doubt that I am enmeshed in the participants responses by engaging with the data on a regular basis. The choice to personally transcribe the interviews has also been extremely helpful because it has allowed for me to *hear* the respondent's voices while re-reading the text such that I developed a higher level of comprehension and appreciation for the material.

Consistent with tenets of grounded-theory, data collection and data analysis was an integrated process that informed the researcher's delivery, questions asked and allowed the research to be adapted to themes that arose during the first set of interviews. A previously mentioned, in the last interview with participant Hal3, I was able to ask a specific question about co-facilitation that was not asked to previous participants but that I had identified as a

possible trend. Furthermore, organizing the transcripts by question and developing a skeleton of themes that had arisen throughout the interviews occurred while data collection was taking place. Meetings and email correspondence with my thesis supervisor assisted in solidifying this initial skeleton of themes.

Once all the interviews were complete, I read and re-read the raw material to be fully integrated with the text. Next, I followed the first four “steps of grounded theory coding” as defined by Auerbach and Silverstein (2003): “raw text, relevant text, repeating ideas, and themes,” (p. 35). By using their framework as a guide, I began by manually highlighting all the relevant text in each interview, allowing for anything that I thought to be important to be highlighted. This process was both logical and intuitive – sometimes I was fully aware why the text was being highlighted and other times it just ‘felt right’ to make sure I could come back to the text for review. Throughout this process, I began jotting down similarities and themes from the relevant text on a scrap piece of paper. Then I referred back to some email correspondence with my thesis supervisor to connect with how I had experienced the information during the data collection phase. After which, I developed a list of approximately twenty-two codes that I organized in alphabetical order and by colour (see Appendix 6). I then re-read the relevant text and attached a code to each important section of the transcriptions in the left-hand margin of the printed documents. Six more codes emerged once I began re-reading the interviews to address some of the text that had been highlighted intuitively. After this process, I had created twenty-eight codes of repeating ideas from the relevant text (see Appendix 7). Once all of the relevant text had a code attached to it, I reviewed the transcriptions and ‘cut and paste’ the relevant text into twenty-eight individual Microsoft Word documents. For example, all relevant text about, G1 – Gentle pushes, has

been organized together in one document. This has allowed for participant's explanations (similar and different) to be grouped together for easy comparison and differentiation.

During this time of attaching codes to the transcription and organizing the relevant text into individual documents, higher level themes started to become apparent to the researcher. Again, jotting this information down on a scrap piece of paper allowed for the ideas to become more concrete and clarified further questions for the researcher. These overarching themes moved a step further along the process of building theory when I formulated Appendix 8 and was able to relate it back to the research question. Finally, it has become evident to me that 'sitting with the data' is an important part of the grounded theory process. Reviewing raw and highlighted text, attaching meaningful codes and building themes certainly takes time and reflection on the part of the researcher.

Chapter 4: Analysis

The previous chapter explained the research method of this study. I will now review and analyze the data, focussing on the overall themes of 1) limitations, 2) emotion, 3) identity, 4) educator's motivations and, 5) coping with and handling challenges (See Appendix 8). The chapter clarifies sub themes in the warranted sections and reviews related coding to provide an in-depth analysis of the information.

Limitations

One of the major ideas that arose during this study had to do with the limitations that diversity and educator's face within their practice. Such limitations to their practice included evaluation, language, money/funding, safe space and time. I now review these specific codes and offer some direct quotations from participants to highlight the challenging learning dynamic within which these educators situate themselves.

Evaluation occurs for most educators in written format where learners are asked to complete a questionnaire at the end of the workshop or training. One research participant mentioned that he wants to start working on a follow-up survey for learners to see how their ideas about the subject matter have changed over time. Another educator was adamant about having her workshop participants complete the formal written evaluation immediately after the workshop because "people have an incredibly positive experience, they write a glowing review and then they go off and something else happens". Thus, the element of time and absorbing the material discussed in the workshop through the process of personal reflection, as well as discussing the information with peers, co-workers and family can have a dramatic impact upon how well the training is received. Sometimes this can lead to what

was described to the researcher as a “revolt” where some learners are uncomfortable with the information presented and try to change or “sabotage” the topic of discussion the next time they meet for a workshop. This reality for educators is especially significant when we consider Margaret Archer’s (2007) notion of reflexivity and exactly how people come to make decisions about their lives when they are able to explore the significance of “self-other overlap” (Bracher, 2009, p. 370). The interplay between individual decision making and other social forces such as feedback and opinions from peers, co-workers and/or family members can have a dramatic impact upon how a workshop is evaluated by learners as well as what is learned throughout this process. Fear of “cultural suicide” as mentioned by Brookfield (2006, p. 84), where thinking about one’s identity and as a result possibly changing one’s opinions or belief structures can put learners in the position of risking exclusion from the culture and support system that has been the foundation for their identity, is another possible reason why these perceived revolts occur in diversity and anti-oppression workshops.

Evaluation also occurs on a “second-to-second” basis during the training itself where diversity and anti-oppression educators need to gauge a “sense in the room” of how the discussion or specific activities are having an impact on learners. Stephen Brookfield (2006) defines this notion of constant and intuitive evaluation as “practical reasoning” (p.6) which is “the reasoning we conduct in the midst of situations that call for immediate action” (p.6). Brookfield asserts that practical reasoning involves “three interrelated skills of scanning, appraisal and action” (p. 6). We take an “[1] initial sweep... to diagnose the big picture... [2] call on our own intuition... [and 3] sort through the interpretations we have gathered”, to choose the most appropriate response. (p. 6-8). This reasoning is an inter-

related triage process where the educator must choose the most appropriate response or action, based on the environment and needs of his/her students. Brookfield values practical reasoning by asserting that it is “neither random or amateurish” (p. 6) and encourages educators to trust the judgments and insights that they have gained through their experiences.

It is apparent that the diversity and anti-oppression educators in this study gain a sense of whether a workshop is going well or not based on an emotive state or “knowingness” where they are able to move of learners along a continuum of learning and “break up given ways of thinking”. Coming to understand, listen and trust this intuition is an incredibly challenging task for diversity and anti-oppression educators because it is difficult to know where learners are in terms of their analysis to the subject matter and their identity. It was explained to me that, sometimes, having more than one trainer or leader in the room can assist in this process of evaluating and gauging the audience with respect to responses about the exercises and overall conversation. Finally, evaluating practice is always a difficult task – especially when it comes to gaining a sense of whether learners have actually engaged with the often sensitive material presented in these workshops. The idea of “planting seeds” and never really knowing when new ideas will sprout came up in more than one conversation with the research participants. For some of the educators involved in this study, there is a sense that one never truly knows when, how and if learners have been impacted by the subject matter.

Secondly, the challenges diversity and anti-oppression educators face is compounded by the limitations of **language** in these workshop settings. This idea has certainly been highlighted in the literature review where language is so closely connected to

one's identity – to the point where students and educators will try to defend or even live up to the language with which they identify. The research participants highlighted the essential role that language plays within the diversity and anti-oppression training context, where some of the educator's saw language as a difficult thing for their students to deal with because it is never neutral and contextual to the learners who are in the room (for example, one educator indicated that youth, adults, and immigrants all have their own language). Another educator talked about how her students are learning a new language – that of an academic discourse and that it is imperative to make this language accessible to students. Three educators identified the challenges of using the term “anti-racism” or “anti-oppression” because it starts the relationship off as being negative “and you set a context where people walk in and right away they're racist or they're oppressive”. This can make the goal of bridging to be very difficult because of the stigma or idea that those interested in anti-racism or anti-oppression work are very angry. The “anti” language makes the dynamic “unnecessarily divisive” for these educators. Finally, one educator saw language as a tool for making emotionally-bound subject matter to become more intellectual in nature. She sees language as a “useful tool for opening the door... for a conversation that is much more personal”.

Most of the research participants, save one, did not make a strong connection between language and identity which is not what the researcher had anticipated after conducting the literature review. This is perhaps because the majority of educators do not refer to psychoanalysis as a body of work that they draw upon for their practice. It is the researcher's observation those participants situate themselves within the feminist and critical theory realm of thought or as Bracher would call the hysteric pedagogy. As such, the

notion of master-bearing signifiers and living up to the words we use every day via our identity was not highlighted as an important feature for this group of educators when considering language. Overall, language was identified as a challenge but not in the way that the researcher had expected.

Money and funding was mentioned by three of the research participants as another challenge. Two components of this code became evident to the researcher. The first has to do with the challenges of educator's making a living doing this work and how difficult the relationship can be when one believes the work is important but that the experiences of these trainers are not afforded the monetary value that is deserving of their work. Secondly, the notion of funding arose for those who work in the non-profit and education sectors. According to one research participant, specific kinds of trainings such as cultural competency – a technocratic 'how-to' guide for diversity education – seems to receive funding over broader types of trainings. On top of this, diversity and anti-oppression educators are pressed by funding organizations to fulfill specific project outcomes. This can be challenging when the educators have a different sense of what outcomes are possible in a workshop setting in comparison to those of their funders. Money and funding is a noteworthy code when we once again consider Archer's notion of reflexivity and the tenuous dynamic between individual and societal forces. In the case of these educators, one of the social forces in play is capitalism and the way in which money impacts our daily living. In this study's case, some educators were very conscious about how money impacts their decision making as well as their personal and professional lives.

The notion of creating a **safe space** for learners is one that arose with all participants, save one educator. Two educators firmly believe that they can create a safe space with their

students, two spoke about the notion of safe space but did not indicate whether or not it is achievable and one educator indicated that she did not think that safe was entirely possible.

This last research participant states:

“I think there’s a lot of discussion about safe places and a lot of that has to do with safety around emotion. One of the big things that I learned through one of my worst training experiences was that safe doesn’t exist ... there’s safer... but safe actually, to do this work, we are actually at the outset, at writing your name on your nametag, at showing up, we are asking you to actually step outside of your safety zone. We are asking you to step into an emotional state of anxiety.”

Creating this safe space for those who believed it to be a possibility meant that people were allowed to express how they feel and that the participants in the room set the tone for creating this environment. One educator spoke of setting up guidelines and safety contracts for learners so that they feel as though they can step into the space of taking more risks. Another educator discussed the debate within the literature about whether safe spaces are possible and chose to use the term “supported” instead of “safe”. Overall, this notion is a highly contestable one and a challenge for all involved within this work. If you think it is possible to set up a safe space, then living up to this expectation is extremely difficult. If you are unsure if safe spaces are possible, it makes the work of teaching about diversity and anti-oppression that much more challenging because you are especially aware of the limitations and constraints of your practice.

Finally, **time limitations** arose with most research participants. Most believe they would like to have more time to discuss these issues with learners and that the expectations

of those who initiate the training can be too high for the short period of time that educators get to spend with learners. One educator states: “As the trainer, I know [what] will work... if I have some time to really work with people. And what happens with training is they give you one day or a half day and it’s like, how are you supposed to do anything?” Time limitations also impact the material that is covered and how in-depth educators can get with the material. Another educator states: “You know I talked about the experience of being dismantled and it was fantastic! But very skilfully done over a year. And if you got three hours? You need to be responsible around the devastation that you leave.” One research participant indicated that three hours at a time is a sufficient time to engage with the material because after this fact, it becomes overwhelming for learners. This educator divides the trainings into three sessions that are each three hours in length. However, there was an overall sense from the research participants that the more time with learners, the better. Most of these educators are asked to talk about diversity and anti-oppression for a shorter period of time than they would wish.

The delicacy in educator’s trying to create safe spaces or figuring out if a safe space is even possible, along with the time limitations that educators experience in these workshops highlights just how difficult these learning environments can be for all involved. The educators in this environment undoubtedly strive to create a safe space and yet half of them don’t believe this is entirely possible because the subject matter is extremely sensitive. This type of education challenges everyone’s sense of self and what we hold on to be true and dear in our lives. Ultimately, these educators will never know if their efforts have had an impact because the process of evaluation is so extremely difficult to gauge and measure. The fact that most educators believe more time is needed to talk about diversity and anti-

oppression demonstrates how hard they work, how committed they are to the project and also how difficult it is to actually achieve the goals they whole-heartedly desire. The limitations give a strong sense of the uphill climb these diversity and anti-oppression educators embark upon every time they facilitate difficult conversations about identity, power, diversity and oppression.

Emotion

There are two major sub themes within this section – that of the educator’s emotion and also of the participant’s emotion. It is essential to note that when talking about participant’s emotion, the information is still coming from the educator’s perspective. As such, it is how the educator’s see the emotional responses of their learners that will be discussed in this study. When it comes to their own emotional responses, the researcher has identified some major codes related to the subject – Bracher questionnaire, recognition, detach, emotion, excitement, history, involuntary learners, risk, sharing personal stories, still learning and towards you. I will now highlight the pertinent information from most of these codes as it relates to the emotionality of diversity and anti-oppression educators.

Common responses about **Bracher’s questionnaire** or the pre-interview survey that I sent researcher participants (see Appendix 2) arose, especially the idea of making them reflect in a different way than they usually do. This had mostly to do with the recognition piece in the survey (ie: where and how educator’s get recognized in the teaching dynamic). It is this researcher’s belief that all of the educators were challenged in various forms by the pre-interview survey. Two participants seemed to set up guards when talking about it - one participant didn’t feel she could answer the questions because she hadn’t been doing the

work long enough, one stated that he doesn't work in an emotive manner although "for participants it could be emotional but my approach is not". The other participants admitted that the questions were "difficult", "provoking" and made them realize "some of the pain involved" to the point of asking why they continue to facilitate this form of education. Being personally implicated in the process also came up for one participant as she states "I mean you're not teaching calculus, right?" The **recognition** code is closely tied to Bracher's questionnaire. Most of the recognition from educators had to do with learners personally thanking them after a workshop or training where it could affect the learner's perspective and practice. Educators feeling like they have "inspired" learners as well as the opportunity to develop new colleagues and friends by working with new trainers were elements that were also mentioned.

Detaching arose for most participants, where one educator spoke of "I'm hearing something that's almost making me upset, how do I handle it?" The idea of detaching is about preventing expression of the educator's emotional responses so that they can handle what is occurring in the training or workshop. It is primarily about putting your emotional baggage aside so as to address what is going on in the room. One educator states:

"And I was challenged for a lot of reasons. One was because I was triggered, I was offended by his way of thinking and also wanting to be a facilitator, keeping this professional distance from the emotions in the room, but engaging in them at the same time and allowing this person's voice to be heard while trying to preserve the safety and comfort of others in the room".

This idea of educators being triggered by the opinions and emotions of the workshop participants became prevalent with some educators such that learning how to detach from their own opinions and responses is a skill that they have tried to develop over time and with the support of their colleagues and co-facilitators. One participant was able to detach from the emotional responses of learners by seeing that he was being confronted not as himself but as the person in the front of the room. As such, he chose not to take the reactions from learners personally.

Emotion was originally identified as a code but grew into an overall theme because of the extent to which it arose in the educator's responses. Research participants were asked about an experience or time when they had to deal with emotion in a training or workshop and how they like to handle the emotional responses of learners in these contexts. The educators shared some very powerful experiences with me about the complexities of diversity, oppression and difference. One participant shared her experience as a Muslim woman who wears a hijab and how this had an impact on a learner who had identified as Native and who was upset by the sight of her physical appearance. The learner was not upset by what this educator typically experienced as being viewed as a terrorist or being oppressed by men. Her hijab reminded this learner of the nuns in the residential school system and for him, it was a symbol of abuse and pain. Other powerful experiences included being the only person of colour in an organization of approximately 700 people, learning how to handle extreme aggression and comments said with "venom", working with white parents who are about to adopt trans-racially, facilitating a workshop where a professional white male opened up about the challenges of his life and facilitating a training with academic peers who were more close-minded than the educator had expected.

Handling emotion is something that all the educators are comfortable with and where emotions must be unpacked and normalized. In many cases, inviting or creating a space for emotion is part of the workshop design and educational process. One research participant states: “it’s important to connect on an emotional level, for the audience to engage on an emotional level and for those emotions to be normalized. You will feel outrage, you will feel guilt, you will feel shock, you will feel sadness, you will feel profound hopelessness, helplessness. It connects us with our humanity and I think it’s really important”. Throughout this emotional process, it is imperative to note that educators talked about their **excitement** when they thought people were learning or looking at things in a different way. They also talked about other emotions such as taking things personally, feeling inadequate, having difficulty handling the aggressiveness of learners, not feeling protected, and seeing all the negatives in a workshop evaluation as being a personal attack. One educator spoke about the reality of her own stability and the fact that trainers need to be “settled in themselves” in order to create a holding environment that allows emotion to be part of the learning dynamic.

Working with **involuntary learners** came up for most research participants and this was very much connected to a level of frustration of not having everyone interested in the subject matter, to the point where aggression and “sabotage” can happen in the learning context. Another research participant discussed how this sabotage occurred after the first day of an ongoing workshop and that other learners who were interested in talking about diversity and anti-oppression were frustrated by the handful of learners who stopped the training from continuing. This code is very much connected to **towards you** where all of the research participants had experienced learners directing their emotional responses towards

them in one way or another. How each educator handled these responses depended upon the context but many spoke about **sharing personal stories** as a way of “making it real” for their learners. One educator identified that her “success” as an educator is very closely tied to how much of herself she can unapologetically bring to the room.

Educator’s talking about their own social positioning can certainly bring context to those who are directing emotional responses towards them and it can also model to their learners that taking **risks** in this learning environment is possible. As one educator stated “I think facilitators have to be open to [taking] risk if they want participants to take risk”. Defining risk was a challenge for two educators, one commenting that you are never sure how it will take form in the learning environment. She states: “silence can be a risk, challenging can be a risk, refusing to do anything can be a risk, telling you to screw off can be a risk. So as a trainer, I have to be open to the different ways that risk shows up”. One educator echoed this sentiment by stating that there is a continuum of risk in these trainings. Two educators definitively stated that they think learners should be expected to take risks in their trainings. One identified that she creates an environment where “it doesn’t feel like a risk” and two educators welcome risks when they appear but do not always expect it from their learners. Finally, one educator stated to me: “I actually believe that engaging in anti-oppression work, as a participant, anybody in the room, it is risky”.

It is no surprise that most of the research participants find themselves currently or previously working in the helping professions such as social work, education, conflict resolution, mediation, mental health and psychology. Handling this level of emotionality certainly requires specific professional training and this is reflected in the sample of educators I spoke with. Their personal and professional **history** seems to have drawn them

to this type of work. Coupled with their training is the notion that they are **still learning** and will continue to learn as they experience more opportunities to engage in conversations about diversity and anti-oppression. Educators talked about “becoming more aware”, being “continually challenged and continually learning”, learning from their own discomfort, about “going out on some limbs” with their training by trying new things, and that these trainings can be a “living laboratory” for both students and educators. Finally, one educator discussed that using evaluation for further development of the educator as an important piece; that it is not always about looking at negative feedback but also identifying as a group of co-facilitators what can be learned from that feedback.

Overall, the significance of the “educator’s emotion” theme relates directly to the notion that diversity and anti-oppression educators must look ‘inward’ to engage with their own insecurities, baggage, desires and identity needs. As previously mentioned, one educator spoke about being settled within her ‘self’ and how important it is to recognize her own emotional stability. This insight is an important one to consider for diversity and anti-oppression educators because in many ways, emotional stability and truly knowing oneself is a life-long process that is difficult to achieve. In many ways, this notion of looking inward and understanding oneself begs the question as to how anyone can be truly ready to engage in the deep and difficult conversations that are raised in diversity and anti-oppression education. And yet, this group of educators handle these difficult conversations all the time. Addressing their own honest perspective in diversity education allows for some to be involved in the human fabric of uncertainty, imperfection and doubt. One educator states: “I always talk about my uncertainty too... my perspective is one of uncertainty and I think that’s the only thing I can give”.

The educator's responses from this study are courageous, admirable and in many ways completely understandable. If put in a similar situation, I would venture to assert that most of us would find it difficult to handle projections from students and involuntary learners, to learn how to detach from difficult situations and also get really excited when our students are learning about a new topic that we feel passionate about. These are common human responses to social settings. They are also magnified in the diversity and anti-oppression education context where the educator's identity as well as the identity of other's in the room is being challenged on a regular basis.

Looking within and being settled with yourself leads this researcher to think about how important the element of self-care can be within this teaching dynamic. The idea of caring for oneself or figuring out ways to preserve one's sense of self was not an overarching theme from research participants in this study. It appears as if this group of educators are more concerned with the feelings and identities of others than they are with their own. This missing piece gives us insight into the particularities of this group of educators and the fact that their own needs, wants and desires are not given priority. It also highlights how most humans tend to shy away from their own inner-workings. Focussing on the needs of others makes it easier for all of us to avoid considering our own identity needs. Perhaps this complex dynamic of focussing on others is one that allows all of us to avoid dealing with issues of importance within our conscious and unconscious selves.

Participant's Emotion

From most of the educator's perspectives it is important for learners to engage with diversity and anti-oppression on an emotional level. Whether emotions are invited or not, it

is clear that these learning contexts bring about many emotional responses from workshop participants. I will now highlight the major issues that surfaced in this study when it comes to the emotions of participants. Again, it is important to note that this information is stemming from the educator's perspective. The codes that became apparent about the emotions of learners were: gentle pushes, guilt, privilege, risk and work from where they're at.

When discussing the notion of **gentle pushes**, it is important to consider the debate within the literature as to what extent learners should be pushed outside of their comfort zone. Some writers believe that learners should be pushed to take risks such that a crisis will occur while others believe pushing people too far will make learners shut down and can possibly create a backlash effect. This conflict was certainly apparent within the group of diversity and anti-oppression educators interviewed in this study. For those who addressed this issue, most people believed it was necessary to push people past their comfort zone, but to do this in a gentle and compassionate way. Most educators believed that "learning comes from discomfort" all while trying to recognize and **work from where they're at** in the process. One educator states:

"You're talking about their experience of parenting in the world. You know, it just becomes so core, so incredibly important and incredibly personal and it deserves a huge amount of respect and just being really gentle. You gotta push, but you know people can't be anywhere but where they are. It doesn't mean that where they are doesn't shift or change and move and that it's fluid. People can't be anywhere other than where they

are and I think sometimes a lot of this work, when it runs into trouble is when people, trainers, other people in the room don't honour that."

One educator discussed two integral elements as it relates to gentle pushes. First, she discussed how there seems to be a glorification of discomfort in the literature and that paradigm shifts do not need to be dramatic changes in order for people to be learning. She stated that she is "not about forcing strong medicine down someone's throat without support". Second, this educator also addressed the importance of educator's being comfortable with themselves in order to ensure that discomfort is not exacerbated by the instructor. Overall, developing skills on how to push people gently and how to negotiate the balance between pushing people past their comfort zone while maintaining their emotional stability was not concretely discussed and this could be an area for further inquiry.

The other important area that arose from educators about the emotional responses of learners had to do with **guilt** and **privilege**. These two codes were interconnected for most educators, especially when talking about the privilege that white or Caucasian people experience in this learning dynamic. One educator defined privilege as "an unearned right" that is relative to the situation at hand and that those students who begin recognizing their privilege in a workshop setting can feel very guilty about it. One educator tries to model to other white women by stating "we talk about guilt, I don't see guilt as a bad thing that's where some of the literature says its bad, but I don't see it as bad, I see it as an invitation to responsibility". When learners become more aware of the impact their social position has on others, some educators will ask them to consider what they are going to do with this new understanding. Finally, as it relates to privilege, two educators identified their own privilege within this learning dynamic; one who saw her experience of being biracial as affording her

the opportunity to “straddle different identities” and another who was uncomfortable with the fact that the institution she worked for required that they choose a person of colour for the diversity educator position. This educator recognized the optics required by the institution and “how there’s an aspect of my identity in one context [that] I might see as posing barriers to me and in this context it’s actually a privilege, very much a privilege”.

In many ways, the “participant’s emotion” theme raised in this study is significant because of the relationship it holds to the “educator’s emotion” theme. The dynamic between educator and learner in diversity and anti-oppression training is an integral aspect of the learning and requires a compassionate approach from both parties. We are all subject to insecurities to the point where pushing someone gently, working from where they’re at, handling guilt and discussing privilege requires an extreme amount of care and concern. Educators must look at their own identity needs when considering their learner’s emotions so that their desires do not supersede those of their learners. At the same time, learners must recognize that the “experts” also have their own emotional baggage and needs. Both parties must consider moving beyond the golden rule to what some have called the platinum rule which involves “treating others as *they* wish to be treated” (Carnevale & Stone, 1994, p. 24). Figuring out how to do this in a three hour time frame is incredibly difficult task indeed.

Identity

When talking about **identity**, one educator spoke about her belief that that this work is all about identity, that it is a “process of identity and engaging with your identity”. She continues to say: “you know you’re asking people to re-consider not only what they know but

the very structure for how they know things and their understanding of how the world is and their most beloved people in the world, their most beloved memories... their most painful memories. So many things that structure their identity and you're now gonna problematize them". Another educator spoke about the relationship between and amongst people when considering the notion of identity formation: "you cannot define identity or concept of self in isolation. It's always in relation to 'other'".

All educators spoke about their own identity, social positioning or **history** such as being first generation immigrants, lesbian, women of colour, being closely connected to the Native community, etc. This is likely to come to the forefront because they are well versed in sharing their own personal stories and experiences with their students. Talking about identity as it relates to social position is also very much part of the feminist and critical theory rhetoric. One educator also mentioned that an integral component of her identity was being an anti-oppression educator: "this is not something that I do, it's what I am."

Only one educator made a strong connection between identity and **language** despite this being an integral aspect of the literature review, especially when the researcher looked at Bracher's and Lacan's notion of master-bearing signifiers. One educator spoke of the fact that "we get really attached to certain words and it can take us away from what we're really trying to work on" but she did not tie this to the concept of identity in any concrete manner. Research participants were asked if they think diversity and anti-oppression training should make people feel uncomfortable about their identity. Four participants were adamant that it should not, one participant believed that it should and another stated that training can make people feel uncomfortable depending upon the context. This is closely connected to the notion of **gentle pushes** where most educators believe that it is important to push people

but not to the point of crisis or backlash. This is especially important for those learners who might be considered **involuntary learners** and who might easily disengage if they are pushed too far.

It is interesting to note that none of the educators in this study recognized Bracher's concept of identity needs such as recognition as being an integral component of their identity. Social location or position was really the overarching way of looking at identity for these research participants. This is not a surprise to the researcher after most participants talked about how the pre-survey questionnaire made them reflect in a different way than they usually do. As such, identity needs is not part of the common vernacular or understanding about identity, despite it being an integral component of the literature review and the psychoanalytic perspective used by Bracher.

Educator's Motivations

Given the challenges of this practice, especially when handling the emotion and identity of themselves as well as those of the learners, it is interesting to consider what motivates this group of diversity and anti-oppression educators. For the educator's working and living in the **city/location** of Halifax, some of the motivation comes from recognizing that "we have work to do here" in terms of diversity and anti-oppression education and how, for instance, immigrants are welcomed when they arrive in Nova Scotia. One Halifax educator spoke about the fact that the face of the city has changed in the last ten years and they are now receiving more requests from organizations whose frontline staff "are running into more and more situations that they find difficult primarily because of cultural diversity". This is in contrast to the educators living and working in Toronto who barely mentioned the city as

having a need to engage in these subjects. The only mention of Toronto came from one educator who spoke about supporting her diversity and anti-oppression colleagues to the extent that contracts for training are referred back and forth within the city, depending upon what aspects of diversity need to be addressed. This is a significant finding because it demonstrates how much social location and our environment impacts the wishes, hopes and motivations of this group of educators.

A fundamental motivation for all these educators has to do with what this researcher calls a **higher purpose** as it relates to **peace**, and **bridging/dialogue**. This higher purpose is a spiritual one for some, for others it is about being a peace educator, or intercultural growth and integration, dialogue and transformation through dialogue, broadening the learner's understanding of difference and bridging difference. These higher purposes are value-laden terms and ones that are very difficult to describe. However, it appears as though they are one of the primary driving forces behind why these educators do this kind of work. When they see these transformations occur, the educators have told me about their level of **excitement** and engagement with the participants and with their work. This can sometimes be connected to a **recognition** component where educators feel good about themselves and their practice because they have inspired change or the possibility of learners seeing something in a new way. One educator speaks about bridging and states:

“I've had a lot of incredible experiences and this is the highlight of my work where we sit across difference and we're able to connect together in our identities. So it's not a neo-liberal [concept] like we're all the same, let's forget it. No, we acknowledge our identities and the particularity of our identities and it's through the identity, through the connection that a lot of

healing and transformation happens. That's probably the best part of the work, to see that dialogue".

Considering why diversity and anti-oppression educators involve themselves in this type of education is an important element of this study. This is especially relevant because of the challenges and limitations that diversity and anti-oppression educators face within their practice. Obviously, their motivations run very deep in order for them to be able to cope with the tremendously difficult and emotional learning environments they face on a regular basis.

Coping With and Handling Challenges

One of the themes that has come out of this study is to recognize how this group of diversity and anti-oppression educators cope with and handle the challenges of their practice. **Co-facilitation**, for example, is a way for these educators to feel more supported in difficult situations. Only one educator identified that she prefers to teach diversity and anti-oppression on her own. Co-facilitation also allows for more diverse relationships to form between and amongst students and educators. One educator plans for co-facilitation as part of her design to ensure that projections from learners are handled as effectively as possible. Another participant highlighted how important the relationship is between facilitators. She states:

"I think the relationship between is us a huge deal and what happens in the room has everything to do with what's happening with us. And so it's myself but also the co-trainer, our connection and so it's really through relationship and through dialogue [and] the relationship that we've created

over time. With both of those co-trainers there's a very high level, a degree of authenticity and I think it's a huge deal because you have to be in connection and [ready] to process at any time."

Another educator spoke about how the relationship between co-facilitators models intercultural learning for students.

De-briefing is another strategy used by educators to ensure that issues get addressed and feelings get worked through in diversity and anti-oppression workshops. Asking more questions and probing questions of participants can assist in this process as opposed to easily offering up the answers to complex situations and questions. One educator suggests: "If someone is feeling really strongly about something there's a reason for it. So you have to allow that expression, no matter what you may think of it. And then you have to allow it to be reflected upon, commented on by others... and you need to open up some sort of dialogue after that emotion is expressed". Another facilitator connected **evaluation** with de-briefing, so as to ensure that her team of co-facilitators has time to talk about how a workshop or training has gone. Evaluation has certainly been identified as a challenge for this group of educators but it is something that they see as necessary for their practice. Most educators have learners complete a written evaluation but there is a great deal of informal and ongoing evaluation that occurs during a workshop.

Sharing personal stories or experiences is a way in which some educators have learned to handle difficult situations with learners. They have built up a repertoire of stories or experiences that they will speak of, depending upon the situation and learning context. As stated earlier, this strategy can be viewed as a way of modelling risk and gives learners the opportunity to share their own experiences with the subject matter. Educators can only

work from where their students are with the subject matter and most of them have come to understand that speaking about identity and student's relationship to diversity and oppression can only begin with the learner and their relationship to the subject matter.

These educators have certainly developed a set of skills in order to conduct and improve their practice. These **tools for practice** include comments from participants such as being "fluent in body language", having a "knack for saying something that will work", gaining a "sense in the room", learning how to develop a "backbone". Other tools include the exercises, activities, discussion topics, de-escalation tactics, perspective-shifting strategies and probing questions that these educators have created, learned and modified throughout their experiences of facilitation. These tools have been tested throughout their years of diversity and anti-oppression education and they take pride in the ones that have worked well for a group of learners. One educator spoke about how she is very willing to share her tools and exercises with other diversity and anti-oppression educators, because of her motivations around a higher purpose – that of spirituality and bridging across difference.

The coping with and handling challenges theme is in some ways a quick answer to the research question - how diversity and anti-oppression educators handle the emotional challenges of their practice. The list of educational tactics that diversity and anti-oppression educators have developed through their practice such as co-facilitation, de-briefing, evaluation, sharing personal stories and tools for practice give us a quick and tangible summary of how they practically deal with the challenges they face. This could be the executive summary of this study because it gives us the concrete ways in which this group of educators handle these difficult learning environments. However, if we look past the "how-to guide" approach to the research question, we can also investigate and discuss the

reasons *why* these educators need to cope with the challenges of their practice. For example, the fact that most educators use co-facilitation as an educational strategy speaks to the emotional needs and identity needs of both learners and educators in this learning environment. Co-facilitation is often a strategy used by educators to handle projections from learners and a way in which they can feel more supported in their practice. De-briefing and sharing personal stories are elements of diversity and anti-oppression education that can be more of a need on the part of the educator to fulfill some part of their own identity and less about the learner acquiring new information. Most educators, especially in a North American environment assume that discussion is a good thing and that the more people talk about something the better off a group of learners will be. Educators have been taught to assume that discussion is “an inherently democratic educational process” (Brookfield, 2005, p. 101) although this is not always the case, especially when dissenting voices are not valued by an instructor or a group of students. Furthermore, by talking about a subject, learners are giving verbal messages to other classmates as well as to the instructor which fulfills some component of that educator’s identity. We have all been in social settings, meetings or even classrooms where our idea feels acknowledged by others when we receive non-verbal cues such as head nodding, eye contact, etc. and other verbal acknowledgments. It feels good to know that people understand you and where you are coming from, just as it feels terrible when you receive blank stares from those with whom you are in a discussion with. Educators who get blank stares from learners usually think it is entirely about them, their teaching style and how they are presenting the material. Similarly, when a group of learners are verbally and non-verbally engaged in the material, there is an overwhelming feeling of success – about the activity, lesson plan and even the educator’s identity. This need for non-verbal and verbal recognition is a key component of most

educational settings, including diversity and anti-oppression education. Perhaps, in some manner, de-briefing and sharing personal stories is more about the educator than it is about the learner.

There is no doubt in this researcher's mind that this group of educator's is committed to the cause of educating learners about diversity and anti-oppression. They subject themselves to extremely difficult situations and interactions with students because they believe that at the end of the day discussing and engaging with this sensitive material will benefit the greater good of society. They are a courageous and dedicated group who recognize some of the limitations of their practice and have intuitively and intelligently created educational tools and antidotes to the challenges they face in these learning environments.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The previous chapter reviewed the data and analyzed some of the major findings of this study. I will now discuss the overall relevance and implications of these findings by connecting them to the reviewed literature, discussing new and missing information and addressing areas that require further study.

Language, Identity and Recognition

Going into this study, we already knew some of the challenges that educators face when it comes to language in diversity and anti-oppression educational contexts. The literature review gave us a solid sense that language is an extremely challenging component of diversity education because of the need to define key terminology especially when coming from a positivist tradition. We also identified that terms and language used in diversity and anti-oppression education are value-laden and contestable concepts that make narrowing down one understanding of a term to be a difficult endeavour for educators and students alike. Furthermore, by drawing upon theorists such as Lacan and Bracher, we were able to draw a relationship between language and identity and discuss the notion that language impacts and often impedes the learning process. Bracher (2006) makes us consider the extent to which language can threaten or support educational experiences depending upon whether students and teachers are living up to or resisting the terms that define their identity. We already discussed the notion that language is a powerful mechanism that assists us in communicating and also with creating and reinforcing elements of our identity structure. By speaking to Canadian diversity and anti-oppression educators, the hope was

to develop a better understanding how diversity and anti-oppression educators negotiate these challenges in their practice.

After speaking with the research participants, what became most apparent was the extent to which a connection was not made between identity and language for these educators. When asked about the role of language in diversity and anti-oppression contexts as well as whether or not language is a difficult thing for students to handle, only one of the research participants acknowledged a strong connection between identity and language. A consensus did exist, however, that language is a powerful and challenging phenomenon to negotiate in these learning environments. The challenges in their eyes had more to do with learning a particular language, recognizing that language is never neutral and that it is contextual given the situation and what participants are in the room. This missing piece could possibly exist because most of these educators did not refer to psychoanalysis as a body of work that was integral to their practice. It is the researcher's belief that most situate their practice within a feminist and/or critical theory approach to the world – Bracher would classify this as the hysteric pedagogy. Identity for these educators has more to do with social location or positioning (ie: gender, race, class, age, ethnicity, ability, sexual orientation) and the politics of identity instead of investigating the inner workings of the self and looking at what identity needs each of us have. Such identity needs for educators include: “explicit recognition (praise, flattery, positive evaluations), implicit recognition (attendance, interest, responsiveness) [and] structural elements (money, position, rank, title)” (Bracher, 2006, p. 139-140). Teacher recognition is an essential component of the identity puzzle – one that has serious implications for the learning process in diversity and

anti-oppression education and it was not really seen as a priority from the conversations held with diversity and anti-oppression educators in this study.

The notion of identity needs was something that was clearly part of the modified pre-interview questionnaire (or Bracher questionnaire code) that I had research participants consider prior to our in-person interview (see Appendix 2). It is my belief that the six diversity and anti-oppression educators in this study were challenged in different ways by this questionnaire. Some did not want to answer how they were challenged, others stated they did not work in an emotive manner and most admitted that this questionnaire made them think in a different way about their practice. Asking yourself very poignant questions about what you get out of the teaching dynamic is extremely difficult and makes us consider our own need for recognition and gratification in a way that has not been highlighted before. In this sense, the work of Mark Bracher could push these educators to think about their practice in a new way – one that encourages them to consider how their own need for recognition can impact and impede their students and their learning processes. One of Bracher's driving motivations is to have educators look within and move towards a more compassionate approach to teaching and learning. Reflecting upon how and why educators are interested in teaching allows for an internal dialogue to begin amongst educators so that they can 'check in' with their own identity needs as well as those of their students. Bracher makes it much more about the educator and less about the student – a reversal that is refreshing but also extremely challenging for most of us to face. This was certainly demonstrated with the group of diversity and anti-oppression educators that I spoke with.

Having the chance to consider psychoanalysis as another lens for their practice is something that this researcher would encourage. Although much of the work about diversity

and anti-oppression is combating structural change and injustice, there is an essential component in each of us, as individuals, that must take place. Psychoanalysis focuses on the individual's own conscious and subconscious thoughts in a way that could add to the depth and breadth to the work diversity and anti-oppression educators do on a regular basis. One participant discussed the notion of being settled within her 'self' and I believe this to be an integral aspect to this type of education. In fact, I would assert that it is an ethical obligation of diversity and anti-oppression educators seeking a more compassionate approach to their practice.

Emotionally-Charged Learning Sites

Prior to meeting with the research participants, it was clear that diversity and anti-oppression trainings can be emotionally-charged learning environments. From the literature review, we knew that people tend to shy away from talking about identity because it challenges their core sense of self. We also knew that there was a debate in the literature as to what extent educators should ask learners to be vulnerable and take risks in a public learning environment. After speaking with the six educators in this study, this debate continues. The study's participants reflected this dilemma of how to address issues of real concern while maintaining the psychological safety of learners. Conversations about pushing people past their comfort zone, but doing this in a gentle way, came up with most of the educators in this study. It is still unclear as to exactly how to offer gentle pushes and encourage risk-taking in learners. I am not calling for a technocratic guide on how to do this, but I do believe that seeing gentle pushes being handled in a compassionate and ethical way would give us great insight into *how* diversity and anti-oppression educators successfully handle one of the major dilemmas they experience. There is indeed a very fine

line between engaging in meaningful conversations about diversity and anti-oppression and keeping learners challenged while constantly maintaining an ethical and compassionate approach to everyone in the room. Extending compassion means including those involuntary learners, those who are angry and speak with 'venom', as well as those learners who the educator believes are not addressing their own privilege or taking risks in the way that is expected of them. Extending compassion also means recognizing one's own triggers and emotional baggage and learning how to detach while teaching in a way that prioritizes the student over the educator. Limited time spent with learners seems to be a key component of this dynamic. As one of the educator's affirmed, one must be cognizant of the devastation left when offering to push people past their comfort zone, especially when you only have three hours with that group of learners. It appears to me that holding a series of workshops where learners and educators get to know one another over a season or even a semester affords the group to be pushed gently in a more effective and ethical manner. Learners and educators get to know each other, become familiar with one another and build a stronger rapport which can lead to being pushed effectively and with concern for the psychological safety of everyone involved. The same can be said for establishing a safe space for learners – with more time a genuine understanding of what is expected, how to deal with each other in a compassionate manner and how to maintain a level of confidentiality about shared personal experiences can be developed. Realistically, more time with students is something that these educators want but typically are not able to access from managers and those hiring them to conduct trainings, unless they are teaching a course over a semester. In this sense, managers expectations about what can be accomplished in a short window of time must be effectively addressed.

The dynamic between educator's emotion and learner's emotion is a key component of this discussion. Diversity and anti-oppression educators balance the identity and identity needs of their students with the emotional reactions they experience while standing at the front of the room. Experiencing personal attacks and having learners direct their emotional responses towards them, feeling inadequate, taking things personally, learning how to detach, feeling excited about the fact that students are learning and that overall need to feel protected are all common and understandable human reactions to the environment that these educators face on a regular basis. Balancing this with the complex and often conflicting needs of their students is something that the diversity and anti-oppression educators in this study consider as part of their everyday practice. This emotional weight is considerable and one that is not taken lightly by the educators interviewed. As such, this researcher also believes that self-care could be more of a priority for these educators because of the emotional spaces that they endure.

There is no doubt that the diversity and anti-oppression educators in this study engage in thoughtful, careful and courageous practice. They have identified considerable limitations to their practice and continue to push forward in a way that must be commended. The researcher believes that there is a genuine desire towards Erik Erikson's notion of generativity: "the instinctual power behind various forms of selfless 'caring'" (Bracher, 2006, p. 153) where the need to teach is of utmost importance. This dynamic is about recognizing the educator's "need to be needed... but also the need to enact a more capacious structure of identity in which the other [the student] is experienced as myself [the educator] in need" (Bracher, 2006, p. 154). In other writings Bracher has identified this as the "Self-Other overlap" (Bracher, 2009, p. 370) where another person's suffering is important to the self

because of an overwhelming connection to one another. This connection is one of empathy and “desiring for the other, in the other’s place” (Bracher, 2006, p. 151). Generativity is about the educator implicating themselves in the learning and development of their students – to the point where empathy and self-other overlap is the priority. Despite the incredible challenges that the diversity and anti-oppression educators in this study experience, they aim towards an approach that considers the needs of their students as the utmost priority. Some have been challenged by involuntary or aggressive learners and those who do not want to ‘play fair’ in their workshop settings. The educators have identified some antidotes (such as co-facilitation) to these challenging students in an attempt to protect themselves and the needs of their learners. Despite this, looking within, developing a sense of their own triggers and identity needs as suggested by Bracher can be a way in which they can move closer towards the ideals of generativity, compassion and empathy for all students and educational situations that they encounter. We are all works in progress and are still learning and this notion of becoming more compassionate and developing a generative identity is one that will continue to develop over a person’s lifespan. Naming this compassionate approach towards all learners as a priority, supporting the formation of strong and secure identities and recognizing this process as important for both themselves as well as those they encounter in the diversity and anti-oppression context is of utmost importance for educators interested in social change and social justice.

Social Forces Impacting our Selves

Throughout the process of meeting with these six educators, reviewing the transcriptions and coding the material, the underlying struggle between individual needs and the weight of other social forces was ever apparent. Most of the codes from the

limitations theme – evaluation, time, money/funding, language are social forces and constructs that impact the development of pro-social and integrated identities amongst learners and educators. Time and money are certainly things that impact whether the educators could deliver on their goals of making learners think in a different way. Examples of educators own emotional experiences with student projections demonstrate the impact that social forces such as history and culture can have on individuals. Furthermore, evaluation, as discussed in the analysis section, was also a challenge for most of the educators in this study. Of particular interest to this research was when learners would go away from a class or workshop appearing to be challenged and interested in the material and then try to sabotage or be closed to the conversation about diversity the next time a group of learners met. Margaret Archer's (2007) notion of reflexivity has already been mentioned but it is integral to the discussion because Archer positions the different ways in which people come to make very important decisions about their lives – an essential consideration for diversity and anti-oppression educators. Archer posits that some people need approval from those around them, others make decisions independently and others need to critically evaluate their circumstance before making important decisions. When it comes to reflecting upon one's identity, socio-cultural upbringing and one's own habitus, it is important for diversity and anti-oppression educators to be reminded of how different people will give weight to the social forces in their lives. Family, friends, community, language, history, culture and money can and will impact how decisions are made by learners about their identity and about the subjects discussed in diversity and anti-oppression training. Being reminded of this makes evaluation an even trickier element of educational practice because diversity and anti-oppression educators can never really know what processes a learner goes through to make important decisions about themselves and their lives. Do they

rely on the support of their family and friends or are they more likely to come to decisions independently? This is an important consideration for the educators in this study to consider.

If the ultimate goal of diversity and anti-oppression is to tap into the inner thoughts and processes of learners so as to change their minds about stereotypes and marginalized groups, then it is of utmost importance that this type of education considers how people come to make decisions about who they are and how they want to relate to one another. This is an extremely heavy burden to bear but it is evident that this group of educators are committed to “planting seeds” about extremely sensitive and challenging material. They are essentially challenging the foundation by which learners have come to see themselves – in essence, their habitus – and are asking learners to dismantle what they have come to know as important and true. The fear of “cultural suicide” (Brookfield, 2006, p. 84) seems like a fairly understandable reaction from learners when one has been supported and has developed a sense of identity from within a specific social group. To ask someone to step outside of this foundation and challenge them to consider another and often critical perspective is certainly as Britzman asserts, an intervention. Ultimately, education itself is a social force that impacts the individual and bears down on how a person comes to make decisions about who they are and how they choose to incorporate new knowledge into their lives. By extension, if we all agree that education is by definition a process of intervention, then diversity and anti-oppression education magnifies this essence in an unquestionable manner.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

An Imperfect and Courageous Practice

The extent to which the diversity and anti-oppression educators in this study cope with and handle the incredible challenges of their practice gives us great insight into the strength, courage and dare I say stubbornness of this group of educators. The experiences of diversity and anti-oppression educators in this study speak to the fact that these learning sites are incredibly challenging and dynamic. So much seems to be riding on the training and workshops that these educators facilitate – a better work environment, a more solid sense of our co-workers or peers and where they come from, improved productivity and offering better services to our clients and customers. In many ways, the expectations placed on diversity and anti-oppression education is far greater than those placed on educators in an everyday classroom. Diversity and anti-oppression education is looked to as the last bastion of hope in order to gain a better sense of one another. Managers, supervisors, academics and teachers are looking to these educators to solve the identity puzzle, and typically do it in a three-hour window of time. The expectations are enormous and yet, we have learned from this group of educators that this last bastion of hope is by far a ‘perfect science’.

Challenges such as establishing a common language, creating a safe space, learning how to push people gently, figuring out where learners ‘are at’ with the material, establishing a level of trust with co-facilitators and learners, negotiating the complexities of evaluation, handling the emotional projections of students and learning how to detach are very much felt by this group of diversity and anti-oppression educators. The courage, resiliency,

adaptability and resourcefulness that these educators possess is truly outstanding. They have creatively come up with antidotes to these challenges and other tools of practice such as co-facilitation as well as the wide variety of skills that Brookfield (2006) would encapsulate under the umbrella of “practical reasoning” (p. 6). Despite the imperfection of their practice, they are *trying* to make a difference and do not fall into the common perfectionist trap where apathy becomes the easy alternative.

It is obvious to this researcher that the educators in this study face the expectations placed upon them head on. They do not bow away from the challenge as most would do. In reality, there are not many educators who want to take on this kind of work. Some believe that this avoidance is based in the fear of learning about ourselves and being fundamentally challenged about who we are to the extent that our habitus and identity become the forefront of discussion and analysis (Kumashiro, 2001). Most people try as best they can to avoid dealing with these kinds of conversations and introspections because they are difficult and force us to consider and challenge our ‘given’ ways of knowing. Juxtaposed to this norm is the group of diversity and anti-oppression educators in this study who are committed and interested in bringing about these conversations that most of us try to avoid. Similarly, most would not want to engage in this kind of practice because they might not know how to handle the wide variety of emotions and responses from learners in the diversity and anti-oppression educational environment. The group in this study has developed a toolbox of activities, personal stories, co-facilitation techniques and various other skills to handle the wide variety of responses that arise in these learning environments. They have done this because they are committed to the cause of improving human relations and social justice initiatives.

So what is it about this group of people that makes them want to engage people in these difficult conversations and subject themselves to such difficult learning environments? The motivations theme was trying to get at this conundrum by hearing from these educators that they are committed to a higher purpose which varies depending upon the respondent. These higher purposes are wide-reaching and highly contestable concepts: spirituality, peace, intercultural growth and integration, dialogue, transformation, bridging, for example, but were used in the interviews as though a common and shared understanding between the researcher and the educator existed. They are all-encompassing words and terms that have such important meaning but are likely very difficult to describe. Similar to the habitus, one might not be able to gain a true sense of these higher purpose terms unless we were put in a situation that was completely foreign and acted so incredibly opposite to the word that its meaning becomes evident. For instance, visiting an autocratic society could give us great insight into how we define the term democracy. Investigating the meanings behind such terms, so as to understand the underlying motivations behind the actions of this group of educators would be the next step in the research process. Gathering a solid sense about exactly why this group of educators subject themselves to these extremely challenging learning sites – handling projections from students, having to investigate their own identity and identity needs, dealing with the high expectations placed on them while having such a short window of face time with students – would certainly be the next step in research conducted about diversity and anti-oppression educators.

Implications for Further Research

The purpose of this study was to investigate the experiences of six Canadian diversity and anti-oppression educators to gain a better understanding of how they handle the

emotional challenges of their practice. It is clear from this research that the complexities and constraints that this group of educators experience are tremendous. And yet, they have creatively come up with educational tools and antidotes to make their practice more manageable in these challenging learning environments. Further inquiry into the motivations theme and higher purpose code from this study would give us great insight into how and why diversity and anti-oppression educators subject themselves to these difficult teaching and learning situations. This call to further research will also benefit the breadth of understanding about teacher identity needs, teacher recognition, human reflexivity, how we negotiate our habitus as well as add to the lifelong learning conversation about higher level concepts such as democracy, peace, dialogue, transformation and bridging.

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Appendix 1

Self-Analysis for Teachers

Mark Bracher *Radical Pedagogy: Identity, Generativity and Social Transformation*

(pp. 138-140, 143-144)

- What does being a teacher mean to me?
- What does it mean in terms of my social, economic and material sense of self?
- How central to my sense of self are the lifestyle, the status, the social relations, the material circumstances and the psychological tasks entailed by being a teacher?

To answer these questions, we can scan our memories and perform thought experiments, recalling or imagining how our sense of well-being was or would be altered by events bearing upon specific identity elements. We might recall, especially the time in our life when we first became aware that we wanted to be a teacher and ask:

- How did I decide to become a teacher?
- Why did I want to become a teacher?
- What identity needs of mine at that time were involved in my decision to become a teacher?
- Do those needs still have the same prominence for me?
- What other identity needs do I have now that are significant?
- What are the main identity needs that my teaching meets now?
- What kind of impact do I want my teaching to have for particular students or for a particular class?
- What memories of the impact of my teaching do I cherish?
- What do I want the effects of my teaching career to be?

We should examine each pedagogical behaviour or situation for the presence of one or more types of recognition, asking:

- Recognition from whom?
- Recognition in what form?
- Recognition for what identity contents?

We should try to identify instances and modes of recognition that we may be seeking and/or receiving unconsciously. We should consider the following potential sources of recognition:

- Students
- Peers
- Supervisors, administrators
- Student's parents

- Our former teachers
- Our parents
- Community, Society
- God (for teachers who are religious), Nature, the Real

We should be alert for different forms of (conscious and unconscious) recognition, including:

- Explicit (from students, peers, supervisors)
 - Praise, flattery
 - Deference
 - Admiration
 - Positive evaluations
- Implicit (from students)
 - Attendance
 - Attention
 - Interest
 - Responsiveness, cooperation
- Structural
 - Money
 - Position, rank, title
 - Space (work, recreational, living)
 - Time (quantity and quality allotted by the institution to one's activities)

We can identify and jot down our most positive experience as a teacher. The experience might involve a particular classroom moment, a particular individual (student, parent, administrator), a class session, an entire course, a school event, and/or working conditions. We can simply jot down phrases, clauses, fragments of sentences as they come to mind.

Next, we can take a minute to identify and jot down our most negative experience as a teacher. Again, the experience might involve a particular classroom moment, a particular individual (student, parent, administrator), a class session, an entire course, a school event, working conditions.

We can then describe the experience that comes to mind in response to the following adjectives, taking thirty seconds or so for each work and jotting down as many objective and subjective details of the experience as we can in that amount of time, writing whatever comes to mind, even if it does not seem to fit the prompt. If no experience comes to mind for a particular cue, we can simply make a note of that fact.

1. Most pleasant
2. Most frustrating
3. Most exciting
4. Most humiliating
5. Most joyous
6. Most anxious
7. Proudest
8. Most unpleasant
9. Most fulfilling
10. Most depressing
11. Most satisfying
12. Most embarrassing
13. Most enraging
14. Most inspiring
15. Most uncomfortable
16. Most disappointing
17. Most shameful

Next, we can pick the most significant positive experience and the most significant negative experience from this list and flesh out the details of each, describing:

1. Objective details of the event
 - a) People involved
 - b) Issues or subject matter involved
 - c) Setting
 - d) Activity
2. Details of our state of mind immediately before, during and immediately after the event, insofar as we can recall them:
 - a) Our thoughts
 - b) Our feelings
 - c) Our fantasies
 - d) Our impulses
 - e) Our bodily posture, position, movements, sensations
 - f) Our behaviour

We can now focus on how the experience affects our sense of self, or identity. For the positive experience, we can ask the following questions:

- What specific recognition or validation did I experience?
- What other gratification did I experience?
- What did I do to elicit this recognition or produce the validation or other gratification?
- What identity elements did I enact in the experience?

For the negative experience, we can ask the following questions:

- What specific recognition or validation did I desire but not receive?
- What damage or threat to my identity did I experience, and to what elements of my identity?
- What was my role in this event?
- Could the event have been avoided or made less negative, if I had not been pursuing certain identity needs or other gratifications (such as being in control, or fearing to assert myself or take control?)

Appendix 2

Self-Analysis Questions for Diversity and Anti-Oppression Educators

Please consider these questions prior to meeting with me. I will not be asking you specifics, but more about your overall impression of thinking about these topics.

- What does being a diversity/ anti-oppression educator mean to me?
- What does it mean in terms of my social, economic and material sense of self?
- How did I decide to become a diversity/anti-oppression educator?
- What identity needs of mine at the time were involved in my decision to become a diversity /anti-oppression educator? Do those identity needs still have the same prominence for me now?
- What kind of impact do I want my teaching to have for particular students or for a particular group?
- What do I want the effects of my teaching to be?
- What kind of recognition do I get by being a diversity and anti-oppression educator?
- Where does this recognition come from (students, peers, supervisors, family, community, etc)?
- How does my identity or sense of self respond to this recognition?

Jot down your most positive experience as a diversity/anti-oppression educator. The experience might involve a particular workshop moment, a particular individual, an entire course. You can jot down phrases, clauses, fragments of sentences as they come to mind.

Next take a minute to identify and jot down your most negative experience as diversity/anti-oppression educator. Again, the experience might involve a particular workshop moment, a particular individual, an entire course. You can jot down phrases, clauses, fragments of sentences as they come to mind.

Describe an experience that comes to mind in response to the following list of adjectives. Take approximately 30 seconds for each work and jot down as many objective and subjective details of the experience. Write whatever comes to mind, even if it does not seem to fit the prompt. If no experience comes to mind, simply make note of that fact.

- | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Most pleasant | 5. Most shameful |
| 2. Most enraging | 6. Most fulfilling |
| 3. Most inspiring | 7. Proudest |
| 4. Most uncomfortable | 8. Most exciting |

Next, pick the most significant positive experience and the most significant negative experience from this list and flesh out the details of each, describing:

1. Objective details of the event
 - a) People involved
 - b) Issues or subject matter involved
 - c) Setting
 - d) Activity

2. Details of your state of mind immediately before, during and immediately after the event, insofar as you can recall them:
 - a) Your thoughts
 - b) Your feelings
 - c) Your wishes
 - d) Your impulses
 - e) Your bodily posture, position, movements, sensations
 - f) Your behaviour

Now focus on how the experience affected your sense of self, or identity. For the positive experience, ask yourself the following questions:

- What specific recognition or validation did I experience?
- What other gratification did I experience?
- What did I do to elicit this recognition or produce the validation or other gratification?
- What identity elements did I enact in the experience?

For the negative experience, ask yourself the following questions:

- What specific recognition or validation did I desire but not receive?
- What damage or threat to my identity did I experience, and to what elements of my identity?
- What was my role in this event?
- Could the event have been avoided or made less negative, if I had not been pursuing certain identity needs or other gratifications (such as being in control, or fearing to assert myself or take control?)

Questions are modified from: Bracher, M. (2006). *Radical pedagogy: Identity, generativity and social transformation*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan. (pp. 138-140 & 143-144).



Appendix 3

Participant Information

Title of Research Project: How Diversity and Anti-oppression Educators Handle the Emotional Challenges of Their Practice: A qualitative study

Researcher's Name: Kirsten Somers [REDACTED] (902) [REDACTED]

Supervisor's Name: Dr. Donovan Plumb donovan.plumb@msvu.ca (902) 457-6211

I invite you to participate in this case study that will investigate the perspectives of diversity and/or anti-oppression educators who conduct trainings in the non-profit, settlement and/or corporate sectors within the cities of Halifax, Nova Scotia and Toronto, Ontario. The research will be conducted by Kirsten Somers, a Masters of Arts in Education (Lifelong Learning) student at Mount Saint Vincent University. You will be asked a series of questions through informal interviews that will last approximately an hour. Participants in this study include educators who have conducted diversity and/or anti-oppression training in the corporate, settlement and non-profit sectors within Halifax, Nova Scotia and Toronto, Ontario.

Potential Benefits and Risks:

Possible benefits of participation include the opportunity to reflect upon your practice and to contribute to the field of lifelong learning and adult education by speaking on your experiences as a diversity and/or anti-oppression educator. There is minimal anticipated risk associated with participation in this project.

Confidentiality:

All information obtained from this project will be held in confidence by the researcher. Only the researcher, her Supervisor, and possibly a transcriptionist will have access to the information provided by participants. Your name and/or identifying information will not be released through any portion of this project. The interviews will be audio-taped so that the researcher can go back and summarize exactly the perspectives of the participants involved in the research. Your name or personal identifying characteristics will not be recorded on tape. Upon completion of the research, the tapes will be destroyed and transcripts (text or electronic records of interviews) as well as the researcher's field notes will be kept in a secured location, accessed only by the researcher.

Participation:

Participation in this project is voluntary. The interviews will be conducted on an informal conversational basis, and are expected to take approximately an hour. These interviews will be audio-taped with your consent. If you wish, you may decline to answer any questions or participate in any component of the project. If you decide not to answer a particular question or set of questions, you can still complete the remainder of the interview, if you so choose. If you initially agree and later change your mind, you may say so and at any time and the data collected will be destroyed. Your right to withdraw from participation will be respected at all times. Shortly after the interview is

completed, the researcher will send you a copy of the transcript to give you an opportunity to confirm the accuracy of our conversation and to add, remove, or clarify any points that you wish.

Publication:

You will be provided with a summary report of the final research project report if requested. Research results may be published as a peer-referred paper, conference presentation and/or submitted to academic journals on a non-profit basis in the interest of furthering knowledge related to lifelong learning, anti-oppression and diversity education. The identity of participants will not be revealed at any level of publication.

If you have any questions about the project or require further information, please contact Kirsten Somers using the contact information provided above. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance.

Consent:

- I have read the Participant Information Sheet and the nature and purpose of the research project has been explained to me. I understand and agree to take part.
- I understand the purpose of the research project and my involvement in it, including potential harms and benefits.
- I understand that I may withdraw from the research project at any stage and that this will not affect my status now or in the future.
- I understand that while information gained during the study may be published, I will not be identified and my personal results will remain confidential.
- I understand that I will be audio-taped during the interview and the data will be collected and stored as outlined.
- I understand that I may contact the researcher or supervisor if I require further information about the research, and that I may contact the Chair of the University Research Ethics Board (UREB) c/o Mount Saint Vincent University Research and International Office at 457-6350 or research@msvu.ca if I have questions about how this study is being conducted.

Your signature below will indicate that you have decided to volunteer as a participant; that your questions have been answered satisfactorily; and that you understand the information provided above. A copy of this form will be provided to you. Your signature below means you freely agree to participate in the research project.

Name of Participant	Signature	Date

Copy of Transcript Requested: Yes No

If requested, address to be sent:



Appendix 4

Third Party Information

Title of Research Project: How Diversity and Anti-oppression Educators Handle the Emotional Challenges of Their Practice: A qualitative study

Researcher's Name: Kirsten Somers [REDACTED] (902) [REDACTED]

Supervisor's Name: Dr. Donovan Plumb donovan.plumb@msvu.ca (902) 457-6211

This case study that will investigate the perspectives of diversity and/or anti-oppression educators who conduct trainings in the non-profit, settlement and/or corporate sectors within the cities of Halifax, Nova Scotia and Toronto, Ontario. The research will be conducted by Kirsten Somers, a Masters of Arts in Education (Lifelong Learning) student at Mount Saint Vincent University. Research participants will be asked a series of questions through semi-structured interviews that will last approximately an hour. Participants in this study include educators who have conducted diversity and/or anti-oppression training in the corporate, settlement and non-profit sectors in Halifax, Nova Scotia and Toronto, Ontario.

Confidentiality:

All information obtained from this project will be held in confidence by the researcher. Only the researcher, her Supervisor, and possibly a transcriptionist will have access to the information provided by participants. The name of your organization and any other identifying information will not be released through any portion of this project. The interviews will be audio-taped so that the researcher can go back and summarize exactly the perspectives of the participants involved in the research. The name of your organization will not be recorded on tape. Upon completion of the research, the tapes will be destroyed and transcripts (text or electronic records of interviews) as well as the researcher's field notes will be kept in a secured location, accessed only by the researcher.

Publication:

Research participants will be provided with a summary report of the final research project report if requested. Research results may be published as a peer-referred paper, conference presentation and/or submitted to academic journals on a non-profit basis in the interest of furthering knowledge related to lifelong learning, anti-oppression and diversity education. The identity of participants and their associated organizations will not be revealed at any level of publication.

If you have any questions about the project or require further information, please contact Kirsten Somers using the contact information provided above. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance by the University Research Ethics Board (UREB) at Mount Saint Vincent University. The Chair of the UREB may be contacted at 457-6350 or research@msvu.ca if there are questions about how this study is being conducted.

Appendix 5

Interview Questions for Anti-Oppression and Diversity Educators

1. Collect general information about the interviewee that they are willing to share (occupation, the sector where trainings occur, how long they have been conducting trainings)

2. Tell me, what are your overall thoughts about the pre-interview questionnaire that I sent you?

3. How have you come to be involved in diversity/anti-oppression training?

4. Describe to me what the ultimate goal of your trainings is?

- 5a. What role do you think language has in the diversity/ anti-oppression training context?

- 5b. Do you find language to be a difficult thing for your students to deal with?

- 6a. Tell me a little bit about your thoughts on identity in this learning environment.

- 6b. What about your own identity?

7. Tell me about a time when you've had to deal with emotion in a training setting. How did you deal with this situation?

7b. Did this experience change how you now handle emotional reactions of students?

8a. Overall, how would you say you like to handle the emotional responses of learners in your trainings?

8b. Do you expect participants to take risks in your trainings?

8c. Do you think trainings should make people feel uncomfortable about their identity?

9a. Have you ever had participants direct their emotional responses towards you?

9b. Tell me a little more about this (example if you feel comfortable)

10. How do you think your perspective about diversity and anti-oppression has an impact on your students?





























11a. How do you evaluate your workshops and trainings?

11b. Do you have a sense of when one goes well or when one flops?

12. Is there anything else you would want me to know about this subject or about your experience?

Appendix 6

List of Initial Codes

 B1	✓ Bracher Questionnaire	 B2	Bridging, dialogue(?)
 C1	✓ City, location		
 C2	✓ Co-facilitation		
 D1	✓ De-briefing		
 D2	✓ Detach		
 E1	✓ Emotion		
 E2	✓ Evaluation	 E3	Excitement
 G1	✓ Gentle Pushes		
 G2	✓ Guilt		
 H1	✓ Higher Purpose	 H2	History
 I1	✓ Identity	 I2	Involuntary learners
 L1	✓ Language		
 M1	✓ Money		
 P1	✓ Peace → Higher Purpose		
 P2	✓ Privilege		
 S1	✓ Safe Space		
 S2	✓ Sharing Personal Stories		
 S3	✓ Still Learning		
 T1	✓ Time (limitations)	 T3	Towards You
 T2	✓ Tools for Practice		
 R1	✓ Risk	 R2	Recognition
 W1	✓ Work from Where They're at		

• Motivations

Appendix 7

Repeating Ideas

1.	B1	Bracher Questionnaire	15.	I2	Involuntary Learners
2.	B2	Bridging, dialogue	16.	L1	Language
3.	C1	City mentioned	17.	M1	Money/Funding
4.	C2	Co-facilitation	18.	P1	Peace
5.	D1	De-briefing	19.	P2	Privilege
6.	D2	Detach	20.	S1	Safe Space
7.	E1	Emotion	21.	S2	Sharing Personal Stories
8.	E2	Evaluation	22.	S3	Still Learning
9.	E3	Excitement	23.	T1	Time limitations
10.	G1	Gentle Pushes	24.	T2	Tools for Practice
11.	G2	Guilt	25.	T3	Towards You
12.	H1	Higher Purpose	26.	R1	Risk
13.	H2	History	27.	R2	Recognition
14.	I1	Identity	28.	W1	Work from where they're at

Appendix 8

Overall Themes

	Theme	SubTheme	Repeating Ideas/Codes	Research Question
1.	Limitations		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E2-Evaluation • L1-Language • M1-Money/Funding • S1-Safe Space • T1-Time Limitations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenges they face
2.	Emotion	Educator's Emotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • B1-Bracher Questionnaire • D2-Detach • E1- Emotion • E3-Excitement • H1- History • I2-Involuntary Learners • R1-Risk • R2-Recognition • S2-Sharing Personal Stories • S3-Still Learning • T3-Towards You 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenges they face • Educator's identity needs • Process of Practice • Purpose of Practice
		Participant's Emotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • G1-Gentle Pushes • G2-Guilt • P2-Privilege • R1-Risk • W1- Work from Where They're At 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educator's identity needs • Process of Practice • Evaluation of Practice
3.	Identity	Educator's Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • H2-History • I1- Identity • L1-Language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenges of Practice • Educator's identity needs
		Participant's Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • G1-Gentle Pushes • I1- Identity • I2-Involuntary Learners • L1-Language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenges of Practice • Educator's identity needs
4.	Educator's Motivations		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • B2-Bridging, dialogue • C1-City, location • E3-Excitement • H1-Higher Purpose • P1-Peace • R2-Recognition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educator's Identity Needs • Purpose of Practice

5.	Coping With and Handling Challenges		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• C2-Co-facilitation• D1-De-Briefing• E2-Evaluation• S2-Sharing Personal Stories• T2-Tools for Practice• W1-Work from Where They're At	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Educator's Identity Needs• Purpose, Process and Evaluation of Practice
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