

Curricular Landscapes: Preservice Teachers' Perceptions of Place and Identity in Canadian Multicultural Picture Books

MARY CLARE COURTLAND, *Lakehead University*

ROBERTA HAMMETT, *Memorial University of Newfoundland*

TERESA STRONG-WILSON, *McGill University*

JOYCE BAINBRIDGE, *University of Alberta*

INGRID JOHNSTON, *University of Alberta*

ANNE BURKE, *Memorial University of Newfoundland*

ANGELA WARD, *University of Saskatchewan*

LYNNE WILTSE, *Thompson Rivers University*

ISMEL GONZALES, *Lakehead University*

FARHA SHARIFF, *University of Alberta*

It has been argued that, while the land provides food and shelter, the landscape provides ideologies. This certainly has been the case in Canada, where the country's "true north strong and free" asserts itself in the national imaginary as the link to "Canadian identity. (Manning, 2003, p. 5)

Contemporary Canadian multicultural picture books provide a rich variety of representations of ideology and identity and have the potential to challenge readers of all ages to consider meanings and perspectives, illuminate voices in the liminal spaces of the texts, and explore readers' own ideologies. Picture books are a unique literary form in which words and images converge in the representation of authors' and illustrators' meanings and in readers' constructions of meaning. Visual images can convey mood and atmosphere, characterization, point of view or perspective, and the nature of relationships.

This paper describes some of the findings from a longitudinal multi-site case study that investigated preservice teachers' perceptions of Canadian identity and ideology as represented in Canadian multicultural children's picture books. The design involved descriptive case studies (Meerriam, 1988; Stake, 1995) in six faculties of education in different provinces across Canada. Respondents were teacher candidates enrolled in literacy courses in elementary and secondary Bachelor of Education programs. Some of the researchers taught the literacy courses themselves; others approached instructors for permission to conduct a workshop and invite their students to participate.

We focus particularly on the construct of place in relation to the respondents' descriptions of their understandings of multiculturalism and representations of identity in selected Canadian multicultural picture books.

Review of the Literature

Edwards and Saltman (2000), writing on the history of children's literature in Canada, describe the nostalgia with the land, which has characterized this body of literature since the nineteenth century:

From its nineteenth century beginnings, Canadian children's literature has been closely linked to the land, to an imaginative sense of place. Canada's first children's books of the Victorian period were entirely rooted in the physical dimensions of the Canadian wilderness – its dangers, challenges, and awesome beauty – and were engaged in finding the human place in it. (p. 1)

They note that one of the earliest attempts “to create a distinctively Canadian genre” (p. 2) of multicultural picture books was Toyé's and Cleaver's collaboration in the 1960s to record Aboriginal myths. The series romanticized Aboriginals and portrayed them as “peoples [who] lived in the distant past of folktales” (p. 2) rather than human beings in contemporary Canada. The experiences of immigrant Canadians were largely absent in picture books of this era. The official policy on multiculturalism within a bilingual framework (Canada, 1971) inspired a new vision of a Canadian mosaic (Jansen, 2005).

Edwards and Saltman (2000) note that the expansion of Canadian multicultural picture books was influenced by the development of a number of small publishing houses with diverse interests. This meant that, “for the first time, English speaking Canadian children had access to picture books that deliberately reflected the evolving model of Canadian society as multicultural” (p. 3). Some of the early texts were overtly didactic; others presented multiculturalism as a “‘food, festivals, and fun’ approach... simplistic, well-intentioned, but having a tendency to reinforce hierarchies of difference” (p. 3). Misappropriation of and misrepresentation of culture emerged as issues in multicultural picture books published during the 1980s.

The landscape theme of earlier decades continued in the 1990s through the work of regional publishers whose texts explored issues of region, place, land and ethnocultural identity in the picture books (Edwards & Saltman, 2000, p. 3). The 1990s also saw the emergence of

Aboriginal and ethnic writers and illustrators whose works contested simplistic perspectives of the Canadian mosaic and benign visions of multiculturalism.

Johnston and Mangat (2003) observe that more recently, a second generation of “Canadianness” is evident in multicultural picture books, “one in which the illustrations are left to hint at cultural diversity, but the text reveals themes related to contemporary Canadian life. Here, the illustrations depict non-white subjects in everyday contexts that are not explicitly about difference” (p. 202).

Postcolonial theorists consider place a key theme in deconstructing notions of identity and multiculturalism. Bradford (2007) situates Canada as a settler society “where colonization took the form of invasion by a European power, where colonizers (settlers) exercised racial dominion over the [Aboriginal] inhabitants of the lands they invaded, and where Indigenous peoples continue to seek recognition, compensation and self-determination” (p. 4). In Canada, the colonizers were France and England. Bradford argues that “as colonial narratives of exploration, adventure, and settlement produced and reinforced the givens of Western cartography, alternative modes of mapping the world—the spacio-temporal cartographies of Indigenous peoples—were rendered invisible...” (p. 147).

In her analysis of postcolonial narratives of Aboriginal peoples in Canada, the United States, Australia, and New Zealand as told in contemporary children’s literature, Bradford (2007) illustrates the counter-discursive strategies used by Aboriginal authors such as Littlechild (1993) in *This land is my land* and King and Monkman’s (1992) *A Coyote Columbus story*. For example, Bradford notes that *A Coyote Columbus story* “targets the way in which dominant discourses produce normative versions of the past, namely the treatment of Columbus as a heroic figure and his ‘discovery’ of the new world as a triumph for

European civilization. Monkman's visual representations are characterized by exaggeration and burlesque" (Bradford, 2007, p. 27).

For Manning (2003), the geopolitical notion of territoriality is critical to complicating the meaning of place. In *Drawing on Sack* (1986), she defines territoriality "as a spatial strategy that is intimately linked to the ways in which people use the land, how they organize themselves in space, and how they give meaning to place" (as cited in Manning, 2003, p. xix).

Manning (2003) also includes constructs such as home, landscape, and geography in her discussion of place. She notes that "when we begin to think of the home as rhizomatic rather than arboreal (as a multiplicity rather than a rooted structure), we expose arborescent territorializations—such as the nation-state—as the dichotomous hierarchized systems they are" (p. xx). She argues for a "shift to a vocabulary of the rhizome that undermines stable notions of identity and territory through its uncompromising tubular propagations across boundaries and ideologies" (p. xxi). This metaphor of the rhizome opens possibilities of appreciating the diasporic communities that are rapidly changing traditional Canadian demographics. She notes that her text, *Ephemeral territories: Representing nation, home, and identity in Canada* (2005), situates "culture as the stuttering voice of 'national identity,' where culture is figured both as that which echoes and sustains the nation and that which refutes and deconstructs the nation" (p. xxi).

In contrast, curriculum theorist, Cynthia Chambers (1999) advocates for a "pedagogy of place" where student teachers, teachers, and curriculum theorists consider "here" in relation to their lives and theorizing:

Just as Canadians need a literature about "here" because this is where they live, Canadians also need a form of curriculum theorizing grounded in "here," which maps out the territory of who we are in relation to the

topography of where we live—the physical topos as well as the socio-political, historical, and institutional landscapes of our lives. Canadians need a curriculum theorizing that helps educators and students come to grips with how Canada, such as it is, has survived to date, and how we who occupy this multi-variegated landscape called Canada can continue both to survive and—to move beyond grim survival—to find our way together in this place. (p. 144)

Jansen (2005) explains that notions of place figure largely in Canadians' perceptions of multiculturalism in Canada: "New immigrants and by implication new cultures, generally settle in a limited number of provinces and usually in large urban areas" (p. 28). The result is that "a large proportion of Canada is not exposed to the cultural diversity of the country, and the policy of multiculturalism has little or no impact on their daily lives" (p. 29).

There has been a lengthy tradition in Canadian children's literature that has romanticized landscape or place as the quintessential marker of Canadian identity. Theorists have problematized notions of place in a variety of ways. Their work provides a lens through which to illuminate teacher candidates' understandings.

Design

The purpose of the study was to investigate preservice teachers' understandings of Canadian identity and representations of identity and ideology in Canadian multicultural picture books.

The methods and nature of the data collection across the six sites were similar with minor variations tailored to individual sites. All respondents participated in a four-hour workshop delivered over two classes and responded to an open-ended survey. Some respondents

created lesson plans and some participated in focus groups or individual interviews before and/or after a field experience. At two sites where the instructors taught the literacy courses, one invited teacher candidates to respond aesthetically to picture books (Rosenblatt, 1978); the other invited her students to compose reflections on the lesson plans.

We articulated a broad definition of multiculturalism and diversity to reflect the complexities of diversity in Canada. We used the following criteria for selection of picture books:

- Published since 1990
- Set in various regions across Canada
- Written/illustrated by authors/illustrators from a range of ethnocultural backgrounds
- Illustrative of some aspects of “multiculturalism” or “diversity”

Myths and legends were not included because they romanticize Aboriginals rather than portray realistic representations of First Nations peoples (Edwards & Saltman, 2000).

We collected over seventy-five picture books¹ for teacher candidates to explore during the workshop and to use in class assignments. We included literature about Aboriginal peoples, ethnicity, disability, language, intergenerational relationships, sexuality, same sex parenting, place, immigration, and historical issues.

The intent of the workshop was to promote teacher candidates’ understandings of the potential of Canadian multicultural picture books in their future classrooms, the evolution of multicultural picture books in Canada, and the textual-visual features of the texts. We created a PowerPoint presentation on *Joseph: A prairie boy’s story* (McGugan, 1994) to generate interactive whole class discussions on the textual and artistic elements which contributed to the authors’/illustrators’ constructions of meaning and teacher candidates’ constructions of meaning. We selected

this particular picture book for its evocative story of a young immigrant's experiences on the prairies in the early 20th century and the book's dramatic award-winning illustrations by Murray Kimber. In the workshop, we focused student teachers' attention on critical, visual, and multimodal literacies.

The participants then explored a selection of the picture books in small groups. Each group was given a set of books that represented a range of themes. On the second day of the workshop, participants read a different set of books. We wanted to challenge and disrupt participants' perceptions of Canadian identity and multiculturalism through textual explorations and discussion with peers.

The Canadian Imaginary: Perceptions of Place

In responding to our questions about what Canadian identity means to them, many participants at all research sites centered their responses in place, including landscape and geographic location, space for socio-cultural understanding, pedagogy of place, and critical reflective discourse.

Geographic Location

Geography was a dominant theme in respondents' descriptions of identity and place. Foci included mention of landscape and situating place in relation to urban, rural and regional perspectives.

Canadian identity was nostalgically linked to the places where teacher candidates grew up:

To me, Canadian identity really talks to me about landscape... I feel people in Canada have a really strong sense of place. And whether that's a city or whether they grew up in a rural area, or whatever province they're from, people seem to really strongly connect with where they grew up. (AB)

I think my Canadian identity has a lot to do with my connection to nature and the many different facets Canada's landscape holds. I feel pride and genuine enjoyment for it. (ON)

Something about Newfoundland is like a quilt to me. We are all—we have city, we have country, we have bay, we have village—I think that all forms who we are and Newfoundland culture and Newfoundland identity is bringing together so many different aspects. (NL)

The last quotation articulates an apt simile for respondents' connections to the land and landscape—"Something about Newfoundland is like a quilt to me..." A counter-perspective was articulated by a First Nations student: "The First Nations were the first to walk on this land and they know it more deeply" (SK). These two observations suggest both a physicality and an everyday familiarity with the place and one's identity in it. One walks in or wraps oneself in the land, experiencing its variety, but owning or possessing it in a very tangible way.

Some respondents perceived that multiculturalism and diversity are linked to place, that large urban centres are more diverse than rural communities:

For example, with a book like *Asha's Mums*, it depends where you live. I mean if it's urban Vancouver, it's different than if it is somewhere rural like Chase. It's important to be aware of that context. And not that I'm shying away from something, but if it's not appropriate for the community that you're in, then why put your job in jeopardy? I don't mean to say that we're going to hold back that type of education from children, but it can work against what you're trying to do because then the doors shut. So, rather than in your face, here's a gay couple, you have to find another way to introduce it that has a subtle

approach. (BC)

Multiculturalism for me is really problematic because I'm going to be, well I grew up in a rural farming community. I plan on teaching kind of in that same community and you have a very narrow view of how the world is... And so, when you present problematic literature to students, something that they don't really identify with, it might throw them off the reading because not only do they not feel comfortable with the form, they don't feel comfortable with the content. (ON)

A concern about the perspective voiced above is that some teacher candidates may perpetuate the perceptions of multiculturalism and diversity that exist in the communities in which they grew up. The implication of this view is that children and youth whom these teacher candidates would be teaching would not, as Jansen (2005) contends, be "exposed to the cultural diversity of the country" (p. 28) and, by extension, to issues of social justice which arise in a multicultural and diverse Canadian society.

Another understanding that some participants held was that they would teach only to the diversity in their classrooms. For example, Mark, a young man of colour who grew up in Toronto, questioned the relevance of a compulsory course on Aboriginal and multicultural education:

To a certain extent (my courses) all have a multicultural basis, but sometimes they don't really have too much application in many of the classes we will be teaching. Not that I want to say that Native Studies are, Natives have a low or non-existence in Canada, obviously they're very important. But in certain areas of the country it will not be as practical to learn about them as much. For example, if you're in Northern Ontario or Manitoba, it's going to be a

much higher degree of need as far as to understand. But, if you're in Montreal, or the East Coast, where there are not as many Natives and sort of Native students in the classroom. So, in that extent I think we have to be careful in how much multicultural we're teaching in the classroom, even in our preservice courses. (ON)

Like the conservative perceptions described above, Mark's view is also problematic in the exclusivity it projects about what would be valued or censored in particular classrooms. Mark's position would exclude the many urban Aboriginal students who live in cities as well as other children and youth whose identities and cultures are not noted. In her study of eight urban Aboriginal secondary school students and identity, conducted in a secondary school in northern Ontario, Desmoulins (2009) reports that the participants had never learned about Aboriginal peoples in the curriculum—history, geography, or science. Science was particularly problematic in that Aboriginal belief systems are in tension with institutional belief systems and educators' ideologies. The educators whom she interviewed were unaware of these conflicts. Desmoulins describes this phenomenon as *e/racing* Aboriginal students. Further, she notes that the largest urban Aboriginal population in Canada lives in Toronto. This demographic contrasts sharply with Mark's assumptions.

Some participants defined Canadian identity in geopolitical terms as "other than the U.S.A." (ON). One Newfoundland and Labrador student said: "When I was living abroad and people asked if I was American, I was very quick to point out that I was Canadian and I am proud of my country." Several recognized that Canadian identity is a multiplicity of identities under one flag:

For me I would hope that Canadian identity isn't singular, but it's a mosaic of identities plural, that's what I hope it is. That there isn't one singular identity that is the norm, that there isn't a norm, and that we all can embrace the

differences that we have but yet be proud that all those differences are underneath the Canadian flag and underneath Canada, that's kind of what I hope. (ON)

Canada is a country made up of many cultures that have come together and it's important for children to know who makes up their country. (NL)

For Ivana, as a student teacher studying in Quebec, geography was associated with loss: the loss of childhood memories, the loss of connection to the land, the loss of the promise of an Italian heritage. Upon seeing an illustration from the picture book, *If you're not from the prairie* (Bouchard, 1993), she was reminded of her Italian family's home in the Ontario countryside and their transposing of their deep connections to the land in Italy to this piece of land in Canada: "When my parents came from Italy, they bought a piece of land, they built on that land, and they will stay on that land until God takes them home." Her memories of the country home are associated with a gradual loss of Italian culture, as her grandparents and parents became more "Canadian." She (metaphorically) hankered for another pair of shoes, just like the ones in her favourite story from the workshop, *Two pairs of shoes* (Sanderson, 1990). The story tells of a First Nations girl proud of her black patent shoes who is given traditional moccasins by her grandmother. Ivana wished for the same dual connection to culture as that enjoyed by the First Nations girl. Hulan (2002) suggests that

... in settler nations such as Canada, the only plausible case of a so-called 'organic' connection between the people and the land can be for aboriginal people. To satisfy the romantic yearning for a spiritual connection between the nation's people, that is, the settlers, and the land, the 'autochthonous claim to the land' belonging to aboriginal peoples is symbolically appropriated." (p. 9)

Place as a Space for Sociocultural Understanding

Perceptions of place as space for sociocultural understanding included the impact of immigration and diasporic communities as well as place as a contested site. Some respondents spoke of the impact of immigration:

I think especially nowadays, because countries are still well-defined by borders, the cultural background of people inside is really beginning to blur and merge a lot more as the population keeps on going up. So many people are switching continents, countries, immigrating/emigrating. It's not going to go away. It's only going to continue and probably go up in volume. You need to be aware of what's going on in the rest of the world. Otherwise, you have that fear of all things different... (ON)

Dawn's family emigrated from India. She lives in a large city outside of Toronto where the majority of the population consists of people of colour. She explained that she does not see diversity unless she goes to Toronto. She commented on the tensions between integration in Canadian society and the powerful homogenizing force of the large South Asian community:

For instance, multiculturalism [is intended] to help immigrants learn English and integrate into society as a whole. But now, you see, in my community, we have our own television stations, our own newspapers. So, there is no big force there to learn English if you can get the news in your own language, you can watch TV in your own language, you're kind of creating your own community outside. ... And in school, most of them just drop out. I remember one of our cousins, his wife's nephew came from India and he had to go to an ESL family. And the (South Asian) kids were like, when he started talking

English, the kids were like “What, do you think you’re white? You’re English? Why are you talking like that? You trying to show off?” So, it’s not even encouraged there too.
(ON)

As a second generation South Asian Canadian, Dawn’s experience parallels Handa’s (2003) description of the tensions other second generation South Asian young women also experienced. For Dawn, place is not a physical landscape, but a social and cultural space. She described a community within a community where language, customs, work, even entertainment have been transported to a different place; but where acknowledging and adapting to the new place are discouraged in order to preserve “home” in the new space.

Some respondents recognized place as a contested space. This phenomenon emerged from teacher candidates in British Columbia, a province which has a troubled history of racist policies against Asian Canadians (Hodge, 2006). The quotations below highlight the deep personal and intertextual connections respondents made to historical picture books:

I chose the book *Ghost Train* for my lesson plan because I instantly made a connection to it. The cover illustrations and the title brought back memories for me of when I was a child living in train stations. My father was a station agent and his father before him. In fact, my grandfather came to Canada from England to work for the railway as a station agent. The other connection I have with the book is my Chinese niece and nephew whose relatives worked on the railway and possibly even died. If I were to teach this lesson in a place where there was a railway present, for example, Ashcroft, I would take advantage of the rich heritage present. There is a Chinese cemetery located in the town; victims of the dangerous work on the railway

may be buried there. (BC)

The reason I chose *Flags* for my lesson is because I grew up in the Slocan Valley where thousands of Japanese Canadians were interned in the 1940s. My chicken coop (had) served as a house where two families lived during their imprisonment (strong word used very intentionally); it wasn't much bigger than a small shed. I can remember the yellow numbers stencilled onto the building—103/104—they still send shivers down my spine. David Suzuki was a little boy when he was forced to live in the encampment in Lemon Creek just 15 minutes from where I grew up. (BC)

In a study conducted with teachers in British Columbia using literature circles and children's literature, teachers' "touchstone" childhood stories, which were associated with memories of place, likewise became a contested site challenged by "counter-stories" they met while reading harrowing stories of First Nations children's experiences in residential school (Strong-Wilson, 2007, 2008).

There were also respondents who defended "our culture": "We need to remember our culture too, not just focus on others" (AB). Some thought that they were not represented in the picture books. For example, at the conclusion of a course in Canadian Multicultural Children's Literature at the Ontario site, most students recommended that the course would be improved if more picture books were added to portray mainstream (white) society.

Pedagogy of Place

Participants were invited to create and implement lesson plans on Canadian multicultural picture books. Two ways in which place was highlighted were in recreating place in the classroom and in reconstructing historical issues or events. At the Saskatchewan site,

several non-Aboriginal teacher candidates explained how they created imaginary Aboriginal places in their classrooms:

We started the morning with circles and giving thanks.

(SK)

I brought in birchwood and we learned different ways of stacking a fire. (SK)

The respondent from British Columbia (quoted above) explained how s/he implemented *Flags*:

So when I taught my lesson to a grade 5/6 class, I brought in my personal experience of that place to produce a tangible moment. I had a space the size of my chicken coop and had ten kids come and sit there so they could kind of conceptualize the living space. I told them an entire family or two would have had to live in that space and they understood because they barely fit. (BC)

Another described how s/he would use *A Mountain Alphabet* (Ruurs, 2000) to create awareness of the links between identity and place. The following excerpt is from the teacher candidate's rationale for her lesson plan:

One way people identify themselves is by their surroundings. We are from Canada. What does the environment of Canada mean to us? What does it contribute to our identities? We live in British Columbia. What does that mean to us and how does it contribute to our identities? This lesson helps students to explore how their environments contribute to their own identities. This helps students build their concept of "home" and helps them begin to understand how where you are from contributes to who you are. (BC)

The first three respondents described creative strategies consistent with a social constructivist approach (Bainbridge, Heydon, & Malicky, 2009) for

engaging students in literacy learning. The last demonstrates an understanding of critical literacy and the use of excellent questions to promote personal and intertextual connections among self, place, and text.

Not all participants, however, recognized the importance of using Canadian multicultural picture books in the classroom. Mark, for example, believed that because of the diversity in Toronto, children already understand multiculturalism:

I can only use Toronto as my example... Whether you have it (diversity) in the classroom or not, it's definitely there in the society. I think most of the students understood that... They experience it every day to the extent where I don't even think it's necessary anymore in many cases in Toronto, to really have to bring in sort of, make the students aware of those kinds of things because I think they live it. (ON)

Mark's assumption that because students live in a diverse cosmopolitan society they understand multiculturalism and diversity is worrisome. His observation links the geographical notion of place to a sociocultural setting where he has already decided that it is not necessary to address multiculturalism and diversity. Desmoulins (2009) contends that it is not whom you see in Canadian society that fosters understanding, but how educators value and address diversity in classrooms and curricula.

Critical Reflective Discourse

Some respondents' observations related to place involved critical reflective discourse on multiculturalism and diversity. For example, some teacher candidates commented on Canada's historical treatment of Aboriginals or ethnic groups:

I grew up thinking Canada is this great multicultural place, that we're so accepting and loving of all of these other people from different places. But when I took

Canadian history, I realized that there have been some difficult things in our past that we shouldn't necessarily forget, and that it's really important to bring those issues across to children. That's why I chose Paul Yee's *Ghost Train* for my lesson so I could have students explore the poor treatment the Chinese immigrants faced in building Canada's railway. (BC)

A number of participants were conservative in how they would approach issues. *Shi-shi-etko* (Campbell, 2005), for example, was considered a "more gentle" introduction to residential schools than *This land is my land* (Littlechild, 2003):

What I liked about *Shi-shi-etko* was the local context of the book, and the fact that the author, Nicola Campbell, grew up not far from here (Kamloops). As a way of introducing the issue of residential school, it was much more gentle (than *This Land is My Land*). It doesn't talk about the horrors of the residential school; it talks more about *Shi-shi-etko's* roots and her family, the place that she came from.... (BC)

One teacher candidate commented on her discomfort with raising issues explicitly in her classroom:

Whereas I like books/multicultural picture books where it's just, it's not mentioned, it's just part of everyday life. We talked about Canadian identity and it just you know, you kind of take it for granted that those kinds of multi-ethnicities, multiculturalism, those are just part of life, and if you're making a big parade out of it in a picture book, I don't know, what you are doing? Does that feel natural? Does that feel comfortable? That's my problem. (ON)

Several Aboriginal teacher candidates offer a counter-discourse to the conservative perspective noted in the last two quotations above:

However, I think that despite our pride in being diverse,
“Canadian identity” is largely decided upon by
mainstream, white Canada. (SK)

All of our political powers are white and I’ve learned
more and more about under-representation of the
multicultural groups. (SK)

My sense is that Canada believes that we are all in search
of certain justices, but only as long as it is not too
uncomfortable. (SK)

Conclusion

Picture books are a powerful educative resource for children and adults. In the study, the teacher candidates’ engagement with and response to the texts promoted reflections on and increased their understandings of their own identity as Canadians, of multiculturalism and diversity, and representations in the picture books. Some, as we have noted above, were resistant to these understandings.

Lippard (1997) suggests that strong attachments to place are a natural phenomenon that touches each of us:

The intersections of nature, culture, history, and ideology form the ground on which we stand—our land, our place, the local. The lure of the local is the pull of place that operates on each of us, exposing our politics and our spiritual legacies. It is the geographical component of the psychological need to belong somewhere, one antidote to a prevailing alienation. (p. 7)

Teacher candidates’ perceptions of place as a marker for Canadian identity and multiculturalism and diversity varied widely. For some, the notion of place as landscape and in relation to geographic location are consistent with Manning’s (2003) notion of place as arboreal, rooted and

static. Other perceptions of place suggest a greater depth of understanding of diversity and complicate the construct of place by seeing space as a socio-cultural place for identity exploration that is sensitive to the mobility of the population, diasporas, and contested sites of racism in Canada.

Some preservice teachers appeared to articulate their sense of comfort with a “white landscape.” As Manning (2003) reminds us, art represented in this way “offers a primarily linear rendition of space, inviting us to enter into an apparently coherent construction of the Canadian landscape” (p. 14). This perspective was challenged by the Aboriginal participants who questioned power relations between “mainstream, white Canada” and other groups. The comment “My sense is that Canada believes that we are all in search of certain justices, but *only as long as it is not too uncomfortable*” (italics added), reflects some of the participants’ discomfort in addressing contentious issues.

While some of the teacher candidates recognized the potential of picture books for promoting their students’ understanding of the complexities of identity and diversity, others would censor the books and issues that they would introduce to students. This is a troubling finding because of its implications for teacher education and teaching. Some participants noted that they would not include certain books in rural settings, that they would “fit into” the existing community mores; others would teach to the diversity in their classrooms, but would exclude literature about groups and issues that did not reflect the composition of students in the classrooms. Bainbridge, Pantaleo, and Ellis (1999) remind us that children need to see themselves in the stories they read. This valuing of themselves by their teachers and peers is critical both to their sociocultural development and that of their peers.

Another implication of conservatism and censorship is to perpetuate the situation Jansen (2005) describes where multiculturalism is a phenomenon in large urban areas and non-existent in many parts of

Canada. How will the children in these communities come to appreciate Canadian multicultural children's literature, the ideologies represented in picture books, and issues of social justice that demand exploration.

The majority of the participants in the study were white, middle class Canadians, who perceive Canada as a benevolent, inclusive society. As noted above, some do not recognize that their unquestioned views of Canadian identity and multiculturalism and diversity present a "coherent construction" (Manning, 2003, p. 14) of the Canadian imaginary. This perception is a challenge to teacher educators. How can we disrupt naïve assumptions and foster greater awareness and depth of understanding? There are, of course, no simple solutions to the complex problem. Aoki (1992/2005) provides a thoughtful starting point for deliberations.

Now I am beginning to understand the landscape of multiculturalism in the language of AND... AND... AND... each AND allowing lines of movement to grow in the middle. Within such an understanding, Canadian multiculturalism is a polyphony of lines of movement that grow in the abundance of middles, the "between's" and "AND" that populate our landscape. (p. 271)

We believe that the workshop we developed promoted teacher candidates' understandings. This strategy, however, does not go far enough. Strategies such as the lesson plan assignment were effective in engaging the participants in pedagogy. We must encourage our students to consider the ANDs involved in addressing diversity and in curriculum planning in their future practices. As teacher educators, we need to embed in our literacy and children's literature courses sustained time for teacher candidates to read, explore, discuss, and reflect on Canadian identity, multiculturalism and diversity, and the ideologies and representations in picture books. We should invite our colleagues in

areas such as art, multicultural education, social studies, and history to engage in conversations with us.

In this study we conceptualized multiculturalism broadly to incorporate not only representations of culture and race, but also diversity to recognize and reflect the changing sociocultural and political complexities of Canada. The findings of this study point to the significant role of Canadian multicultural children's literature in preservice teacher education in forming and changing/shifting teacher candidates' understandings of place and developing a sense of multiculturalism and diversity in Canada. Further research is needed to investigate and describe planned interventions in literacy methods courses and children's literature courses and their effectiveness in enabling teacher candidates to develop conceptual and practical tools (Grossman et al., 2000; Smagorinsky et al., 2007) and the capacity for reflection (Harste et al., 2004) to promote their professional development as educators who are responsible and proactive in a Canadian multicultural and richly diverse society.

Acknowledgements

This research is being funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, Standard Research Grant (#410-2006-1796). We gratefully acknowledge this support.

Notes

¹ http://www.mun.ca/educ/people/hammett/canadian_multicultural_picture_b.htm

References

Aoki, T. T. (1992/2005). In the midst of slippery theme words: Living as designers of Japanese Canadian curriculum. In W. F. Pinar & R. L

- Irwin (Eds.), *Curriculum in a new key: The collected works of Ted T. Aoki* (pp. 263-277). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.
- Bainbridge, J., Heydon, R., & Malicky, G. (2009). *Constructing meaning: Balancing elementary language arts* (4th ed.). Toronto, ON: Nelson Education.
- Bainbridge, J., Pantaleo, S., & Ellis, M. (1999). Multicultural 'picture books': Perspectives from Canada. *Social Studies*, 90(4), 183-189.
- Bradford, C. (2007). *Unsettling narratives: Postcolonial readings of children's literature*. Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press.
- Chambers, C. (1999). A topography for Canadian curriculum theory. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 24(2), 137-150.
- Desmoulins, L. (2009). *E/raced: Aboriginal youth identities and schooling*. Doctoral dissertation, Lakehead University, Thunder Bay, ON.
- Edwards, G., & Saltman, J. (2000). *Looking at ourselves, looking at others: Multiculturalism in Canadian children's picture books in English*. Paper presented at the History of the Book in Canada's Open Conference for Volume III (1918-2000). Available: http://www.hbin.library.utoronto.ca/vol3edwardssaltman_en.htm
- Grossman, P., Valencia, S., Evans, K., Thompson, C., Martin, S., & Place, N. (2000). Transitions into teaching: Learning to teach writing in teacher education and beyond. *Journal of Literacy Research*, 32(4), 631-662.
- Handa, A. (2003). *Of silk saris and mini-skirts: South Asian girls walk the tightrope of culture*. Toronto, ON: Women's Press.
- Hodge, D. (2006). *The kids book of Canadian immigration*. (J. Mantha, Illus.). Toronto, ON: Kids Can Press.
- Harste, J., Leland, C., Schmidt, K., Vasquez, V., & Ociepka, A. (2004). Practice makes perfect or does it? The relationship between theory and practice in teacher education. *Reading Online*, 7(4). Available:

http://www.readingonline.org/art_index.asp?HREF=harste/index.html

- Hulan, R. (2002). *Northern experience and the myths of Canadian culture*. Montreal, QC: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Jansen, C. M. (2005). Canadian multiculturalism. In C. E. James (Ed.), *Possibilities and limitations: Multicultural policies and programs in Canada* (pp. 21-33). Black Point, NS: Fernwood Publishing.
- Johnston, I., & Mangat, J. (2003). Cultural encounters in the liminal spaces of Canadian picture books. *Changing English*, 10(2), 199-204.
- Lippard, R. (1997). Introduction: All over the place. In *The lure of the local: Senses of place in a multicentered society* (pp. 4-20). New York, NY: New Press.
- Manning, E. (2003). *Ephemeral territories: Representing nation, home, and identity in Canada*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Merriam, S. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Rosenblatt, L. M. (1978). *The reader, the text, the poem: The transactional theory of the literary work*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Smagorinsky, P., Wright, L., Augustine, S. M., O'Donnell-Allen, C., & Konopak, B. (2007). Student engagement in the teaching and learning of grammar: A case study of an early career secondary English teacher. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 59(1), 76-90.
- Stake, R. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Strong-Wilson, T. (2008). *Bringing memory forward: Storied remembrance in social justice education with teachers*. New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Strong-Wilson, T. (2007). Moving horizons: Exploring the role of stories in decolonizing the literacy education of white teachers. *International Education*, 37(1), 114-131.

Canadian Multicultural Picture Books cited:

- Bouchard, D. (1993). *If you're not from the prairie*. (H. Ripplinger, Illus.). Vancouver, BC: Raincoast Books & Summer Wild Productions.
- Campbell, N. (2005). *Shi-shi-etko*. (K. La Fave, Illus.). Toronto, ON: Groundwood Books.
- Elwin, R. (1990). *Asha's mums*. (D. Lee, Illus.). Toronto, ON: Women's Press.
- King, T. (1992). *A Coyote Columbus story*. (W.K. Monkman, Illus.). Toronto, ON: A Groundwood Book, Douglas & McIntyre Ltd.
- Littlechild, G. (1993). *This land is my land*. San Francisco, CA: Children's Book Press.
- McGugan, J. (1994). *Josepha: A prairie boy's story*. (M. Kimber, Illus.). Red Deer, AB: Red Deer College Press.
- Ruurs, M. (2000). *A mountain alphabet*. (A. Kiss, Illus.). Toronto, ON: Tundra Books.
- Sanderson, E. (1990). *Two pairs of shoes*. (D. Beyer, Illus.). Winnipeg, MB: Pemmican Publications Inc.
- Trottier, M. (1999). *Flags*. (P. Morin, Illus.). Toronto, ON: Stoddart Kids.
- Yee, P. (1996). *Ghost Train*. (H. Chan, Illus.) Toronto, ON: Douglas & McIntyre/ Groundwood.