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MID-AIR:
***Reconceptualizing Multiculturalism through Arts-Based Negotiations
of My Canadian Identity***

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OISE/University of Toronto 2002

Abstract

My thesis proposal focuses on the complexities of cultural identity negotiation. I see it as the puzzling of my “Canadian self” because of its resonance with my own life story. I am a Canadian of visible minority status, but in that statement alone, lies the puzzle. I investigate what it means to be a Canadian citizen of Filipino heritage on and within a multicultural landscape.

I will also inquire into cultural identity negotiations, as teachers and students contemplate and construct their identities of self on and within classroom landscapes. I draw upon my personal experiences and relate them to my developing understanding of the terms *cultural self identity* and *teacher identity*. I grew up in two cultures-Filipino and Canadian- and in effect, the stories written in and around this negotiation of identity shape and reshape the story of my teaching.

An arts-based narrative exploration of the term *identity* will create a thesis traveling through my experiences and the experiences of my participants. I choose this form of research writing for its constant puzzling providing opportunities for me to think and rethink my inquiry.

I will explore the notion of cultural identity as defined from the notion of exogenous (PASSIVE) and endogenous (ACTIVE) identity construction. Exogenous construction is defining of ethnic identity according to existing theoretical, social, historical, and cultural interpretations. Endogenous construction is the individual's exploration of these external factors and the creating of an identity laced with lived experiences. I see the dialectic between the two constructions of identity as the emerging theory– it is **MID-AIR**.

My research stems from a notion of the postmodern philosophy. “Postmodern versions of inquiry ... transform the ways in which classrooms, teacher development and inquiry are represented...[It] is indifferent to such concerns for coherence and closure. Rather than feeling at a loss, artistic researchers can go on by avoiding (or working through to the point of exhaustion or boredom) the prosaic writing style” (Diamond and Mullen, 1999,42,43).

From this philosophy, I intend to construct a thesis that embodies my **self**(ves), (teacher, visible minority, Canadian, performer, poet, Ph.D. Candidate et al) and to represent these many dimensions of self in different arts-based research forms (collages, split-text forms, shape poems et al).

It is my hope that this thesis, as it relives my past **self**(ves), in terms of my current researcher self, will enable me to write through my experiences producing a re-conceptualization of multiculturalism for education and Canadian society.

**MID-AIR:
Reconceptualizing Multiculturalism through Arts-Based
Negotiations of My Canadian Identity**

By

Darryl Daniel Bautista

A Thesis Proposal in Partial Fulfillment
For the Requirements of Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Curriculum Teaching and Learning

ONTARIO INSTITUTE FOR STUDIES IN EDUCATION
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Within View

A single feather,
I see it there,
Set adrift in mid-air
It has fallen from the flyer's wings

The flyer,
To find balance is his wish,
To fly to hope is his dream,
To soar to truth is his intent.

He sews feathers to make wings that fly him through mid-air

Yet one feather falls

And way above this falling, drifting feather

I am there

I am he

I,
The flyer
The tailor
The dreamer
The poet

I am thankful that a single feather
Tied to another
Tied to another
Takes me here

Where I belong

(Bautista May 2002)

MID-AIR: Reconceptualizing Multiculturalism Through Arts-Based Negotiations of My Canadian Identity

*I think about my poetry. It is a large part of my **self**(ves), my identity negotiations and as I age, I realize the impact this writing has had on my life.*

My sense of words pervades any kind of communication I may do with others-I have learned that I speak volumes when I write my own poetry. It is cathartic and it stems from the ability to look inward on my soul and to be able to recreate my soul's temperament on paper.

How I live and what I am can be found in moments of captured text, within my poetry.

(Bautista, Personal Journal Entry, October 2001)

An Introduction into MID-AIR

My thesis proposal begins very simply. I am a Canadian.

I was born, raised, educated, and am living and breathing as a citizen of Canada. Simple enough, but behind the statement lies a story full of lived experiences. In my thesis, I will become a storyteller and recount the tensions, the emotions, the updrafts and downdrafts of my **MID-AIR** identity negotiation.

In my thesis, I will share the stories of my Canadian self that are embedded with the passion and words of Pierre Elliott Trudeau's vision of Canada. When Trudeau (1998) speaks, I listen.

We should not even be able to agree upon the kind of Canadian to choose as a model, let alone persuade most people to emulate it.... There is no such thing as a model or ideal Canadian.... What the world should be seeking, and what we in Canada must continue to cherish, are not concepts of uniformity but human values: compassion, love and understanding. (p.146)

From this starting point, I begin my journey.

Key Theoretical Constructs within the MID-AIR Inquiry

In this thesis proposal, I focus on the complexities of cultural identity negotiation. I see it as the puzzling of my “Canadian self” because of its resonance with my own life story. My personal story has been of negotiating my ethnicity in terms of “belonging”, within cultural and multicultural surroundings. I am a Canadian of visible minority status, but in that statement alone, lies the puzzle. I investigate what it means to be a Canadian citizen of Filipino heritage on and within a multicultural landscape.

I will also inquire into cultural identity negotiations, as teachers and students contemplate and construct their identities of self on and within classroom landscapes. I draw upon my personal experiences and relate them to my developing understanding of the terms *cultural self identity* and *teacher identity*. I grew up in two cultures-Filipino and Canadian- and in effect, the stories written in and around this negotiation of identity shape and reshape the story of my teaching.

I was born in Canada and educated in the Canadian school system. My parents are immigrants from the Philippines. They brought with them many cultural codes and customs that I will never fully understand because I have not experienced them, lived them, as a Filipino. Through life I find myself in a labyrinth of labels-a visible minority, a Canadian, an Asian-Canadian, an ethnic teacher and so on.

(Bautista, March 6, 2001)

An arts-based narrative exploration of the term *identity* will create a thesis traveling through my experiences and the experiences of my participants. I choose this form of research writing for its constant puzzling providing opportunities for me to think and rethink my inquiry.

I will work through the label of *visible minority*, and its influences on individuals who live ethnic identities. “Many members of ethnic minorities (EMs)...experience more than one culture when growing up, and face the challenge of incorporating those diverse influences into their identity” (Tse, 1999,1). Ultimately, my thesis will unravel my Canadian identity, examine its textures, relive its nuances and question its vitality in order to tell the story of my current **self**(ves). Kelly (1955) writes of *pre-emptive construing*¹, and I understand it as the categorizations of individuals according to social, political, economic, cultural standards or from my experiences, I liken the term to living in a virtual labyrinth of labels. In my research writing, I will try to work through my cultural identity maze.

Positioning within This Inquiry

As Paley (1979) writes, “coming to terms with my difference, prepares a person for all kinds of differences” (p.29), I feel the resonance. In my thesis, I will explore my lived moments of difference.

As I attempt to unmask constructions of cultural identity, I will begin by sharing my theoretical approach. I will explore the notion of cultural identity as defined from a number of sources. I then explore the notion of exogenous (PASSIVE) and endogenous (ACTIVE) identity construction. Exogenous construction is defining of ethnic identity according to existing theoretical, social, historical, and cultural interpretations. Endogenous construction is the individual’s exploration of these external factors and the creating of an identity laced with lived experiences. I see the dialectic between the two constructions of identity as the

¹ When a person is construed as nothing but an X, all their other characteristics are ignored e.g. a black candidate for the US Presidency or a Catholic before Jack Kennedy. (Kelly, G. A. 1955 *The Psychology of Personal Constructs* 2 vols. NY:Norton.)

emerging theory– it is **MID-AIR**. We exist in a world of vast identity conceptualizations, but we are just beginning to grasp the notion that cultural identity construction can be explored and re-conceptualized through personal agency or voice. Individuals should not only be able to write, document and provide understandings of their culture; they must feel confident in doing so.

I feel one should shape culture as much as one has been shaped by culture. Explorations of self need to be validated and conceded as contributory to the texts that already exists. Identity construction involves the participation and acceptance of all research writers who, in turn, contest the prevailing meta-narrative.

As a Canadian of Filipino heritage, a performer/comedian, an academic writer and a teacher living in Toronto, I am constantly negotiating the dimensions of my **self(ves)**. I live in **MID-AIR**. My thesis furthers my academic knowledge and personal understanding of self and issues of cultural diversity. It will help me explore and, perhaps, understand certain aspects of the construction of cultural identity.

I believe educators must be able to construct and deconstruct theories of cultural identity to facilitate a better understanding of the way individuals think and interact with one another. Diversity, played out on landscapes of education, is a process of working through what practices already exist and deciphering their content and meaning to make the classroom experience more culturally responsive.

This thesis is an attempt to give meaning to cultural identity by opening up a dialogue that

involves as many perspectives as possible. My intentions are to explore cultural identity and representation as historically, theoretically, politically and culturally rooted, while thread-lining the thesis tapestry with voices of human agency. My belief is that the **intertextuality** of storied lives (of finding connection to each other), whether teacher to teacher, teacher to student, teacher to self, in fact, any “self” to other, is the universal act of cultural identity negotiation– of living in **MID-AIR**.

Multiculturalism in Canada

In effect, I also hope to construct a discussion on issues of cultural identity for students of diverse backgrounds who live and are educated in Canada. I will explore questions of identity and identity crisis in terms of current literature and define and re-conceptualize the concept of multiculturalism in relation to schools, teachers, students and Canadian society.

I visit and revisit these issues through my writing. By incorporating my stories, I live and relive the concept of “a Canadian self” in my own experiences in the Canadian education system. This furthers explorations of alternative, more inclusive visions of multiculturalism.

I am a Canadian who has been raised in an immigrant household. My parents are Filipino and have brought with them the traditions and cultural beliefs of the Philippines. It has often been a struggle to negotiate an understanding of the two cultures of lineage. In my thesis, I explore to transcend the usual dichotomies of Canadian-Filipino, Teacher-Student, Male-Female, Fact-Fiction and ...

Guiding Questions of MID-AIR

Canada² advocates a belief in multiculturalism, of celebrating the differences amongst cultures, and I continually puzzle through its effects on my life. As a researcher, I will explore these puzzles as they attempt to embrace each child's diverse cultural background including my own. Currently, my guiding questions are:

1. Who is Canadian?

When we think about representation of our citizens, I believe that the cultural mosaic of Canada is too rich to reduce it to a single or unitary model citizen. Trudeau (1998) writes, "There is no such thing as a model or ideal Canadian. What could be more absurd than the concept of an "all-Canadian" boy or girl? A society which emphasizes uniformity is one which creates intolerance and hate" (p.146). In my thesis, I will search through my personal experiences to define my Canadian self, my *cultural self-identity*. From Diamond and Mullen (1999), *cultural self-identity* refers "to the representation of race, ethnicity, gender and other forms of identifications viewed from personal, political, ideological and sociological locations" (p.154). In doing so, I hope to find my place in Canada's cultural mosaic.

2. Who is the Canadian teacher?

A teacher in Canada must be aware of the cultural make-up of the students in his/her classrooms. We can no longer assume that culture or ethnicity in our classroom is solely because of the immigrant experience. Some students are new to the country, some are

second generation, third generation, some are interracial, and some know no other culture distinction than simply Canadian.

There are many kinds of Canadians of many different colours within our classrooms. As Trudeau (1998) says, Canada “is a multicultural society; it offers to every Canadian the opportunity to fulfil his or her own cultural instincts and to share those from other sources. This mosaic pattern, and the moderation, which it includes and encourages, makes Canada a very special place” (146).

I am also a Canadian teacher whose physical skin colour is brown. This physical trait does not make me more or less responsible for multicultural practices in the education system or in Canadian society. If you teach in Canada, live in Canada or claim a Canadian self, then **you and I**, together, are responsible.

3. What is the future of multicultural education?

In my thesis, I share personal and professional experiences thread-lined with experiences of multiculturalism. I search out a Canadian self by writing a thesis of stories that encompasses all of these experiences.

It is my hope that this thesis, as it relives my past **self**(ves), in terms of my current researcher self, will enable me to write through my experiences producing a re-conceptualization of multiculturalism for education and Canadian society.

² As a young boy, Pierre Trudeau had a profound effect on my family and on myself, in terms of living multiculturally in

The future of multiculturalism lies in the ability to negotiate identity across landscapes of education, society and self in order for me (us) to claim ownership of my (our) Canadian **self**(ves).

Canada. I will explore my relationship to Trudeau more fully in the final written thesis.

MID-AIR Arts –Based Educational Research (ABER)

Without poets, without artists, men would soon weary of nature's monotony. The sublime idea men have of the universe would collapse with dizzying speed. The order, which we find in nature, and which is only an effect of art, would at once vanish. Everything would break up in chaos. There would be no seasons, no civilization, no thought, no humanity; even life would give way, and the impotent void would reign everywhere.

(Apollinaire, *The Cubist Painters, On Painting*, 1913)

For me, the arts-based approach takes experiences, creates a tapestry with them and it gives them a palpable texture. These stories are of life and they must have a form that displays them. They need to have a form that satiates, frustrates, pleases, causes tension, resonates, bewilders, combines, echoes, confines, frees– they need to be of the arts.

My research stems from a notion of the postmodern philosophy. “Postmodern versions of inquiry ... transform the ways in which classrooms, teacher development and inquiry are represented...[It] is indifferent to such concerns for coherence and closure. Rather than feeling at a loss, artistic researchers can go on by avoiding (or working through to the point of exhaustion or boredom) the prosaic writing style” (Diamond and Mullen, 1999,42,43).

I can move in and out of my research with the knowledge that my writing will be authentic to my **self**(ves). I can work through experiences creating a text that propels both my research inquiry and my artistic style: “artistic researchers seek language uses that are evocative, metaphorical, figurative, connotative, poetic and playful (Barone cited in Diamond and Mullen, 1999, 43). By experimenting with artistic form, they learn about themselves and

their deeper capacities while connecting with the flight paths or deadends of others” (Diamond and Mullen, 1999, 43). The thesis transforms words into senses of self. As I negotiate identity, I want to be able to do so with as much fervour and passion that inflames my soul. I want my thesis to know no bounds. For me, *multiculturalism* is more than just an exploration of a term. It is my life and its profound effect must be mirrored in profound extravagance.

My ABER Metaphor: “Not here and not there but simply Mid-Air”

The metaphor of **MID-AIR** becomes the core artistry of my work. I am a traveler and vow to venture whenever I can. I travel to many places: across Canada, Korea, The Philippines, Cuba, throughout the U.S., Hong Kong, France, Australia, and more places will surface. With this thesis, I will learn to travel inward within myself.

MID-AIR thoughts arose when I traveled to Paris, France. On the airplane, I wrote in my journal about the strange beauty I know as **MID-AIR**.

When I think about where I am right now, I revel in the idea of being between destinations. Flying seems like such a miraculous endeavour. Living between spaces or destinations sounds unreal, but as we negotiate our identities across numerous landscapes, we must remember that we are connected to these landscapes. Being in between, amongst, amid places is similar to being in mid-air. When I negotiate my cultural identity, I feel safe in mid-air...

(Bautista, June 2001)

In my thesis, the metaphor will transform itself, sustaining a plausible and engaging thread-line or theme. **MID-AIR** moves away from the compartmentalization, the constant categorizing, or “the boxing” of individuals within society. **MID-AIR** provides the space

for the self to actively explore notions of identity and ethnicity. It is the time and space to visit and revisit my **self**(ves) across identity arenas including, but not limited to, lineage, history, culture, environment and society. Mid-air allows for endless possibility.

MID-AIR then becomes the “third space,” the space between, and the category that cannot be categorized. It exists so the story of self can fly and not fly. **MID-AIR** is grounded in theory, but it is free to soar. It is active and passive, because it is in flight while simultaneously being stationary. It is ambiguous, simply, because it is. **MID-AIR**, like life, negotiates destinations.

Through my stories, I will recover the past in present reflection with an intentional future gaze. The storied past permits me to relive my identity negotiations, in terms of my current **MID-AIR** self with the intention of providing a forum for future discussions of multiculturalism in education and society.

Wings as implements of negotiation

My wings, the implements of flight, are my art. My poetry, my writing self and my lived experiences are implements fashioned into the wings of my thesis journey. They guide me through my inquiry and they become forces that move me through the spaces and places of my life path.

I will approach my inquiry with an Arts-based narrative guise using the method of **Critical Autoethnography** to inform my audience and myself. It is a study of culture written by and about my self that is as critical as I choose for it to be. I understand that personal experience and my professional self are connected (Personal Practical Knowledge, –Connelly and

Clandinin, 1988,1995,1997). These experiences become stories and these same stories are placed alongside the stories of others that are similar, but not the same.

As I soar to new ground, I must be aware of my ambitions. There was a previous flyer, a boy who soared too close to the sun, and his wings melted as he tumbled down towards the sea. The legendary myth of *Daedalus and Icarus*, father and son, echoes over and over as I write through my research.

So he set to work to fabricate wings for himself and his young son Icarus.... When all was prepared for flight he said, "Icarus, my son, I charge you to keep at a moderate height, for if you fly too high the heat will melt them. Keep near me and you will be safe."...He kissed the boy, not knowing that it was for the last time. Then rising on his wings he flew off, encouraging him to follow, and looked back from his own flight to see how his son managed his wings.... They passed Samos and Delos on the left and Lebynthos on the right, when the boy, exulting in his career, began to leave the guidance of his companion and soar upward as if to reach heaven. The nearness of the blazing sun softened the wax, which held the feathers together, and they came off. He fluttered with his arms, but no feathers remained to hold the air. While his mouth uttered cries to his father it was submerged in the blue waters of the sea, which thenceforth was called by his name.

(Bulfinch, 1979, p.187 & 188)

At all times of my researcher self, I believe in being wary, of seeing the signs along my path in order not to be drowned by my ambitious endeavour.

I live in **MID-AIR**, and know that my research writing will sway in the updrafts and downdrafts of my flight.

And so, I collect my feathers—the participants, the terms, the theories, and the arts and I begin to fashion my wings.

MID-AIR Methodology: The Tapestry of the Thesis

The thesis will have many research textures. It will include an excavation of key theories and terminology in relation to culture and diversity. As I begin to piece together the theories with the terms, I hope to write about my experiences and connect them with the literature. Also, excerpts from my own personal narrative, a co-written chapter with Audrey Cahill, memoirs, autobiography, poetry and explorations of other textual influences, will hopefully, find their way into my thesis tapestry. The following methods are incorporated in this proposal as prompts to field notes that will become parts of the research text.

Letter Writing

In writing letters in regards to issues of identity and culture, I have been able to untap areas of inquiry that are latent with my own thoughts of multicultural education. I will include excerpts from them and weave them throughout the text.

Personal Writing

Excerpts from my journal, autobiographical accounts and some of my poetry are included. They are pieces that have been written both currently and within the past few years, as I have contemplated the state of my involvement as an educator in a multicultural landscape.

Reflection Papers and Arts-Based Responses

During my course work for my Doctorate, I have read and reflected on a number of readings and found that my resonance with certain authors and their work are related to issues of culture and identity.

Also, arts-based responses (i.e. collage, script writing, reflection writing et al.) to certain art forms (i.e. film, literature, theater et al.) will be included in my thesis. I share an example here to illustrate my inclusion of these responses. My response to the film *Amelie* (2001) depicts a recurring theme within my life. In this written reflection of *Amelie*, I remind myself that difference and individuality are good things and upholding the status quo is not my life intent.

Amelie 2001 (France)
Director Jean Pierre Jeunet

“I never knew I was unusual until somebody told me I was”
Personal Journal Entry Bautista 2001

I walked home from seeing the French Film *Amelie* at the Cumberland Cinemas in Yorkville. I felt a bit overwhelmed by the film and the timeliness of it in comparison to my daily life struggles.

The main character of the film is a unique individual
whose only intention is to see others take action in life.

She invests her time making sure that special people around her, live life
and not sit idly on their hands.

She is a quirky young woman and her storied life is different, in fact, unusual,
but she harnesses these experiences as tools of empowerment.

They motivate her “life” work.

She, too, however needs guidance and once it is received, her own desires are fulfilled.

I walked home from the film because I needed to reevaluate my own senses of difference.
I am not a typical young individual and sometimes as I swim against the current, I swim alone.

I have not felt like myself lately because
I entered into a relationship where I put my true self on a shelf.
I do this, often, I am learning to stop this action.

Amelie reminded me that difference is a good thing
and that if we let life pass us by then all we collect are “moments gone by.”

I want to gather life moments I have lived.
I want to let go of inhibition and perhaps, as I live moments,
I will have collected “dreams come true.”

(Bautista, November 2001)

An Interview: In Conversation With...

In the thesis, there will be an interview with a close colleague of non-minority status, who has shared similar teacher and Canadian cultural experiences. His story placed alongside my own will be key to my exploration of model representation when I speak of a Canadian identity. This interview will take on a more interpersonal quality and so, I choose to call this interview process, **In Conversation With...**

I see the interview process as a fundamental belief in the powers of dialogue. Through conversation “intellectual ideas arise from the stimulating interchanges of mature minds” (Yonemura, 1982, p.239). I also see it as a means of uncovering and sharing experience.

From my experience, the interview process becomes like a conversation; all parties have access to the questioning and the discussion. Narrative examines “personal and social history for narrative origins and embodied meaning” (Connelly and Clandinin, 1988, p.109). The focus is on experience. Through conversation, the researcher uncovers meaning, makes connections, asks questions, is questioned or shares similar experiences. The formalities (a traditional Q & A) of a structured dialogue are neglected. In doing so, the researcher’s hope is to reveal some of “the feelings, attitudes and values that give meaning to the activities and events” in a person’s narrative history (Anderson & Jack, 1991, p. 12). When the interview becomes a conversation, a researcher comes to know the significance of a particular facet of the participant’s life story. As teachers converse, the “participation in the interviews and the interpretive process [is] minded by our personal practical knowledge” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1994, p.13). Through the interview/conversation and the placing of stories alongside each other, the separation between researcher and participant fades.

Other Arts-Based Educational Research Textures of the Inquiry

Photographs and Collage work

I want my thesis to be a rich tapestry of my experiences and so, I choose to include personal photographs and also, collage work of my personal photographs

Memoirs of the immigrant experience: Voices of My Mother and My Father

Included in my thesis will be stories written by my mother and father. Their personal and mutual immigrant experiences shape and reshape the story of understanding my Canadian self.

Both these remarkable stories, I will tell and retell throughout my thesis. I would, however, like for their own words to be placed alongside my own. With their permission, I have been granted the opportunity to use excerpts from their self-written memoirs in my thesis.

As the thesis develops over time, I am sure that other arts-based influences will surface. For now, however, my methodology is complete and it demonstrates my current key methods of exploration. The following section takes these immediate methods and applies them to the chosen participants or co-researchers of my inquiry.

As I map out my **MID-AIR** negotiation of **self**(ves), I begin to connect my stories with the stories of those who travel with me.

Under Wing: The MID-AIR Researcher and his Participants

Since arts-based narrative inquiry is personal in design, then researchers and participants develop interpersonal relationships. Experiences are shared and they have resonance – or not. In research terms, connections of experience could be to theory, practice and self – or not. Like life, it is unpredictable. These shared moments, however, become the foundation of the interpersonal relationship between researcher and participant.

I understand the impact of story in an arts-based narrative research text. A researcher writes through experiences with the knowledge that reconstructing a person’s past provides only a glimpse of truth about that person’s life. The story is never fully told, but we are able to tell a story well if we do it artfully: “Nothing in this genre lasts unless it is done with art...There is no credit in living; the credit is in being able to specify experience” (Leibowitz, 1989, xviii). The writer must not isolate the participant in the retelling of their story; rather, the writer must connect the person with the problems and lives of others.

Prospective participants for my thesis include myself, my mother, my father, my brother and his wife, my maternal grandfather and my best friend who is also a teacher.

The following map outlines how these co-researchers will participate in the thesis.

MID-AIR PARTICIPANT MAP:
The Art of Critical Autoethnography

Autobiography & Critical Autoethnography

I am a Participant

Partly autobiographical, my thesis will travel through many layers of my **self**(ves). Friedman (1983) writes, “[the autobiographer] inevitably finds himself in the paradox of losing it as soon as he finds it.... He is engaged in creating unique meaning, he cannot have any sure ground on which to stand but must be exposed to the despair that comes when he doubts his own struggle or when existence itself seems to shift beneath him, making all his images and formulations invalid. The harder a person tries to fight his way through this ambiguity, the deeper his confusion must be if he is both honest and aware” (p.7-12). In light of this knowledge, I am prepared to travel inwardly within myself for my thesis work.

I will explore many of my selves in this thesis and will attempt to do so under the guise of an arts-based, *critical autoethnographer*. As I explore my selves, I must do so consciously and conscientiously aware of all experiences, both good and bad, found in my **MID-AIR** flight. Higgins and Wilson (2001) refer to this awareness as arriving “at the threshold of experience with baggage: expectations, fears and perhaps hostilities” (p.192).

I am writing through my lived experiences and placing these stories alongside the story of my culture to create a critical autoethnography of my Canadian self. I do so with the hopes of being honest to my audience and to myself. The following collage or shape poem represents areas of my **self**(ves) to be explored in my thesis.

Self

Canadian

I

What is myself(ves)

Academic

The effects of MID-AIR

Poet

My childhood

Performer

My adult life

Traveler

My Student Self

Researcher

My Teacher Self-

Pre/Post service teaching

Memoirs, Stories and Letter Exchanges

Mother & Father

My parents have individual and mutual stories of their immigration to Canada. These stories will be included, as I have written about them and my interpretations will be placed alongside their own written memoirs.

Brother and Sister-in-law

Through letter exchanges, I will include the story of my brother and his wife as they negotiate their interracial marriage. I will explore how their experience finds its way into my conceptual and re-conceptual vision of the Canadian identity.

My Grand*friend*father

As a child, I have vivid memories of my maternal grandfather when he came to stay with us for a few years. He was my only childhood friend and that experience will shape my current academic work. Even after his death, I still feel his friendship in my adult life

An Interview

In Conversation With... David Burns and Darryl Daniel Bautista

I will conduct an interview with David Burns³, a friend and teacher colleague, who has come to teaching differently than myself. We share a common experience, however, of teaching in Korea for one year. Although we traveled to Korea at different times, we taught for the same school and lived in the same area of Seoul.

³ David Burns chose not to use a pseudonym for this thesis proposal.

David is a Caucasian male whose cultural self-identity is Canadian. I am a Canadian male, of visible minority status. We both negotiated a Canadian teacher identity in a foreign country and the interview process will explore our stories.

I plan to talk with David at least three times over a one-month period. These conversations will be audiotaped and transcribed. The transcriptions will be included in the appendix of the thesis. Excerpts from the interview will be included in the thesis. I will keep the cassettes and the transcriptions under close surveillance. David will have access to the interview process including write-ups of the conversation and/or written reflections on the process. He will contribute to the verbal and written analysis of the interview. He will co-edit this section of the thesis.

From the conversations, I hope to investigate further dimensions of the term *Canadian identity*. My focus will be on ideas of representation in terms of a Canadian citizen and a Canadian teacher.

With Map in Hand...

With the stories of my **self**(ves) placed alongside the stories of these fellow travellers, my **MID-AIR** inquiry approaches its take-off position. Before this takes place, however, I offer the following section detailing the key terms of **MID-AIR**. I share how I understand these terms as they affect negotiations of my Canadian identity.

Mapping the Key Terms of MID-AIR

Numerous terms weave their way into this tapestry. These terms become the platform from which my metaphor takes flight.

Three Dimensions of Identity

Identity becomes a complexity shaped by the contexts of our lives. It is not a one-dimensional notion. Identity is laced with historical, cultural, and social influences and is further shaped by personal factors, including but not limited to, experience, time and memory. In this thesis proposal, I begin to puzzle through three layers and attempt to convey where my thoughts lie at this point in time. I know it will change because identity is an ever-changing principle of understanding the self and others.

Experience and Identity

Through our experiences, a notion of the self is created. Miller (1994) writes of the “surprise of a recognizable person” (p. 505) as the self who is constructed through language and other forms of social organization. This “recognizable person” is the product of history, culture, society and language. These contexts then shape the constructions and representations of *self* and *other*.

The following short story embodies my understanding of experience and its influence on my puzzling through my cultural self-identity. I wrote it within minutes of rereading this section of the proposal. From within this tale, I find traces of my current writing self. I hint at the

inner struggle that exists within me, namely the constant puzzling of identity, and how the experience of living in **MID-AIR** negotiates the conflict between self and other. I enclose the story in box form because it may or may not find its way into the thesis. For the time being, I place it here.

The Other

Like you, I was born into this world with aspects of my identity predefined by my gender, the colour of my skin, the place of my birth, the first language of my parents, the colour of my hair, –the list (the labels) is (are) endless.

As a child, you are somewhat naïve to these voices of prejudice but as you age and experience more of life, their echoes grow louder. Before you can say a word, they label and limit you. You hang your head as you meet the enemy known only as the “other.”

The “other” tries to keep you down, tries to lock you into the cell that is predetermined by factors, both physical and cultural that are beyond your control. This prison is your destiny.

And so you fight, you work towards freeing yourself from the “other”, and sometimes you win and sometimes, you do not.

The “other” is stronger, and so you retreat, you gather more weapons, you observe and you prepare for the war. You try everything. You blend into your surroundings searching out weaknesses of the “other.” They think you have come to their side and that you have accepted your prison.

You strategize. You read through their philosophy looking for mistakes, you pine for points of inconsistency. You educate yourself (you go to Graduate School). You train your mind, body and soul.

And you strike. A fatal wound opens and you withdraw your sword (your pen). You are victorious.

And as you lift the mask disguising your enemy, you step back in disbelief.

In the quiet of the moment, you see your own face, your own life, gasping for mercy.

(Bautista, June 2002)

Time and Identity

Identity is also temporal. The *self* over time represents experiences within the greater contexts of history, culture and society. Crites (1971, 1986) asserts that the notion of *I* is the recollector (present) in discussion of self (past) and further discussion of the future. Narrative constructs are constantly changing because the accents of life are constantly shifting. As the story of the *self* begins to weave its way into the tapestry of meaning, some parts of it become more important, “emerging from obscurity”, and others become less significant. Crites (1986, 161) sees *self* as an aesthetic construct; the more complete the narrative story, the more integrated the *self* becomes (p.161). Similarly, Kerby (1991) understands selfhood as “a degree of identity, of self identity over time” (p.4). For my work, the understanding of self and identity rely upon the flow of the personal narrative.

Memory and Identity

The notion of memory also influences my understanding of identity. From Zinsser (1987), the credibility of memory and the perception one has of a vivid moment of life are not definitive. An individual’s specific memory of a life event is recounted and re-experienced by the speaker, but others involved in the memory might have a different understanding of the experience. In my thesis to come, I must be aware of the memories I choose to share. When I write them down, they become my interpretations of my lived experiences. Reading my memories is like looking at paintings and so, I might see something differently than another participant in the memory.

As Zinsser (1987) writes, “one of the most powerful of writer’s tools, is one of the most unreliable” (p.12). Likewise, Schachter (1996) writes, “Our memories are the fragile but

powerful products of what we recall from the past, believe about the present and imagine about the future” (p.308). My memories are my *re-visions* of my past. They are slices of time as relived by me and I cannot write about them as the definitive way of knowing my past. I can, however, write about them as contributory to the current and future puzzle of my negotiation of cultural self-identity.

In summary, the contexts of our lives, the temporality of experience and the power of memory are vital parts of negotiating my identity. These aspects of identity construction take place in our personal lives, and in my thesis, I will continue to unravel their effects on my understanding of identity.

Between Identities: Cultural and Ethnic Identity Negotiations

Self-identity for those of diverse cultural backgrounds involves a search for spaces and places of belonging. Both heritage and mainstream culture greatly influence identity awareness of those who are living and trying to negotiate an ethnic identity.

Tse (1999) discusses the process of identity conceptualization for those who live more than one culture in their lifetime. She states: “Members of ethnic minorities (EMs) in the United States experience more than one culture when growing up and face the challenge of incorporating those diverse influences into their identity. EMs that are of different race from the dominant group (visible minorities) may face the additional challenge of stigmatized or subordinate status” (Fishman cited in Tse, 1999,121).

Tse’s discussion addresses this issue by sharing the stories of EMs living this negotiation of

self. Many of these stories resonate with my own lived story, specifically the frustration that arises when I am constantly trying “to fit in” and then realizing that I am not “fitting in” for reasons usually beyond my control.

This is an **ALEPH**⁴ moment. The term **ALEPH** has similar meaning to that of epiphany, a marker event, a turning point, a watershed moment, Eureka –“I found it”. Simply, it is a syncretical moment, an illumination, a manifestation, or a fractal. For me, it is a sudden change beneath my research wings or a re-direction in my **MID-AIR** flight path. In reading Tse, I felt an overwhelming sense of transformation take place and I began to place my lived experiences into her theoretical framework. When Tse’s participants wanted to take college courses about their ethnic culture, but soon discovered they had no place to begin, or when EMs spoke of the futility in searching out one’s cultural identity, I had flashbacks to my youth. Some participants mentioned travelling to their homeland and still discovering senses of not belonging. When I traveled to the Philippines, as an adult, all by myself, I felt a sense of displacement. In a crowd of people, of similar physicality, I felt alone.

In Tse’s participant stories, I saw my lived history being replayed. I began to wonder how many other stories were not being written or heard. I wondered how many of my own stories were being shelved.

In education landscapes, many children find themselves living *between* or *among* identities. Educators need to recognize that members of this group have their own struggles with identity. Ethnicity is not always a process of acculturation and assimilation. All stories, including those from individuals who are *living between identities*, need to be shared. We must

learn from all lived experiences as we develop a more mutually responsive set of cultural possibilities.

Negotiations of Whiteness

While in **MID-AIR**, I must also address the notions of *whiteness* in its different masks: Euroamerican⁵, the culture of power, or the dominant majority, whatever masks previously or currently worn, will be addressed in my thesis. For me to puzzle through my cultural identity means I must puzzle through the term *whiteness* because it, too, has shaped my identity.

Currently, it is my understanding that all of us belong to a culture and *whiteness* is no longer the measure or the marker against which to hold issues of ethnicity. Multiculturalism advocates **inclusiveness** and my outlook on this educational issue can be found in my work with Audrey Cahill⁶, M.Ed. Our collaborative writing of lived multiculturalism is based on notions of lived experience. Lived multiculturalism is the negotiation of the storied and cultured self. It is the knowledge that all humans come from a culture. We are all “coloured” and live in a world of other negotiators of identity. Audrey and I take narrative accounts of experience and place stories of difference along side other stories of difference to illuminate the inclusive intent of lived multiculturalism.

Lived multiculturalism is an ever-changing story. Stories have evolved and reflected backward and forward to create our research text. These stories are shaped alongside our participants’ stories. At times, our narratives connect on a very profound level, but at other times, we encounter moments of

⁴ (Borges, J.L. “The Aleph”. *A Personal Anthology*. New York: Grove Press. 1967.)

⁵ After reading Mullen (1999), the term **Euroamerican** from Nieto (1996) means “the cultural origins of most whites in North America who are not English in origin (“Anglo”), but rather European and ethnic. (150)

⁶ Audrey Cahill chose not to use a pseudonym for my thesis proposal

tension. The tensions that arise from this inquiry create significant learning experiences. This is our story.

(Bautista & Cahill, 1999, p.3)

Our work is an interpersonal co-construction.

But...

I must also revisit the past in my present researcher self to work towards the future of lived multiculturalism. And yet, my past carries heavy memories that are engraved with very vivid understandings of *whiteness*.

I offer my interpretation of whiteness through a letter I wrote to a colleague for an in-class co-presentation. It has been edited for space in this thesis proposal. In order to keep the letter intact on one page, I divided the page into two columns. I changed the colour of the text to represent my differing voices being spoken in the letter. The brown font represents the skin colour people see when I walk into a room. It is my voice. The white font on black background is the form I adopt as I transform myself into a white persona. It is my voice of *whiteness*, as I have come to understand it.

I remind the reader that this is my notion and I accept your support and/or doubts about what I have chosen to do in this letter. But...

Before you question my actions, I ask you this:

What colour have you lived?

Dear M,

I believe that when I put this original question of finding an inner voice, of locating “whiteness”, I truly did not fathom the difficulties of beginning such a letter. Letters, to me, are meaningful reflections shared from someone to someone in the hopes of familiarity and perhaps, to generate an exchange of some sort. Here in this letter, I hope to exchange with you a voice that is unfamiliar and yet familiar to my daily identity negotiations.

This voice that you are about to hear comes from Darryl, the multicultural educator. It is my voice as if I lived as a white person:

As I live as a white person, I see my life as simply just living. I mean that I do not question my ethnic identity. I assume that because I do not represent a visible minority then there is no need for me to do this. I do feel, however, that there is an unconscious guilt associated with being of Euroamerican status. Let me explain.

When I am in a social setting and the conversation turns to race, I feel cautious in what I can and cannot say. How do I enter a conversation without sounding racist? How do I ask a minority about their background without feeling as if I am being intrusive rather than just friendly? Why is it that a simple look of disdain from that person or from my peers around me makes me feel as if what I ask is purely insulting and that my sincerest intentions don't apply? How do I walk this path of political correctness without sounding out of date, insincere, prying, uneducated or superior? How does whiteness apply to our current social arena?

I have heard about my white privilege, too and it bewilders me. I never really thought about what things are automatically given to me because of my physicality. I have never thought about *what is being taken away from me or what I am being excluded from.*

I hardly ever get asked where I am from. I hardly ever walk into a room knowing that someone is staring at me trying to figure out my race. When people initially meet me, there is not that awkward moment of “Oh, he speaks without an accent”. There are no questions about my heritage and no cultural stereotypes that leave mental scars. I mean we live in a world of stereotypes, but I do not have to constantly battle with preconceived notions of my culture, and my heritage. I have never experienced racism nor heard stories of my parents being discriminated against because of their accents and their skin colour. I don't think whiteness relates to culture.

I don't have to validate my Canadian identity. I don't have to travel and constantly explain that Canada is diverse in its people. My Canadian self is accepted whether or not the inquirer knows if I was born in Canada or not.

There is a lot to puzzle through here and I wonder about your response.

I wonder what you will tell me.

I wonder how much of it I already know.

Darryl

(Bautista, In-class Presentation,
OISE/UT November 2001)

What is Culture?

Culture shapes the perception of its members. Culture means the system of symbols and meanings people use to organize their ideas, interpret their experiences, make decisions and ultimately, guide their actions.

(Andres & Andres, 1994, p.51)

Hall (1977) defines the term culture as an area of complexity. It is a multi-layered idea of understanding an individual's membership in a particular group and consequently, how the group's system of beliefs, traditions and functions affect and influence the individual. Cultures, then, are indicative of a way of life.

Cultures are extraordinarily complex...how does one go about learning the underlying structure of culture? ...Culture is humanity's medium; there is not one aspect of human life that is not touched and altered by culture. This means personality, how people express themselves (including shows of emotion)...as well as how economic and government systems are put together and function. It [culture] is frequently the most obvious and taken for granted and therefore the least studied aspects of culture that influence behaviour in the deepest and most subtle ways. (Hall, 1977,106).

If this is so, then issues of education are also affected by the complexity of culture. In classrooms of diversity, students live and learn according to their particular background, but they also function within the larger context of Canadian culture. The difficulty lies in locating and negotiating the similarities and the differences between the culture of heritage and the culture of dominance.

In multicultural settings, complexities of culture tend to multiply. If particular people function in certain ways, then what occurs when a number of cultures must operate and live within the same community?

In essence, culture is a quality of life that shapes and guides a large part of how people think and interact in their environment. A homogenous community, where culture is somewhat uniform, provides a place of shared lived experiences. In a multicultural setting, however, misunderstanding the culture of others is often at the heart of ignorance and prejudice. When we try to construct a Canadian identity of similarity, we overlook the significance of difference. We posit the differences as outside of the Canadian cultural definition. Diversity in Canada is the recognition both that we are all ethnically different, and that we are also connected. We must be mindful of the differences in cultural practices.

Identity and Multicultural Education

The central challenge for educators and other cultural workers...is to redefine the relationship between culture and politics in order to deepen and extend the basis for transformative and emancipatory practice. Central to such a struggle is rethinking and rewriting difference in relation to wider questions of membership, community and social responsibility.

(Giroux, 1996, 91-92)

In the past, the term multiculturalism was quite commonly used and demonstrated through tokenistic practices and celebratory events such as “pot luck” lunches. It has recently become a policy that can be implemented into and removed from the curriculum at will. It is a very complicated term that is not fully understood because it is open to many interpretations.

Multicultural discussions often use terms that are familiar and yet unfamiliar. The complexity of the issue creates senses of miscommunication. The language of multicultural education, if there is one, does not travel well from place to place.

I believe the terms, multiculturalism and multicultural education are complex and for different researchers, in different countries, on different teaching landscapes, the term takes on a multitude of understandings.

I am Canadian, but that label does not become my sole cultural marker. My parents are immigrants, but that, too, does not mean I am of one place. I am not *White*. I am labeled a visible minority, I am a teacher, a multicultural educator, and I have many other daily guises chosen by me and/or prescribed by others. My point is that I negotiate a multitude of influences when I think about my cultural identity and I approach multiculturalism the same way. I swirl in a multitude of constructions and do so aware of the fact that multicultural education is not tidy. It cannot be placed into nor taken out of a curriculum. It is ***lived*** by each and every individual in Canada.

The following reflection, taken from a presentation made with colleagues, summarizes the complexity of the term *multiculturalism* and where I envision diversity in education in future classroom practices.

The form of the reflection is art-based. It is designed in newspaper-like fashion because it “reports” the events of that particular day in my academic life. Written in three-columns with a headline, the article provides facts about multicultural education as witnessed by me on that particular day of Graduate School. The news story is my reflective editorial on the issue of multiculturalism.

MULTICULTURALISM: REWORKING THE CLASSROOM PRACTICE

Our presentation went well last week as we tried to suggest that multicultural education has many layers. Although it is a complex issue, we tried to explore, investigate and present the many areas of its definition. We tried to do so in a manner that allowed for the class and ourselves to interject whenever a concept was troubling, misleading or questionable. We began the presentation by allowing the class to consider multiculturalism in terms of their own understandings. We allowed for a twenty-minute group discussion. We felt before we could address our understandings, it would be best to frame the mindset of the class.

The three of us initiated our project through discussion and our own personal connections to this issue. It was a casual and yet, revealing way to begin to negotiate and discuss multicultural education. We wanted to create the same kind of feeling in the presentation environment and encouraged the class to see the presentation as more of a place to sit and chat with us.

As a group, we agreed that there is a need to revisit the issue of multicultural education in terms of

redefining its current position of a liberal almost myth-like policy, of tokenism and celebratory practice, to that of a more critical and questionable practice. There is a suggested "norm" by accepting it as a myth. It centers on notions of assimilation, or a reconstruction of identity to that of the culture of dominance, for those of diverse cultural backgrounds. We agreed that it is more than just simply a concept of equality. In fact, multiculturalism is a process that entails a great amount of deconstruction and reconstruction of ideals and participants. There is a lot more at stake in doing so, but multicultural education is integral to the make-up of a community in Canadian schools and that because our country advocates such a policy of diversity, both its effectiveness and ineffectiveness need to be monitored.

We stressed that multicultural education is transformative and that it is an on-going process of change, and the need for change. It needs to be reflective on itself and that there needs to be a willingness to discuss the issue by all parties involved.

It is not tidy. And why should it be? To frame multiculturalism as a policy of limited depth is quite overstated and quite bluntly, unacceptable. But, as reflected by current governmental strategies, we see it moving in this direction. So we ask, who is responsible for educating students on multicultural policies?

Our world is embedded in numerous social, political and historical constructions of identity, we recognize this, but how do we explore those lives that have to function within these frameworks of adhering to the culture of power. Where do we begin? What about identity as constructed by the person and not the theory? What role do teachers play?

Our discussion and presentation brought to light many of these puzzles and in doing so created even more questions. And yet, I believe that to be a pivotal connection to the dialogue of critical multicultural education.

(Bautista, March 1999)

From the news story (personal reflection), I write about trying to define multiculturalism, perhaps even re-define it for future Canadians. I also suggest that lived experiences are valid ways of understanding one's cultural self-identity. I will put these perspectives in motion in my current research work.

By exploring all influences on my identity construction, I begin to isolate my lived experiences as transformative moments of knowledge. I begin to puzzle through my **self**(ves). What happens to my history, my stories and my lineage when I write? How do I shape my Canadian identity in a multicultural setting? I will investigate the endogenous (ACTIVE) construction of identity as defined and shaped by my lived experiences.

Lived Experience

Every culture is and has always been ethnocentric, that is, it thinks its own solutions are superior and would be recognized as superior by any right-thinking, intelligent, logical human being.

(Andres & Andres, 1994, p.4)

In reading through my life texts, I begin to come to terms with my own endogenous (ACTIVE) cultural identity construction. In my thesis work, I acknowledge my culture of heritage, my Canadian identity, my minority status and the many layers of multiculturalism as they have contributed to my experiences. There are theories, but there is also the opportunity to explore, to define and to construct my own identity as I have lived it. It becomes the validation of my life experiences and my personal practical knowledge (Connelly and Clandinin, 1988) in the construction of my own multifaceted cultural self-identity.

The Personal Voice and Identity Construction

The root of my inquiry takes me to a memory tucked into a corner of my mind. This memory is the impetus, the “take-off” of my flight into **MID-AIR**.

As Kerby (1991) writes, “Questions of identity and self-understanding arise primarily in crisis situations and at certain turning points in our routine behaviour. Such events often call for self-appraisal” (p.7). At the time of this memory I was six. When I relived the memory for a graduate school course, I was twenty-six. The passage of time will never diminish the effects of this event on my life. I retell/relive the story each and everyday.

The Roots of Awareness

When I was little, I remember going grocery shopping with my father and my mother. We had walked to the local grocery store and had just finished paying for our food.

We were walking home and I was ahead of my parents holding one bag in my right hand. I was six. I was not really paying attention until I heard my father shout out. I turned and saw that he had stopped and so had my mother.

They were staring back at a group of kids. I ran to them and heard my father cursing in his language. The kids were shouting at my parents. I remember them saying, “Go back to China, you ugly chinks!” I remember my mother shouting back at them and I remember this clearly because my mother is not very confrontational unless she is angry. She spat on the ground in front of them and told them they were stupid and that they would never become anything.

I remember my mother grabbing me and telling me to keep walking.

I said nothing.

(Bautista, September 1998)

From this story, I recognize the implications and influences of *memory*. In terms of Kerby’s

(1991) crisis situation, this childhood memory of identity crisis, reoccurs in different forms throughout my life up to the present day. Throughout my thesis, I intend to allude to its effects on my identity conceptualization. In order to find a new voice, I must visit those times when my voice experienced silence. I must travel between both the external and internal forces of my **MID-AIR** flight.

EXTERNAL vs. INTERNAL:

The Dialectic of Exogenous and Endogenous Constructions of Identity

Personal experiences involved in identity construction are as complex as are its historical, social and political parts. Lived experiences offer other dimensions to my self-knowledge. In this sense, identity construction is not exclusively an exogenous concept. The negotiation of my identity includes the exploration of social, historical, political, and theoretical layers as well as my lived experiences.

When I began my journey to locate meaning in my cultural identity, I found texts written about a specific cultural group by researchers that are not born of nor have lineage to the particular group. This external identity construction sees cultural identity through a “looking glass” where writers posit their ideas in a commentary-like fashion. It is the presentation of a culture by an outsider’s viewpoint.

Palumbo-Liu (1994) discusses notions of the Asian American as defined and reinforced by “white hegemonic identifications”. He examples the “looking-glass” construction of identity mentioned earlier. Briefly, such researchers define Asian-Americans (Chinese, Japanese and

Korean Americans) as a stoic, apt and conformable people. This depiction of Asian culture is oversimplified and stereotypical. The complexity of culture, presented by “looking glass” researchers, reconstructs what they perceive to be true. In doing so, a perpetuation of cultural stereotype is propagated and reinforced and blanketed over all Asian-Americans.

With the majority of research texts written by exogenous researchers, constructions of identity occur outside of an individual’s making. How can I construct and explore cultural identity issues in a professional landscape, if as a person from the culture I am not contributing to these identity constructions? An answer, perhaps, lies in the question.

Endogenous or Internal Construction of Identity and Culture

On the other hand, Filipino anthropological researchers, Andres and Andres (1994) are of the culture being studied. They offer interesting concepts of Filipino culture that reflect part of my own culture of heritage. They write about key points of cultural identification inherent in the Filipino belief system such as the importance of child education in a Filipino household, and the role of Filipino parents and child-rearing practices. It was the first time I found a text on my culture of heritage written by Filipinos⁷.

After reading the text, many of my lived experiences connected to numerous passages. I began to weave moments of my past into a research study written by Filipinos. My notion of an endogenous construction of identity allows me to place exogenous (the looking-glass research) definitions of cultural identity alongside my own personal experience.

A second **ALEPH** moment arises as I come to see one side of my dual ethnicity take shape in written research form. By placing my lived experiences in the context of Filipino culture, I, therefore begin to see that parts of my Canadian self are deeply rooted in a land far away. I further realize that my parents are stems branching out from those cultural roots.

The following image places key quotes from Andres and Andres alongside sections from my personal stories that detail aspects of my childhood. This split text form represents my dual ethnicity. For my work, it becomes a form that informs both the reader and myself, of the negotiations taking place within my Canadian self.

In the left column of the image, I place references from the text as I see them resonate with my own life story. On the right, I share stories of my childhood that are thread-lined with themes of “living between” cultures.

The fonts are red and white signifying our country’s national flag. I know that I am Canadian and the banner I wave proudly is coloured red and white. However, as I negotiate my Canadian self, I live with the cultural traditions of the Philippines and so, within these coloured words I place the struggles of my dual ethnicity.

When my parents left their home country, Filipino cultural codes were packed with their belongings. As they lived in Canada, the customs were unpacked into the lives of their children. This knowledge now travels with me into **MID-AIR**.

⁷ I discovered the text in 1997 while I was living in Korea

Framing Culture in the Filipino Landscape

The Filipino cultural orientation reveals three main traits which highlight Filipino behaviour and decision-making...personalism, familism and particularism (or popularism)...personalism has to do with the degree of emphasis Filipinos give to interpersonal relations...a tinge of personal touch...problem-solving is effective if handled through good personal relations rather than group deliberation, debate and collegial reasoning...familism...gives emphasis on the welfare and interest of the family over the welfare and interest of the community. The family is the basis of group action...Within the neighborhood, it is the family, not the individual members, which decide on the resolution of important matters...particularistic tendencies. Each individual appears to strive hard to promote his own and his family's interest over the larger community interest. To be popular is the highest compliment a Filipino can receive from his [her] kinsmen [kinswomen], neighbours and acquaintances...(Andres & Andres, 1994, p.51, 52)

The Filipino child has a right to an education. The Revised Civil Code provides for an education "in keeping with their (the parents') means." Filipino parents go into all sorts of sacrifice to provide the highest educational opportunities for their children. The children are some kind of insurance for the future, and even when there is no need to contribute to the parents' support, the moral obligation to give financial help is still there. (Andres & Andres, 1994, p.45)

By Western standards, the Filipino parents can be considered overprotective and sometimes intrusive. However, if one understands this seemingly unreasonable control in the context of the Philippine culture wherein exists the belief in the primacy of the extended family over that of the individual and that the only source of emotional, economic and moral support is the family, one will be more tolerant of such actuations. (Andres & Andres, 1994, p.6)

Excerpts from **Passages: The Final Narrative** (Bautista, December 1998)

I am different. I acknowledge my differences as determinants of my strengths and convictions. In my family, I am different. I am very tall and very loud. I was trained to excel and to surpass and that is what I thought people did. I never knew what other choices I had. I only knew how to win.

My earliest memories of childhood now seem so distorted.

At night I would play with my toys in my room, creating wild stories and making sounds as I explored my text. I would always dread it when 10 o'clock would come, because that would be the time my mother would leave for work. I would beg her not to go.

When I started school, I excelled right away. I remember in Kindergarten when the teacher asked me to help kids count to 100. She would ask me to write out the alphabet and to read stories to the class. I would still play by myself. I just thought that's what every one was supposed to do. I didn't know.

I liked school because I was allowed to draw and create pictures. I was allowed to be creative and encouraged to pursue both passions of art and academics.

I thought you had to be competitive that life was about being focused and being ahead.

The older I got the more I studied. I remember my father waking me up at six in the morning so that I could spend an hour reviewing my homework making sure that it was perfect.

As I grew, my marks remained high and most teachers liked me. However, most students didn't. I never learned how to relate to other children so if they couldn't understand me and if I was an over-achiever then I just figured that was fine. I didn't miss what I had never had.

As a teenager, I fought to keep my marks up, and to keep myself involved in many things. I joined everything I could to show my parents that I was capable of doing it all. I wanted to be popular and cool. Well, I was popular, but still very lonely.

As a child, I understood life to be solely family and education oriented. According to Andres and Andres (1994), most of my conceptions and misconceptions can be attributed to inherent notions within my culture of heritage. From this knowledge, my third **ALEPH** moment arises. As I write the thesis, I have decided that all texts about Filipino culture, whether written by *others* (looking-glass researchers) or written by members of the culture, will find their way into my negotiation of identity. One is not more or less accurate than the other, but as I fly through the complexities of *cultural self-identity*, I must navigate through how I have come to understand my culture of heritage.

And so, where do I go from here?

I am a researcher/teacher taking an active stance on how I want my cultural self-identity to be defined. I travel through the dialectic of exogenous and endogenous identity construction and fly through **MID-AIR** with my **self**(ves) in tow. I write about my lived experiences, my cultural self-identity, my reconceptual vision of multiculturalism in the hopes of creating possibilities for teachers and students, to better interpersonal relationships within classrooms and for that matter, within society.

Yes...but this sounds overly ambitious. As I move towards the actual thesis writing, I intend to keep these lofty ambitions under a certain amount of control. If I soar too high, I might succumb to an *Icarian* urge and end up ruining my hopes for multiculturalism. The following section, beginning with a self-written poem entitled “Wings”, shares how I have often flown too close to the sun as a researcher/teacher.

WINGS

My wings, like yours,

Break.

I cannot fly at all times,

I cannot glide perfectly

And so, my flights of fancy,

End.

When my wings need repair,

My pen begins to write,

My words start to heal,

My voice medicates.

Relentless in renewal

My wings, like yours

Mend.

And I, like you,

Wind ride,

Again.

(Bautista February 2002)

Towards the Sun as a Researcher/Teacher

As I move through this understanding of my lived experiences, I must also be aware of how they shape and reshape my professional life both as a researcher and a teacher.

As a researcher, my intent is...

Cultural identity is rooted deep within the many political, cultural and historical realms. Identities are temporal, they are connected and so, to be able to locate and to unravel them in all of their social and political guises is challenging. On the other hand, to be able to reconstruct them in full awareness (having the right to be able to do so) is crucial to the difference between the puzzles of “How am I represented?” and “I want to be represented as...”

I hope to explore identity as transformative and not static because identity is linked to the past, present and to the future. I will gather possibilities to create a tapestry, a re-conceptualized multiculturalism, embracing both exogenous and endogenous constructions of identity.

As a teacher, my intent is...

I often present issues of multiculturalism to my students and facilitate discussions on issues of identity because I have lived and struggled through them. I share stories, my stories, and hope to hear their stories, their understandings of their cultural self.

I try, honestly. ***I try...*** the following reflection is an updraft in my **MID-AIR** flight...

In my teaching experiences, I have shared with my students of all colours. I do so, not to seek out pity or release, but more so to create empathy in my classroom. I want them to understand cultural differences and to respect others. I want to understand their concepts of identity, their lineage and their cultural mindset. I want them to be understood. To walk in their shoes because I have been walking the same path.

(Bautista and Cahill, 1999, p.10)

...and sometimes I fail... here is a story... caught in the downdraft...

Her Exact Words Were

It was the summer of 1999 and I remember writing through my Master's work with a fervour that made multiculturalism and identity construction the "be all" and "end all" of my graduate research. No other issue had greater value, at least at that particular time of my life.

But I was not just a researcher that summer. I was an English teacher. I worked at a Learning Center, from Monday to Thursday and taught three classes. One class, my older students, about 17 years of age, was super keen and showed interest when I talked about my work.

As the summer passed, I facilitated more and more cultural identity discussions.

One day, a student wrote a journal entry saying she never questioned her cultural identity until she met me. I couldn't believe it and so, I asked her to explain what she meant.

Her exact words were: "I don't know Mr. B, why is this important?"

Silence.

And then, "Because, it is!" "C'mon!"

In my reply, I broke my personal teacher vow. I promised myself never to use that coercive phrase in my classroom. Children, a person, that particular human being, we all ask questions to find clarity in life and in that moment, I silenced her right to question.

Regretfully, I shaped parts of her student identity and my own teacher identity.

The rest of the day, I wallowed in disbelief. Am I trying to do something beyond my scope of things? What the hell am I doing? I want to create awareness, but at what cost.

I am not sure if I am being critical in class discussions. I better be careful, no, mindful of those I want to reach the most through my work.

I must decide the way I want to handle my researcher/teacher self. I must remember that they co-exist within my life.

(Bautista, May 2002)

Story and Storytelling: The Experience of Teacher Identity

My teacher identity affects and is affected by my classroom experience. And so, I incorporate the idea of narrative storytelling as an integral instrument that helps to explore notions of self. Kerby (1991) writes "...narrative and narration give meaning to what we usually call the self...we know we are, in our lives, caught up in a story, already involved in a drama of some sort" (p.1 &7). These moments of lived history, of recounting past stories, and of identity negotiation are all involved in my teacher identity.

From a Deweyian point of view, experiences are neither isolated nor static moments in time, but they are reflections on one's past and they affect one's future. As Dewey (1938) writes "the principle of continuity of experience means that every experience both takes up something from those which have gone before and modifies in some way the quality of those which come after" (p.35). Experiences are also interactions between individuals and their environment. These Deweyian notions of continuity and interaction together form the foundation on which I understand the role of the teacher in the classroom.

Like identity itself, teacher identity is temporal, both active and passive in construction and is, ultimately, based in experience. It is always changing because classrooms, students and society continue to change; experience is life (Dewey, 1938). Teachers must develop an understanding of this shift and they must continue to reflect on their practice so as to accommodate these changes. They must do so with the awareness and acknowledgement of their own experience as part of the classroom framework.

Teacher stories and the stories of teachers shape teacher identity, which shapes and is shaped

by the self. As Connelly and Clandinin (1988) write, “storytelling is the process of reconstructing events in the past and is designed to be useful in understanding ourselves in the present” (p.34). I believe then that stories provide a vehicle of self-awareness.

Carter (1993) writes that stories are “a personification and a patterning of events around a theme or figure of significance to a particular culture” (p.6). These same stories consist of “events, characters and settings arranged in a temporal sequence implying both causality and significance...Story represents a way of knowing and thinking...Story is a distinctive mode of explanation characterized by an intrinsic multiplicity of meanings” (p.6). Furthermore, Carter writes, “through story, then, teachers transform knowledge of content into a form that plays itself out in the time and space of classrooms” (p.7).

These stories are not simply random thoughts. They become part of the education experience: “what students come to understand, believe, and practice as teachers is largely shaped both by the murmured stories they’ve heard over their years of experience as students in schools and as members of our culture” (Wilson & Ritchie, 1994,178). The significance in “stories and re-telling stories can allow teachers to resist and revise confining stories which others too often draft for us” (Wilson & Ritchie, 1994,177). The retelling of these stories contributes to an understanding of our teacher identity. Stories are developmental ways of understanding how we come to know our teacher practice.

My stories become a fundamental part of the multiplicity of my overall identity that includes my teacher identity. Identity construction moves through my contexts including the memories of my **self**(ves). Story serves to uncover meaning, to retrace these dimensions of

self and to place these experiences within curriculum planning and classroom practice. Teacher stories are the retelling of experiences that shape both the individual teacher and their teacher identity.

I try again...a belief that carries me in the updraft of **MID-AIR**...

Personal Philosophy of Teaching

My personal philosophy stems from a key word that tends to prevail in my writings. The word “understanding”, and all of its derivatives and synonyms, is key in my views on personal practical knowledge. Understanding our selves, our students, our teachings and the world around us is quite a tumultuous task. As teachers, I think we forget that we have not figured everything out. Either society or perhaps, our own thoughts have created this belief that we ought to know everything. It is a fallible belief because education is continuous. It does not end when we receive a teaching degree, nor does it end when we reach retirement. We feel that our classroom is where children learn and often, we fail to acknowledge what we, too, have learned. It is the knowledge of self in relation to all aspects of education that does not make things completely understood, but rather, it puts things into better focus.

(Bautista and Cahill, 1999, p.61, 62)

Numerous social, political, historical and personal experiences shape my life and revisiting them through the idea of story is key to a construction of my Canadian self that includes my teacher identity.

As Greene (1994) writes: “if I truly want to provoke others to break through the limits of the conventional and the taken-for-granted, I myself have to experience breaks with what has been established in my own life; I have to keep arousing myself to begin again” (p.3). I understand all of my experiences as contributing to my negotiations of identity. Through the notions of story and storytelling, I find a place to begin my exploration of my teacher identity.

Like teacher identity, our classrooms are shaped temporally. The classroom “cannot be treated as static totality. It is constantly lived, experienced, reordered by those who move through it... We must look at kids both historically and spatially” (Nespor, 1997, p.94). The teacher, the student, the classroom and the curriculum co-exist.

Also, if we are to build relationships in a classroom then we should do so, without prejudgment of a student’s ability or personality. Crowhurst (1994) writes, “liking and trust for the teacher are positive forces that can facilitate the learning process” (p.236). My story, “Her exact words were”, reminds me that my research intentions do not have to be accepted, understood or supported by my students. If I want them to think about these issues, I must trust their abilities. Their time will come as did mine and maybe it will not. I cannot force my researcher self on anyone.

In summary, my researcher/ teacher identity becomes part of the negotiation of my Canadian **self**(ves). My experiences and my stories of teaching will find their way into the tapestry of my thesis. When I write my stories, whether personal, professional or an intertextuality of the two, I attempt to make connections to my teacher identity. My teacher self along with my other selves co-exist in **MID-AIR**.

My Stories and Negotiations of My Teacher Identity

I am a new teacher (I received a B.Ed. in 1996) and my experiences collected over years in the classroom connect to my past, continue in the present and find themselves in my current and future practices. Knowles (1988) writes “...their [teachers} past profoundly affects their present actions” (p.703). My teacher identity extends beyond the years as a professional. It

is shaped by the contexts of my life, the temporality of my experiences and by the memories I interpret and choose to share. My graduate studies uncover and recover meaning from my experiences. According to Knowles (1988), “it is important to consider the impact of life experiences on the making of a professional” (p.710).

A vivid memory⁸ from my childhood shares an experience of awareness when I learned of my visible difference. I was walking home with my parents from grocery shopping and I witnessed my parents and me receiving racial slurs.

When I was in the teacher education program, I continually experienced negotiations of my cultural identity. At this time, I began to question the role of responsibility in terms of multicultural education.

Year II-1995

I have been asked by my host teacher to work through the discussion he had begun on multiculturalism. He told me that as a new teacher I was a model for students. He went on to say that many students do not see ethnic teachers in the classroom and it would be good for the kids to see that you are a smart and confident person.

I wonder about the idea of responsibility when we talk about multiculturalism. I wonder why I feel both sure and unsure about taking over this unit. My host teacher said that I should use a text if I wanted, but don't be limited by that resource. I told him that I would probably start off with a story. I thought that a personal account from my history would be a good beginning.

(Bautista, April 2001)

My thesis work continues to uncover these stories from my past and I work through their present meaning.

I have lived a life of difference. I am a different colour, but to say it, is almost like I am not sure if I am. You see, I don't see myself as coloured. I often don't react angrily to people's judgement. I know that I am coloured, but that is not a factor that I feel hinders me in any way. I am aware of its ramifications, but vow to use it as an asset and not something that labels me.

(Bautista and Cahill, 1999, p. 95)

All of my teaching stories and classroom experiences influence my teacher practice. According to O'Connell Rust (1994), "...the stories that these new teachers tell of their lives as student teachers and beginning teachers [are]...acts of meaning (Bruner, 1990) through which they are making sense of the work of teaching" (p.9). I know of my negotiations of identity across many landscapes, but it is in the classroom where I find the most critical of junctions. My students and I share stories of similarity and difference. Often, our stories and our experiences connect to each other.

When I speak of sharing stories and making connections, I speak of the term resonance (Frye, 1982). Experiences are shared through stories told by the self. These stories are temporal and they connect through metaphor "as a process of understanding" (Conle, 2000, p.202). Conle (2000) describes connecting stories as "narrative echoing." She writes, "...one story was an echoing response to a previous story; or certain parts in a story reflected, or echoed, parts of an earlier story...I began to see the relationship among my own experiential stories as resonance" (p. 202).

The following story has a connecting metaphor of a lone figure seeking membership to a larger group. There is a definite sense of familiarity to my other experiential stories.

⁸ See Educational Story entitled "The Roots of Awareness" on page 34

A Story of Who He Is (edited May 2002)

He is familiar. He was 8 and had no one, but he never reached out for help. It is something he continues to do. He often forgets that he needs help and is left voiceless. Childhood was no different. He never asked for help. Why didn't he? Times were different, perhaps.

It is inherent in his family to be self-sufficient and he believes that he has mastered the art of relying only on himself. His lineage conditioned him to not want others to help him. He had to be a strong son, an individual, and a person of hidden emotion. He had to be better than those that prejudged him by the color of his skin. This would have been fine, perhaps, if he wasn't starving for attention and dying to be with others.

He was an emotive kid who longed for acceptance, acknowledgement and approval. He was a little boy who had to suppress these desires and who had to find comfort when he was alone. This is a story of who he is.

(Bautista & Cahill, 1999, p.134)

My life is a constant negotiation of culture and identity and my experiential stories, along with the stories of my students, continue to shape my Canadian and my teacher identity. I am aware of identity theory and construction, but I believe that there is more to my teacher identity than just the classroom experience. Stories occur outside the classroom. Stories can also occur alongside other stories. The story of my teacher identity is ever changing and complex. It is a puzzle that shapes who I am and consequently, the classroom I belong to; it is a classroom of lived experiences.

Through stories and the retelling of stories, I have come to know what, why and how I am a teacher. By visiting experiences from the past, seeing them in the present and contemplating their effects on the future, I know that I change to meet the changes of my classroom. In my thesis work, I will recreate this knowledge for other negotiators of cultural self-identity.

A Researcher/Teacher Reconceptualizes Multicultural Education

The classroom as social space illustrates that a teacher functions on and within diverse landscapes of culture, society and identity. Therefore, teachers must be conscious of and conscientious about how to negotiate each individual student. Teachers must be able to facilitate learning with the awareness that in providing a curriculum a teacher must also provide for *inclusiveness* in their classrooms.

There is a tendency to assume that those of visible minority status are the “experts” in facilitating discussions on multicultural education. The assumption is that those of colour know more about the issue and that “whiteness” means not having to learn, question or puzzle through self-identity issues. There is an underlying notion that teaching diversity in schools is not the responsibility of everyone. We are all involved in the multicultural landscape. Multiculturalism should represent the richness of the Canadian mosaic. It should be a lived, a shared and a vital part of the Canadian classroom.

And so, as teachers and human beings, we learn from our experiences. “Insights from the analysis of ourselves, our classrooms or communities, and our world can result in more authentic teaching, learning and living” (Alter, 1993, p.4). Teacher education, social and cultural influence, negotiations of identity and theories of curriculum, all contribute to the way I have come to know my teacher practice. My stories and storytelling are connected to my classroom practice. Stories of the classroom create a tapestry of my “personal practical knowledge.” (Connelly and Clandinin, 1988,1994,1995,1996).

As an individual negotiating my Canadian identity, I believe that my experiences inform the curriculum in my classroom. However, I do not believe that I am solely responsible. In fact, identity negotiation, specifically related to issues of multiculturalism and multicultural education, is the responsibility of all involved in the education system. As teachers, educators, academics or curriculum planners, we should vie for all identities to be understood and accepted in our classrooms. As Canadians, we must work in similar fashion to re-fortify our country's policy of *inclusiveness* for all.

The Flight to Come

As I embark on my thesis journey, I take with me a simple vision. I explore ideas of multiculturalism by renewing its strengths, polishing its ambiguities and redefining its necessity to our everyday lives.

Multiculturalism is not simply a policy that can be placed into or removed from a society whether it is a school, a workplace or a community. It is an issue that needs to be addressed continually. Ethnic diversity within the population of Toronto changes continually and likewise, multiculturalism must do the same. We need to move beyond the theories and we need to see the lived experiences of culturally diverse individuals. We must meet the needs of all Canadians because all Canadians negotiate cultural self-identity. This transformation of multiculturalism through making denizens more culturally responsive is my hope.

The following shape poem is a list of reminders that I must pack with my belongings as I travel into **MID-AIR**. Presented in no particular order, these items are the thematic thread-lines of my final written thesis. The red font color represents the passion within my writer's soul to see this thesis journey through to the very end. The red and white (the font and the background on the page) are the colours of Canada and the words of the poem form the Maple Leaf, the national emblem found on our country's flag.

These reminders, a **MID-AIR** map of sorts, become the essence of my thesis to come.

CANADIAN REMINDERS

A

Canadian

defines **self**(ves).

A Canadian accepts the differences.

A Canadian has a voice.

A Canadian should be able to create a cultural self-identity based on lived experiences.

A Canadian citizen is subjected to both exogenous and endogenous factors of identity construction.

A Canadian, a self of many layers, places stories alongside the stories of other Canadians.

A Canadian self includes culture, but it is also a multiplicity of selves.

A Canadian re-visions multiculturalism continually to include all identities—all stories.

A Canadian never loses hope.

I am

just

one

Canadian.

I know that I will invest a great deal of my **self**(ves) into this thesis. I do believe, however, that I am not overly ambitious in my plight. I am quite aware of the writing that is to come and of the future I envision for myself. My flight is immediate and temporal.

And so, without risk, without the urge to leave the cliff, I will not soar to a place I have lived and experienced.

The moment has come.

I am not Icarus

Oracles echo
Swirling their gentle sounds
Captivating
Captive

Truth is spoken.
Without the abyss
The darkened journey
Spiraling
Helplessness
Downwards
Delusion of self
Seclusion of self

No direction left except heaven

With valued wings
To the sky
With tarnished hands
Soar and not soar

Towards the sun
Forget the shore
Urge, upwards, surge, higher
Above the clouds, beyond the stars
Behind the moon

Celestial being
Celestial bliss

Oracles echo
And I
I
Just fly

(Bautista January 2002)

The MID-AIR Timeline: Proposed Calendar of Thesis Research**May 2002**

- ◆ All course work completed (Comprehensive Examinations completed June 2001)
- ◆ Thesis Proposal draft copy
- ◆ Thesis Proposal Final Copy Approved by Supervisor
- ◆ Thesis Committee Members being considered

June/July 2002

- ◆ Expedited Ethical Review Procedures
 - ◆ Participant Letters
 - ◆ Application Procedures
- ◆ Thesis Committee Formed with Supervisor

July/August 2002

- ◆ Ethical Review Proceedings Continue
- ◆ Meetings with supervisor
- ◆ Professional Literature Research

September 2002

- ◆ Ethical Review Finalized
- ◆ Data Collection
- ◆ Begin GA position at OISE/UT

October 2002 to February 2003

- ◆ Data Collection
- ◆ Data Analysis and Interpretation
- ◆ Weekly Meetings with Supervisor
- ◆ Chapter Writing

March 2003

- ◆ Thesis and Chapter Editing
- ◆ Defense date considered
- ◆ Thesis binding

April 2003

- ◆ Defense date announced
- ◆ Preparation for dissertation date

May/June 2003

- ◆ Defense of Thesis
 - ◆ Graduation from OISE/UT
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