

Major Research Paper: Incorporating Spirituality into Post-Secondary Institutions' Policies and
Services as it relates to International Students

Melanie Zuzarte

Ryerson University

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Abstract

Some international students arrive in Canada with the assumption that academic institutions will treat them equally in comparison to domestic students. However, equal access to opportunities is not always the case. Unregulated annual tuition fees, immigration policies and a lack of culturally responsive services create challenges for international students that are not shared by domestic students (Chen, 2008; Mayuzumi et al., 2007; Montison, 2018). Canadian post-secondary institutions lack culturally responsive spiritual services that may support international students with their acculturation issues. Child and youth care practitioners may encourage the use of culturally responsive interventions which incorporate spirituality when providing support to international students in their acculturation to Canadian life.

Keywords: spirituality, attachment theory, attachment figure, religion, faith, international students, Child and Youth Care Practitioners, post-secondary institutions, Canada, Canadian Government.

Chapter One: Introduction

1.0 Introduction

A 2014 University of Guelph and York University joint study revealed that more than 328,000 international students were enrolled in Canadian universities in 2012 and have contributed \$3.5 billion CAD in tuition revenue to the country's economy (Montison, 2018; University of Guelph, 2014). The total number of international students is projected to reach 8 million by 2025 globally (Altbach, 2004; Chai, Krägeloh, Shepherd, & Billington, 2012). Tuition from international students offers a revenue stream that is not restricted in comparison to other sources of institutional income (McCartney & Metcalfe, 2018). The projected growth in international students and its revenue implications are important issues for research/policy. Some international students arrive in Canada with the assumption that academic institutions will treat them equally in comparison to domestic students. However, equal access to opportunities is not always the case. Unregulated annual tuition fees, immigration policies and a lack of services create challenges for international students that are not shared by domestic students (Chen, 2008;

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Mayuzumi et al., 2007; Montison, 2018). The Advisory Panel on Canada's International Education Strategy articulates that "International education is a key driver of Canada's future prosperity" (Advisory Panel on Canada's International Education Strategy, 2012, p.12). Policy makers can potentially gain from having a better comprehension of the implication of acculturative stress. In addition to the financial constraints, international students lack access to culturally responsive post-secondary services that can support them with their transitional stresses (Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance, 2012; Vigor, 2015). In the absence of family and caregivers, international students may use their cultural and spiritual practices to feel a sense of safety and comfort in their new communities and post-secondary institutions. Culturally responsive services may embody cultural and spiritual supports that international students may use as a form of secure attachment as they cope with their acculturative stress.

1.1 Research Problem

International students may bring their unique cultural and spiritual practices upon arrival to Canadian post-secondary institutions. International students' cultural and spiritual practices may be rooted in their attachment relationship with their parents or caregivers. As they cope with acculturation stress, international students may require similar secure attachment supports with a lens towards cultural and spiritual practices at their post-secondary institutions. Cultural and spiritual supports may be incorporated into culturally responsive post-secondary services. International students may not find culturally responsive services within their post-secondary institutions that can encourage their acculturation. For the purpose of this Major Research Paper (MRP), I will consider how culturally and spiritually responsive services in post-secondary

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institutions can provide a secure attachment to international students, which may support them in the reduction of their acculturative stress.

1.2 Purpose Of The Study

Due to COVID-19 prevention strategies during the 2020 pandemic, I was unable to conduct this study and engage in data collection and analysis. This research project may have contributed to the state of knowledge about post-secondary services and the experiences of international students, by demonstrating how child and youth care practitioners can fill in the gaps in how post-secondary institutions support international students. Child and youth care practitioners can propose cross-sectoral policies and practices in collaboration with different levels of government and post-secondary institutions that reflect the evolving and inclusive needs of international students. For the purpose of this MRP, I will consider how a narrative inquiry can be used as a method to unpack how culturally and spiritually responsive services may support a secure attachment between international students and their post-secondary institutions as a coping mechanism towards acculturative stress.

1.3 Significance Of The Study

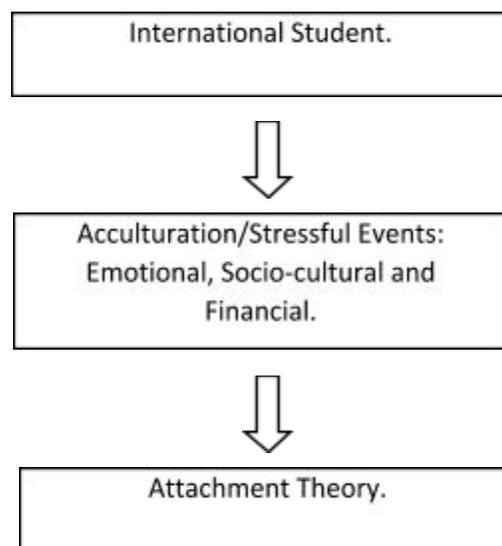
The MRP may inform child and youth care research and policy by documenting how post-secondary institutions can implement culturally responsive services, and can support international students who face acculturative stress. Child and youth care practitioners may typically work with international students in post-secondary institutions, for example at Kids Help Phone, Good 2 Talk or through counselling services on campus. They may be in a unique position to build relationships with this demographic. Child and youth care practitioners may

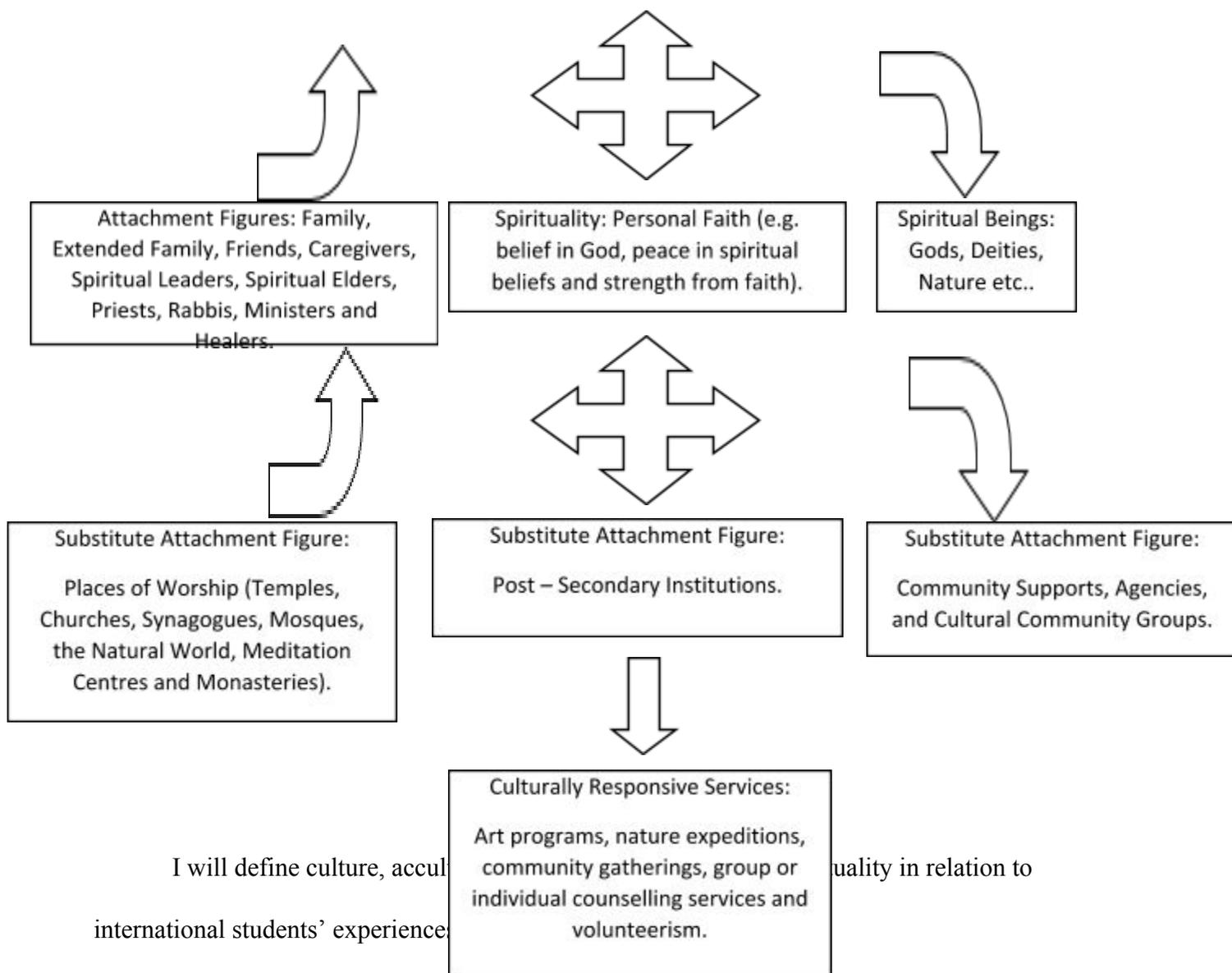
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utilize their frontline experience to capture international students' deeply personal narratives about their culture, spirituality, health and well-being. Child and youth care practitioners may contribute to child and youth care by informing academic and government policies and services on the importance of meeting international students' spiritual, secure attachment and acculturation needs. Child and youth care practitioners may use attachment theory to demonstrate how evidence through a narrative inquiry may support international students' acculturative stress within their new communities.

Chapter Two: Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

2.0 Conceptual Model





2.1 Culture

International students arrive in post-secondary institutions with cultures that may differ from that of their new communities. Kroeber & Kluckhohn (1952) define culture as humans' traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) behaviours, which are communicated through symbols, artefacts and explicit and implicit patterns (Jahoda, 2012). A more contemporary

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definition of culture is described as “*networks of knowledge* consisting of learned routines of thinking, feeling, and interacting with other people, as well as a corpus of substantive assertions and ideas about aspects of the world ...[it is shared] among a collection of interconnected individuals who are often demarcated by race, ethnicity, or nationality” (Hong, 2009, p. 4).

International students embody cultures whose values and belief systems are embedded within their family of origin, inherited intergenerational historical narratives, and always-changing spiritual, political and social institutional influences. International students’ cultures may be viewed as complex in comparison to Western norms, which can conflict with their adjustment to their new communities and post-secondary experiences.

2.2 Acculturation

Immigrants experience acculturative stress in their negotiation of cultural differences and discrimination challenges in relation to their cultural background or country of origin (Sirin, Ryce, Gupta, & Rogers-Sirin, 2013). Several studies articulate that minority youth face challenges in cultural identity development because of discrimination or competing cultural demands (Sirin, Ryce, Gupta, & Rogers-Sirin, 2013; Garcí’a Coll & Magnuson, 1997; Garcí’a Coll & Marks, 2009; LaFromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993; Sirin & Fine, 2008). Some international students are ill prepared for coping with acculturative issues as they acclimatize to life in Canada. Johnson, Seifen-Adkins, Sandhu, Arbles & Makin (2018) state that many international students face unique stressors related to acculturation, which includes the process of changing one’s values and behaviours, while learning and trying to fit into a cultural environment (Berry, 1997, 2008). A recent study revealed that international students reported

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more sociocultural adaptation difficulty than their domestic students in the areas of language barriers, cultural differences, the education system, and the physical environment (Güzel & Glazer, 2019). Hyun, Quinn, Madon, & Lustig, 2007; Yakunina & Weigold (2011) assert that international students are less likely than domestic students to use counseling services due to cultural stigmas or unawareness of services on campus (Güzel & Glazer, 2019). International students may face acculturative issues related to language barriers, different academic institutions, cultural and racial conflict, and emotional issues (Johnson et al., 2018, Smith & Khawajar, 2011). International students may come from well-resourced countries but may feel ill equipped to cope in a new foreign community without adequate information or preparation, which may result in acculturative stress (Jacob, 2001; Johnson et al., 2018). Symptoms of acculturative stress include mild to severe distress, homesickness, anxiety, loneliness and depression (Johnson et al., 2018). Family and peer supports that worked for international students in their home country may not exist in their new communities when coping with mental health and acculturative stress issues. Spiritual culturally responsive supports have the potential to provide international students with comfort in the absence of family and peers.

2.3 Attachment Theory

Attachment theory is a scientific theory that studies human beings and their cultural practices (Bosworth, 2015). In brief, attachment theory illustrates how infants form attachments to their caregivers and how these caregivers form reciprocal bonds with their young. Infants and

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young children form ideas about their caregivers or “attachment figures” based on their experience (Bosworth, 2015).

Further, attachment theory can be described as the bonds shared between parent and child as well as intimate partners (Kelley, 2009). A primary caregiver or attachment figure functions as a safe connection in times of stress (Kirkpatrick, 1998). When an attachment figure responds to the needs of an infant, a secure attachment is formed and, as a result, infants will expect the attachment figure to support them in the long term (Kelley, 2009). Infants’ responses to separations from their caregivers include secure attachment, avoidant attachment, anxious attachment and disorganized attachment. Secure attachments may encourage secure relationships later in life, whereas insecure attachments may encourage insecure relationships (Kelley, 2009). Some international students who are away from their families for the first time may struggle with the lack of parental support. Spirituality and cultural traditions has the potential to provide a familiar sense of comfort, safety, belonging, and love that can support them in their transition.

2.4 Spiritual Beings

Attachment and spirituality may work together in providing support to international students and their acculturation. Kirkpatrick (1990) suggests that attachment theory provides a psychological framework to understand the personal relationship one has with God, which in itself is at the core of monotheistic religions. Kirkpatrick (1990) articulates that a relationship with a transcendent deity, regardless of spirituality, resembles a similar love an infant has with their mother. Empirical research on how parent-child relationships influence religious development is sparse (Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1990). For the purpose of this MRP, I

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acknowledge international students who believe in monotheism, polytheism, and animism. I will use the term spiritual beings to be inclusive to all international students' beliefs.

2.5 Attachment Theory And Spirituality

Some international students can be susceptible to issues such as depression, isolation, anxiety, suicidal ideation, or self-harm as a result of their move to Canada (Anye, 2013). During this period of transition from adolescence into adulthood, international students may benefit from the positive effects that spirituality offers to their overall health (Anye, 2013). Solórzano and Yosso (2002) argue that spirituality takes the shape of a personal path which may further provide an inclusive and less formal way of trying to make sense of racism, social and political environments and cultural survival. Spirituality, in the form of prayers, the reading of spiritual material, and attending religious activities, can potentially encourage a stronger attachment to their community and a balanced lifestyle (Anye, 2013). There is a possibility that international students are already participating in similar activities in their countries of origin and would benefit from discovering where they can access similar supports in Canada, which are inclusive, less formal, and personal (Dalton, 2001).

2.6 Attachment Figure As A Metaphor

Bosworth (2015) defines an "attachment figure" as a metaphor for God or other deities, like "father," "warrior," or "shepherd," which provide attachment relationships. Kirkpatrick (1992) states that an individual's relationship with a God or deity parallels that of a close relationship with a loved one. Positive images of God or other deities provide securely attached individuals with a figurative representation of an attachment figure that is reliable and

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trustworthy, which makes those individuals feel loved and cared for (Kirkpatrick, 1992).

Anxiously attached individuals who require high levels of intimacy encounter a figurative representation of an attachment figure that can provide for a powerful engagement (Kirkpatrick, 1992). Avoidant attached individuals, with an aversion to interpersonal relationships, may avoid spirituality and religion altogether (Kirkpatrick, 1992).

Ainsworth (1985) discussed how “parent surrogates” can take the shape of relatives, teachers, or spiritual mentors in the absence of a parent (as cited in Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1990). Kirkpatrick & Shaver (1990) argued that, although a God or substitute attachment figure was not represented in Ainsworth’s (1985) research, a spiritual being may fit within their interpretation of a “parent surrogate.” Pickard and Nelson-Becker (2011) articulate that if youth feel a sense of attachment with their families, they may also have an attachment to God.

2.7 Implications Of Contemporary Attachment Theory Research

Recent research tends to focus on individuals’ perceived attachment history with their parents but not romantic relationships that are formed in adulthood (Granqvist, Mikulincer, Gewirtz, & Shaver, 2012). Mikulincer & Shaver (2007) stress the importance in researching interpersonal relationships that go beyond parental attachment (as cited in Granqvist, Mikulincer, Gewirtz, & Shaver, 2012). Another implication is that attachment and religious research tends to focus on Christianity in the Western world, and viewing God as a respite from everyday stress (Granqvist & Kirkpatrick, 2008). Granqvist, Mikulincer, Gewirtz, & Shaver (2012) encourage researching how attachment and religion connect to other faiths. International students may

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articulate, through a narrative inquiry, how they would like to see their post-secondary institution administer culturally responsive supports on campus.

Chapter Three: Literature Review

3.0 Who Are These International Students?

International students from collectivist cultures may use their spirituality to cope with acculturative stress in the absence of family and peers. Siu & Chang (2011) define collectivist culture as a culture that may turn to family, peer groups, spirituality or religion as support systems. Triandis (2001) states that international students from collectivist cultures, such as China, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Iceland, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia and Afghanistan, attend post-secondary institutions globally.

The Immigrant and Refugee Mental Health Project (2019) define a newcomer interchangeably with “immigrant and refugee” and refer to both groups as having been in Canada for less than five years. The term newcomer can counter the stigma associated to the terms “immigrant or refugee” (Sadiq, 2004).

3.0.0 Age

Decock, McCloy, Steffler, and Dicaire (2016) reveal that international students are older than domestic students overall, with more students in the 21–25 and 26–30 age categories for both Toronto colleges and the rest of Ontario. Toronto international students are also older than their international counterparts elsewhere in Ontario (Decock, McCloy, Steffler & Dicaire, 2016).

3.0.1 Gender

Decock, McCloy, Steffler, and Dicaire (2016) articulate that international students are more likely to be male than their domestic counterparts. Outside of Toronto, the gender pattern is the opposite for domestic students (Decock, McCloy, Steffler & Dicaire, 2016).

3.0.2 Language

Decock, McCloy, Steffler, and Dicaire (2016) reveal that 31.2% of international students in Ontario responded that English was their first language. The percentage point difference between international and domestic students in English as the first language is approximately the same.

3.0.3 Spirituality

Wu et al. (2015) state in 2010/2011 most international students came from Asian backgrounds such as China (21.8%), India (14.4%), South Korea (10.1%), and Taiwan (3.4%). Canadian or domestic students held 3.8% of the post-secondary population. These students' faiths include Christianity, Islam, Taoism, Buddhism and Hinduism. International students' spirituality may be rooted in an Eastern lens of practice, which maybe a predominant trend in Canada.

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Calder et al. (2016) articulate that international students choose overseas post-secondary institutions to attain a quality education and international academic experiences. A 2016-2017 Ontario International Post-Secondary Education Strategy (OIPES) reveals that international students came from Asia, Africa and the Middle East (Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development [MAESD], 2018).

3.1 Acculturation Stress Among International Students

The healthy immigrant effect is a phenomenon in which international students arrive in their new country healthier than domestic students, and then over time their health conditions deteriorate (Miller et al., 2016). Calder et al. (2016) state some of the challenges international students experience, include academic pressure, language barriers, cultural differences, financial stress, and issues with social coping. Additional stressors include time management, bullying, and learning how to manage a heavy course load, which amplify feelings of stress and anxiety (Shakya, 2010).

Tartakovsky (2009) states that a loss of a sense of self may impact international students' physical, psychological, and social adaptations to their post-secondary institutions' cultural norms or standards (as cited in Ukasoanya & Ukasoanya, 2014). Physical manifestations may include international students' avoiding participation in class or dropping out of classes entirely if they are unsatisfied with their grades or lack of social supports (Tartakovsky, 2009; Ukasoanya & Ukasoanya, 2014). Psychological manifestations may include international students' struggling with their sense of self and how to cope with their mental health (Tartakovsky, 2009). Finally, in terms of social adaptation, an international student's issues with their mental health

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may cause their peers to avoid them, which may further exacerbate their isolation in their community and on campus (Ukasoanya & Ukasoanya, 2014). Some international students may seek support from their families, peers and spirituality to make sense out of their reality.

Mosselson (2002) articulates that international students may try to compensate for their sense of loss by trying to gain acceptance from academic staff and peers through overachieving in their studies to demonstrate their worth (as cited in Ukasoanya & Ukasoanya, 2014). If they do not succeed in impressing academic staff and peers, it may increase their stress level and issues with their mental health. For example, an international student may feel disconnected from their professor when they receive a low grade on an assignment. The international student may try extra hard to change their professor's perception of them on the next assignment by over-achieving in their studies. This experience may be connected to an international student's attachment issues with their parents. Perhaps, if their parent views a poor grade standing with disappointment, an international student may feel that their professor feels the same (Ukasoanya & Ukasoanya, 2014). Further, this experience can make the international student feel like they are disappointing themselves, their post-secondary institution and their community.

As international students begin to confront physical, psychological and social adaptations, they may require culturally responsive services, as well as the knowledge of how to access these services at their post-secondary institutions.

3.2 International Students Access To Mental Health Services

Post-secondary institutions' mental health services focus on providing general supports that may not fit the needs of the whole student population. American post-secondary institutions

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embody a student population with diverse cultures, abilities, genders, learning styles, and spiritual philosophies (Chavez, 2007; Morey & Kitano and Rogers, 2007). International students with acculturation stress require culturally responsive services that encourage honesty, genuineness, trust, acceptance, warmth, and empathy between themselves and helping professionals (Vigor, 2015). The mental health services tend to be more supportive to domestic students rather than international students. Post-secondary institutions point international students to on-campus and career services for support, which may not meet their needs (Andrade, 2006; Arthur and Flynn, 2013; Kenyon, Frohard-Dourlent and Roth, 2012). Further, international students may not use post-secondary counselling services due to mental health stigma, service unawareness, and a lack of culturally appropriate services (Hwang, Bennett, & Beauchemin, 2014). Empirical studies have identified that international students experience barriers in receiving mental health services as a result of a personal perception of weakness and that a Western, white counsellor may not provide culturally responsive service (Popadiuk and Arthur, 2004; Vigor, 2015). Korhonen (2002) asserts that good multicultural counselling is sensitive to cultural differences and provides accessible services with a community focus (as cited in Robertson et al., 2015).

Some child and youth care practitioners may provide culturally responsive supports through the use of community gatherings and spiritual reflection with international students that are similar to experiences that they have shared with their families and peers. Certain child and youth care practitioners can work with post-secondary institutions to develop policies and services that support international students' academic inclusion amongst their peer group and relationships with academic staff. Some child and youth care practitioners may inquire as to how

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spirituality and attachment issues play a part in how international students relate to academic staff and their peers. Certain child and youth care practitioners can make sense of these moments with international students with reflexivity, so that they feel understood, valued, and accepted within their post-secondary community.

3.3 The Importance Of Spirituality In The Lives Of International Students

Studies suggest that spirituality can play a significant role in effective coping and provide a source of strength to students. A National Study of College Students' Search for Meaning and Purpose studied the role spirituality plays in students' lives while also identifying strategies that institutions may use to enhance students' spiritual development (Astin et al., 2011; Lau, 2015). The study found that about 66% of students admitted that their spirituality was a source of joy, and more than 66% agreed that their religious/spiritual beliefs provided them with strength, support and guidance (Astin et al., 2011; Lau, 2015, p.978). Prayer, spiritualistic behavior (e.g., praying, lighting lamps) and a belief in a higher power, such as God or another deity, may be used to minimize stress (Siu & Chang; 2011). Lau (2015) suggests that spirituality in higher education is essential to several university students' lives. Spiritual supports can encourage many international students to strengthen their sense of selves and life's purpose.

Religious minorities have long faced discrimination in American higher education (Wechsler, 1977), and Christian privilege is quite pervasive even on secular campuses (as cited in Clark et al., 2002; Seifert 2007; Small 2011; Bowman, 2012). Cross-cultural societies that provide nurturing child-rearing practices may also embrace supernatural deities (Kirkpatrick & Shaver, 1990). Montison (2018) proposes cross-cultural experiences with domestic students, so

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international students may incorporate their cultural backgrounds into university life, which can support them with language and adjustment issues (Andrade, 2006; Popadiuk & Arthur, 2004; Poteet & Gomez, 2015; Montison, 2018).

The Convention on the Rights of the Child articulates that spiritual development is a benefit to youth (Ogretici, 2018). Ogretici (2018) asserts that spirituality may be stitched into educational systems' community, ideology and helping professionals' roles. Some international students arrive in Canada with a strong spiritual identity, which they may use as a coping method towards resiliency (Quinn, 2008; Philip et al., 2019). Quinn (2018) argues that secular post-secondary institutions' administrators may consider what makes spiritual practices effective as a method of coping for international students. Quinn (2008) suggests visual and performing arts as coping methods which provide opportunities for self-expression, reflection and critique. Environmental activism and service-learning encourages the strengthening of one's sense of responsibility and interconnectedness (Quinn, 2008). Some international students can experience challenges such as depression, anxiety and isolation, and they may benefit from using their spirituality as a comfort in the absence of an attachment figure when dealing with acculturation issues.

Hsu, Kra"geloh, Shepherd, & Billington (2009) compared a sample of 218 domestic to 164 international university students in the New Zealand World Health Organization's Quality of Life inventory (Chai et al., 2012). Hsu et al. (2009) found that international students reported higher levels of spiritual, religious, and personal beliefs than domestic students. International students did not have significantly lower levels of psychological wellbeing and social relationship scores than domestic students; the literature commonly reports that international

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students experience a substantial amount of stress from acculturation (as cited in Chai et al., 2012). Hsu et al. (2009) argue that international students use their religion or spirituality as a coping mechanism to reduce the effects of acculturative stressors (as cited in Chai et al., 2012). However, Hsu et al. (2009) did not specifically inquire into coping styles in their sample, but made the assumption that, because international students had higher levels of religion or spirituality, they were also more likely than domestic students to use this as a coping resource (as cited in Chai et al., 2012). International students may benefit from making sense of their new communities and post-secondary experiences with the support of helping professionals who can be understanding of the use of spiritual development when coping with acculturative stress.

3.4 Culturally Responsive

Burns et al. (2019) build upon the definition of culture by defining “culturally responsive” as being sensitive to and respectful of cognitive and cultural variations. Burns et al. (2019) encourage culturally responsive practice to embody an assessment design that recognizes cultural variations in ways of behaving and socializing. Some individuals from collectivist cultures may use their verbal and nonverbal behaviour to distance themselves from acknowledging conflict or a difference in opinion (Triandis, 2001). Child and youth care practitioners can be culturally responsive to international students’ cultural diversity by providing them with the space to navigate next steps with autonomy. Individuals from collectivist cultures may explain the context when referring to individuals, while placing less emphasis on personal attributes (Triandis, 2001). Child and youth care practitioners can be culturally responsive to international students by acknowledging how they choose to interact with their community and learning environment. Some international students arrive in Canada

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with no friends or family; they are already at a disadvantage. Post-secondary institutions may encourage international students' culturally responsive programs by matching them with senior international student mentors for advice and support, offering group-based activities that relate to academic and cultural systems, and enhancing counselors' awareness of international students' needs (Johnson et al., 2018).

3.5 Social Construction Of Care In Child And Youth Care

For the purpose of this MRP, critical child and youth care focuses on child and youth care practitioners' awareness of the social issues and socioeconomic context (Bamber & Murphy, 1999) that influence international students' acculturation stress. When child and youth care practitioners embody an ethical, self-aware, responsive and accountable lens (White, 2007) with international students, they can potentially provide culturally responsive support that speaks to their needs.

Skott-Myhre (2004) states that the helping professions encourage forced assimilation that subscribes to a dominant Euro-Western paradigm (as cited in DeFinney, Dean, Loiselle, & Saraceno, 2011). Helping professionals utilize a social construction of care, which encourages individuals to "comply with the interests of the nation, the corporation, the family, or the agency" through the control of their bodies and minds (DeFinney, Dean, Loiselle, & Saraceno, 2011; Arieli, 1997; Skott-Myhre, 2004, p. 90). Child and youth care practitioners are often representatives of the white, heterosexual, physically abled and middle-class. Child and youth care practitioners' jobs are to bring together those who are "properly socialized" with those "who are not" (DeFinney, Dean, Loiselle, & Saraceno, 2011). Child and youth care practitioners often

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engage in their employer's mandates to fix those individuals "under the guise of moral goodness and helping" and colonial interventions (Saraceno, 2012, p. 256). Colonialism is embedded within child welfare, schools, the legal system and health care systems, which force assimilation into Euro-Western paradigms (Saraceno, 2012).

3.6 Critical Child And Youth Care Practice

Kouri (2015) recounts how the roots of child and youth care practice reside in residential programs, youth care and developmental psychology. Child and youth care practitioners provide support to youth and their families, using holistic therapeutic relationships, developmental systems and strengths-based theories (Anglin, 1999; Mattingly, Stuart, & VanderVen, 2010). Critical child and youth care focuses on the analysis of social issues, socioeconomic context and theoretical frameworks which may support youth from a lens of advocacy (Bamber & Murphy, 1999). Child and youth care practitioners may encourage the use of the critical child and youth care values of democracy, justice and equality into their practice with youth (Bamber & Murphy, 1999). If these values are ignored, it can be argued that child and youth care practitioners may perpetuate social harm when working with youth (Lavie-Ajayi, & Krumer-Nevo, 2013). Praxis is defined as an ethical, self-aware, responsive and accountable action (White, 2007). In other words, praxis involves knowing, doing and being, which can be expressed using specific historical, sociocultural, political and institutional narratives (Kouri, 2015). For example, child and youth care practitioners may be "knowing" with international students when they are self-aware of their history; child and youth care practitioners can be "doing" with international

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students when they are culturally responsive in their approach; and child and youth care practitioners may be “being” with international students when they are politically self-aware.

An assumption of critical child and youth care can be that all youth at risk face forms of marginalization, such as social isolation or racism, with limited supports (Lavie-Ajayi, & Krumer-Nevo, 2013; Sharland, 2006; Watts, Griffith, & Abdul-Adil, 1999). Praxis appears in child and youth care practitioners’ research and training language, but not in relation to how they may provide support to youth who may be struggling with issues as it relates to culture, heterosexism, racism and oppression in the milieu (Kouri, 2015). Generally, critical child and youth care implies a social justice and social change approach to youth work as oppose to enforcing individualization and criminalization onto youth at risk through the use of case-management, monitoring and discipline (Lavie-Ajayi, & Krumer-Nevo, 2013; Jeffs & Smith, 2002; Karabanow & Rains, 1997). For example, child and youth care practitioners, who may use a person-centred approach in their interventions with youth, may focus on the youth as the issue instead of considering the environmental context they inhabit (Lavie-Ajayi, & Krumer-Nevo, 2013; Durlak & Wells, 1997). Critical child and youth care encourages the use of professional resources to advocate for structural change and the use of populations to achieve their own liberation within society through the development of critical consciousness or sociopolitical development (Lavie-Ajayi, & Krumer-Nevo, 2013; Diemer & Hsieh, 2008).

Mander (2010) suggests that, in supporting the oppressed, we must seek them out and listen to their mental health needs while also demonstrating empathy, trust and respect. Critical child and youth care integrates praxis as not a singular moment between a child and youth care

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practitioner and international students, but as a process towards an anti-oppressive future (Bamber & Murphy, 1999).

3.7 Research Questions

Philip et al. (2019) articulate that there are no qualitatively designed studies to examine the relationship between international students' religion, spirituality and acculturative stress in the United States. Andrade & Evans (2009) reported that, despite the significance and benefit of spirituality, there is little empirical research examining its influence on international students' adjustment to U.S. higher education (as cited in Philip et al., 2019). New studies highlight the positive effect of spirituality with the youth population (Abdel-Khalek, 2009; Jansen, Motley, & Hovey, 2010; Merrill, Read, & LeCheminant, 2009; King, Carr & Boitor, 2011). A significant, transcendent event within those relationships may encourage a connection with a divine entity, a religious community or nature (King et al., 2011). Further, Reich (1998) explains these meaningful experiences as connecting with oneself and one's community (as cited in King et al., 2011). Some international students use spirituality and a substitute attachment figure to strengthen their sense of resiliency. A narrative inquiry has the potential to encourage an understanding of how international students use spirituality to cope with their acculturative stress. This MRP will ask international students to provide stories about their Canadian post-secondary experiences and how spirituality has helped or hindered their acculturation. These stories will then be re-storied by myself, a child and youth care practitioner, into a chronological narrative. I will combine views from the international student's life and my own

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life in a collaborative narrative as a result of the shared process to gain further insight into this topic (Creswell, 2014).

In order to understand international students' narratives, the following research questions will be asked, with a view to grasping how they use spirituality and a substitute attachment figure when coping with acculturative stress in post-secondary institutions:

1. How are international students coping with acculturative stress in Canadian post-secondary institutions?
2. What is the relationship between spirituality and a substitute attachment figure for international students as they cope with their acculturative stress in post-secondary institutions?
3. How can spirituality and a substitute attachment figure be used by international students to reduce their acculturative stress in Canadian post-secondary institutions?

Chapter Four: Methodology

4.0 Researcher's Positioning And Reflexivity

Reflexivity is an ideological position situating the researcher as non-exploitative and compassionate towards participants (Berger, 2015). When a researcher explores reflexivity, they address concerns regarding the negative effects of power in the researcher-participant relationships (Berger, 2015). Tension can be a result of existing values, beliefs, knowledge, and biases, which may ethically enhance the rigor of a study (Berger, 2015; Bradbury-Jones, 2007; Gemignani, 2011; Pillow, 2003). Some researchers are aware of their reflexivity; they demonstrate a mental and emotional stability in their positioning that allows for a stronger sense of trust and collaboration between participants. With that grounding in place, reflexivity can be useful in minimizing bias and creating a space for participants to share their experiences freely without the fear of being judged.

4.1 The Collaboration Between Researcher And Participant And Giving A Voice

Some participants may perceive that the researcher is advocating for them and may feel empowered to express themselves freely. For example, the participants may feel self-conscious about expressing how they feel to the researcher. When the participant expresses how they feel to the researcher, the researcher will show compassion for the participant's disclosure. The disclosure of the participant in the interview with the researcher will allow for the researcher to demonstrate their vulnerability as a result of being familiar with their reflexivity. Researchers can adapt their interview to allow for the participant to share their narratives freely (Gallagher &

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Gallagher, 2008; McGarry, 2015). Flexibility in the research strategy may be attributed to the researcher's reflexivity and an understanding of the fluidity of the research process (Gallagher & Gallagher, 2008; McGarry, 2015). When researchers are open to collaborating with participants, the research may yield results that have the potential to add to the literature on youth empowerment. When researchers are open to collaborating with participants, it allows for the participants to express how their narrative is impacting them the most. For example, participants may experience a welcoming invitation from the researcher to share their personal experiences when they normally feel silenced in their communities. Reflexivity strategies for researchers can include checking in with participants during the interview, peer reviewing with fellow professionals in the field, and keeping a diary for self-reflection (Berger, 2015).

A trend exists in narrative inquiry for 'giving voice' to participants (Gallagher & Gallagher, 2008; James, 2007; McGarry, 2015). The research reveals that youth provide an objective source of knowledge about themselves and their lives (Gallagher & Gallagher, 2008). If participants use their voices to participate in research with a researcher, there is a possibility they can address where the inequality is found in institutional structures that normally silence their contributions. If youth are able to express their views without the fear of adult researchers' interference, they may feel empowered that they have contributed their "voice" towards a possible change to address their needs (McGarry, 2015).

4.2 Self-Reflexive Collective Praxis In Child And Youth Care

Decolonizing praxis can challenge political and social normative values and practices. Child and youth care practitioners may use a decolonizing praxis through a social justice lens

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when they practice reflexivity. When child and youth care practitioners engage in reflexivity, they participate in self-reflection, which exists at the heart of responsible and ethical practice (Saraceno, 2012). Reflexivity praxis can be used to resist political and social normative practices that exist within colonial post-secondary institutions' policies and services (Saraceno, 2012). This process may be quite difficult, an open and reflective stance in order to make sense of how privilege exists in how we speak, move, take up space, and understand the assumptions that underpin our judgments (Saraceno, 2012).

4.3 The Researcher's Demonstration of Reflexivity

I have 15 years of narrative therapy experience counselling post-secondary students. As an able-bodied female who is Roman Catholic with South Asian and Portuguese ancestry, I have sought out therapy over the years to better understand myself in relation to how I work with youth. For example, I have used therapy sessions to unpack interactions with youth that involve racism and discrimination and how they connect with my own childhood experiences. I have used supervision to explore my moral code and as a result, how it supports me in maintaining professional boundaries and empathy with youth in my care. For example, I have debriefed counselling sessions with my supervisor, in which racialized youth have encountered oppression within their communities. I have used supervision to unpack how youths' mental, emotional and physical health is affected by these experiences and how they, in turn, affect me.

I will demonstrate reflexivity when I document the participants' experiences without interruption or judgment. I will also attend to the participant by providing them with ample space and time to tell their story. If the participant becomes upset during the interview, I will pause the

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interview to allow the participant to take some time. If the participant becomes emotional, I will ask if they need anything to help them feel safe. While attending to the participant, I will continue to gently check in with them. After a five-minute pause, I will ask the participant if they are interested in moving forward with the interview. If they choose not to move forward, the interview will conclude.

By understanding my own narratives with racism, spirituality and oppression, I am in a unique position to create a space of respect, openness and understanding with the participants. This positionality can affect the research process through the encouragement to share narratives as it relates to their culture, spirituality and acculturation stress that they may not have shared in the past.

4.4 Research Design And Methods

For this study, I will use a qualitatively designed narrative inquiry with a lens towards a transformative worldview. The interviews will yield spiritual narratives that may be used to demonstrate why culturally responsive supports are important to international students at post-secondary institutions (Creswell, 2008). Narrative inquiry is used in educational research to study how humans experience the world through stories (Connelly & Clandini, 1990). Narrative inquiry resides in the relationship of a researcher and participant(s) who may also become co-researchers as the relationship evolves (Connelly & Clandini, 1990). A narrative inquiry can lead to a deeper understanding of how international students manage their acculturative stress through the use of spirituality.

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The narrative inquiry will be cross-sectional and will comprise collaborative, in-depth, semi-structured interviews. The individual semi-structured interviews will be predetermined and the questions will be open-ended. The participants and I may collaborate and re-story as the research progresses, so that both voices feel heard and cared for (Connelly & Clandini, 1990). An interview guide will be provided to the participants ahead of the interview by email. I will hold debrief sessions with my supervisor as needed to minimize the impact of researcher bias on the analysis of the data (Philip et al., 2019). I will provide an opportunity for the participants to provide feedback on transcribed scripts. This will allow me to ensure that I have not missed any nuances or data that the participant felt was meaningful as it relates to their spirituality and acculturation. The data yielded from this narrative inquiry may inform us as to where international students can benefit from culturally responsive services on campus.

4.5 A Mini-Ethnographic Case Study

For the purpose of this paper in collaboration with a narrative inquiry, a mini-ethnographic case study approach will be used to explore international students' spirituality in relation to their acculturative stress in post-secondary institutions. White (2009) defines a mini-ethnography as a research method that researchers use to understand the cultural norms, values and roles as pertaining to what is remembered by participants (Fusch, Fusch, & Ness 2017). Storesund and McMurray (2009) state that the classic ethnographic study can take years to complete to allow the researcher to understand the participants' culture in order to yield data that benefits the research, whereas mini-ethnographies can be conducted within a week, a month, or up to a year (as cited in Fusch, Fusch, & Ness 2017). Fusch (2013) asserts that data collection is reached sooner during a mini-ethnography because the research is bounded in time and space

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by a case study design (Fusch, Fusch, & Ness 2017). Borg, Gall, and Gall (1993) explains an ethnographic case study as focusing on being able to express a much deeper meaning, as opposed to a surface one, to research findings with a few participants. In the development of ethnographic case studies, inferences are made from three sources: “1) from what people say; 2) from the way people act; and 3) from the artifacts people use (Spradley, 1979)” (Fairhurst & Good, 1991, p.16). Additional data that would be gleaned from the narrative inquiry will be derived from reflective journaling opportunities for the researcher and participants after the session to process their thoughts, the researcher’s observations of the participant during the interview, supervision debriefs between the researcher and their supervisor, debriefs between the researcher and their peer and dialogues between the researcher and service providers on post-secondary campuses and in the community.

Barbour (2010) describes ethnography as a qualitative research design aimed at exploring the cultural interactions and meanings in the lives of a group of people (as cited in Fusch, Fusch, & Ness 2017). Fields and Kafai (2009) asserts that ethnography involves learning the feelings, beliefs, and meanings of relationships between people as they interact within their culture or as they react to others in response to a changing phenomenon (as cited in Fusch, Fusch, & Ness 2017). Alternatively, a case study in research is seen as flexible and neither time-dependent nor constrained by method-based evidence (Heckathorn, 2011). As a result, case studies utilize different methods when making sense of the process and dynamics of change (Heckathorn, 2011). Case studies can signal a potential shift in the power base of who controls knowledge and the importance of co-constructing perceived reality through the relationships and joint understandings we create in the field (Heckathorn, 2011). Case studies also provide an

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opportunity for researchers to take a self-reflexive approach to understanding the data, the participants, and themselves (Heckathorn, 2011).

4.6 Semi-Structured Interview

An interview guide consisting of eight questions will be provided to the participants by email prior to the interview with the researcher. The questions will be related to the research questions and the tentative conceptual model (Given, 2008). Participants will be invited to answer questions about their spirituality, attachment figures, substitute attachment figures and acculturation issues. The questions will be open-ended, concrete and predetermined (Given, 2008). It is estimated that participants may take up to an hour to answer the questions and they will be encouraged to take their time. Every effort will be made by the researcher to clarify their responses to better understand their lived-experiences and the role that spirituality can play in services provided by post-secondary institutions.

4.7 Snowball Sampling

Snowball sampling starts with a random sample of people from a given population (Goodman, 2011). Snowball sampling/respondent-driven sampling in hard-to-reach populations starts with a “convenience sample” which is used to narrow the variation of participants and focus on their similarities (Goodman, 2011). Snowball sampling can be used by the researcher to be connected to additional participants that they may not necessarily have access to, or where some degree of trust is required to initiate contact (Thomson, 1997; Miller & Brewer, 2003). The anticipated sample size will be two to three participants. In terms of purposeful sampling strategies, the aim is to recruit racialized international students from collectivist cultures such as

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China, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Iceland, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia and Afghanistan. Religious groups such as Islam, Taoism, Buddhism, and Hinduism would be of interest to the research study. Various gender identities and programs of study would also be a benefit to the research. The research will be expanded by using snowball sampling. The researcher will ask the participants at the end of each interview if they know of any other potential participants towards recruitment for the study.

4.8 Sampling And Recruitment

International Student Support helps international students adjust to life in Canada and connect with fellow students, and provides support in achieving their personal and professional goals at Ryerson University. With permission, as a recruitment strategy, I will use posters and approach prospective participants at Ryerson University's International Student Support office, which is located in POD 50A, and Ryerson's English as an Additional Language (REAL) Institute. I will email the participants with a consent form and a letter of information that communicates the goals for the research interview, and the interview guide. I will also provide the participants with a list of counselling supports available at Ryerson University upon the conclusion of the interview.

The rationale for the sampling design will focus on international students and how they cope with acculturative stress. The posters will include the following questions: "Are you an international student? How do you cope with stress as you adjust to life in Canada? Do you use spirituality to cope with stress as you adjust to life in Canada? If you answer yes to any of these questions, I would like to talk to you." The poster will be printed on white paper with Times

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New Roman font, font size 12, and black ink. The poster will detail a Ryerson University email address that can be used to schedule interviews. The interviews will be organized to meet the participant's preferences. I will hold the interviews with participants at International Student Support or at the Student Learning Centre. Recruiting for participants at International Student Support may invite opportunities to connect with participants who are willing to speak openly about what supports them in coping with acculturative stress. Two or three participants are proposed to participate in interviews. Participants' demographic characteristics (e.g., visible minority status, age, country of origin, gender and ethnicity) will be collected.

4.9 Potential Limitations

A limitation that can be encountered as part of a case study between researcher and participant lies in the researcher's inferences, based on each interview session. The validity and subjectivity of the findings may be debriefed in supervision sessions with the researcher's MRP supervisor (Heckathorn, 2011). The researcher may use supervision sessions with their supervisor to unpack the trustworthiness of their inferences. The supervisor may challenge the researcher on assumptions made during the interviews with participants in relation to the participants' country or origin, spirituality, age and gender, which has the potential to affect the relationship between the researcher and participant and the findings of the study.

4.10 Data Collection

Narrative inquiry as a research methodology can be illustrated as

“Arguments for the development and use of narrative inquiry come out of a view of human experience in which humans, individually and socially, lead storied lives. People shape their daily lives by stories of who

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they and others are and as they interpret their past in terms of these stories...Narrative inquiry, the study of experience as story, then, is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience. Narrative inquiry as a methodology entails a view of the phenomena. To use narrative inquiry methodology is to adopt a particular view of experience as phenomena under study (Connelly and Clandinin 2006, 477)" (Lessard & Caine & Clandinin, 2015, p. 201).

In preparation for the narrative inquiry, I will ask permission from the participants to make notes by hand during the interview. I will also audio record the interviews. Research materials will be kept in my secure office on a password-protected computer. Writing by hand will encourage me to provide a relaxed space for the participants. All research participants will be asked the same questions to capture their point of view and to discover new data about their lived experiences (Wu et al., 2015). Each interview will last for approximately one hour and will be conducted in English. Handwritten notes will be kept in a notebook owned by myself. I will not share the findings with anyone except my supervisor. The notes will then be transcribed, along with reflection thoughts immediately after the interviews. Transcripts will be sent to the participants to verify if the data collected is correct. After the interviews are transcribed, original audio files will be deleted. Transcripts will be saved on a Ryerson Google Drive for a period of six years and then destroyed for the purpose of potential future research. The data will be saved into separate files such as "participants," "consent forms" and "transcripts," to protect the participant's confidentiality and anonymity on the Ryerson Google Drive.

Research queries that will be asked during the semi-structured interview with participants will include:

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1. I would appreciate hearing your experiences in regards to your immigration, post-secondary experiences and spirituality since being in Canada as an international student.
2. Tell me how you have been coping with your immigration in Canada.
3. What have your post-secondary acculturative experiences been like?
4. I wonder what types of stress you have encountered in your immigration and post-secondary experiences.
5. Tell me about how spirituality is helping you cope with your acculturative stress.
6. I wonder how spirituality has helped you in the absence of your family, extended family, peers, and spiritual leaders since being in Canada.
7. Tell me about whom and what services or programs you can lean on in your adjustment to post-secondary life in the present and into your future.
8. I wonder how your spirituality can support you in realizing those goals.

4.11 Analysis

I will create a ‘narrative sketch’ of the interview, which will include a broad description of the interview and the issues that the participants share during it (Connelly & Clandini, 1990). Once the interviews with the international students are complete, I will look for consistent themes, affects, and stressors when organizing the gleaned data. Some researchers have used a balance of abstraction and theory when curating the written narrative from participants from a broad to more specific perspectives (Connelly & Clandini, 1990). I will use an inductive mode of analysis, in which data from the participant’s responses is used to tell their unique story and open up a lens towards new possibilities (Connelly & Clandini, 1990). An inductive mode of analysis

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will open up possibilities for further discussion and discovery based on the participant's disclosures (Connelly & Clandini, 1990).

Madigan (2019) describes narrative therapy as a practice based on the idea that people make meaning in the world about who they are—and who they are in relation to others—through a dialogic relationship that is shaped by the prevailing cultural group. I will use Schafer's (1981) narrative therapy approach by focusing on the participant's narratives and how they connect with their acculturative stress through the use of spirituality (as cited in Connelly & Clandini, 1990). By doing so, I will reconstruct the participant's story from their point of view and the period of time in which their narrative occurred (Connelly & Clandini, 1990). Finally, I will ask the participant to reflect upon present and future considerations and how they envision a new narrative for themselves (Connelly & Clandini, 1990). Lastly, I will use observation as a final step in the narrative inquiry with participants (Connelly & Clandini, 1990). I will collaborate with international students in the gathering of data and their narratives during the interview process. I will send them a draft of their transcribed interviews by email for clarification and amendments a few days after our interview has concluded.

4.12 Ethical Issues

Due to the fact that I am a racialized woman and a practicing child and youth care practitioner, participants who are racialized may feel comfortable revealing information that may demonstrate risk. As I embody my own narratives in relation to culture and spirituality, I

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recognize at the outset that the disclosures of the participants come first. I will remind myself during the interview to make notes of thoughts or feelings that I encounter as a result of the participants' narratives to process with my MRP supervisor once the interview concludes. If the participants shares stories that demonstrate risk, I recognize that I have to report these disclosures as part of my child and youth care practitioner code of ethics. I am comfortable reporting risk disclosures to child protection and emergency services through my work with Kids Help Phone and Good 2 Talk. Finally, if I experience any counter transference due to participants risk disclosures, I will seek out counselling for myself from a therapist or debrief with my supervisor.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

5.0 Conclusion

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Ideally, child and youth care practitioners can consider reflecting on delivering mental health strategies in non-traditional spaces that may engage international students with their barriers to mental health care (Faghani-Hamadani et al., 2019). For example, child and youth care practitioners can meet with international students at coffee shops in neighbourhoods away from campus and provide meet up or Skype sessions online. Culturally responsive services that support international students respectfully encourage a substitute attachment relationship with fellow students, their community and post-secondary institutions in the absence of a caregiver. When child and youth care practitioners advocate for culturally responsive supports, they promote international students' well-being and academic success.

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