

To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Tera Shenae Bunch entitled “Impacts of American Student Teachers on Twelve Community Members in Broken Hill Australia: A Qualitative Study.” I have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science, with a major in Agricultural and Extension Education.

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Impacts of American Student Teachers on Twelve Community Members in a Rural New
South Wales Community Australia: A Qualitative Study

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Degree
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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the influences of American student teachers on a rural community in New South Wales, Australia. The study analyzed interviews with twelve participants of the American student teacher program in A Rural New South Wales community, Australia. Two researchers worked together to complete this study. Both researchers were student teachers with the New South Wales community for ten weeks and taught Agriculture in one the community's two high schools. After allowing one year to pass, researcher one returned to the community to interview twelve individuals involved with the program. The interviewed participants were questioned based on a predetermined protocol. The interviews were then transcribed, coded, and categorized into themes by researcher two. Using participatory action research and a modified grounded theory approach, the researchers were able to identify areas of influence suggested by the participants. The participants identified nine areas of influence within the school and community of the American student teachers: cultural awareness, stereotypes, language, classroom distractions, teaching methods awareness, cultural changes in community members, student performance, community unification, and impact of student teacher presence.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

General Introduction

In this age of globalization, greater attention has been placed on increasing individuals' understanding of international affairs. Within the realm of education, this trend is no different. According to Alfaro (2008), in recent years, it has become “increasingly clear that there is an awareness of the need for the globalization of teacher education programs . . . to prepare globally minded teachers for service in the United States” (p. 20). Likewise, Stachowski, Bodle, and Morrin (2008), noted an increase in the number of student teaching experiences that offer culturally unique settings and broaden the knowledge and understanding of other cultures and educational systems. Furthermore, Sandell (2007) noted that the number of study abroad programs by U.S. students has doubled in the past decade. Sandell also reported that in the 2003-2004 school year, the number of American students studying abroad had increased by 9.6% from the previous year, and in education the number increased by 4.1% over the previous year.

In response to the increase in global student teaching experiences, considerable research has been conducted to evaluate the benefits to student teachers. Benefits to the student teachers have included increased awareness of teaching, culture, and self (Clement, 2002). In a study conducted by Sandell (2007), over two-thirds of participating international student teachers reported their experiences abroad as having a significant impact on their professionalism, international perspectives, and personal development. Furthermore, at least 50% of the same participants reported having an

international student teaching experience significantly impacted their intellectual development.

While the impacts of international experiences on student teachers have been widely evaluated, the impacts of those student teachers on communities in which they reside have received less attention. Nevertheless, students, schools, and communities cannot be successfully separated. As stated by Wright and Smith (1998), “school, and community environments may support each other and be mutually beneficial” (p. 146). Therefore, it must be considered that student teachers in any community could make some impact on that particular community. In addition, consideration must be given to student teachers who may not only benefit from the international experience, but also impact the community in which they reside.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the impact of American student teachers on the rural community in New South Wales, Australia. The study examined influences made by American student teachers on students, parents, school administrators, and community members in a rural community in New South Wales. More specifically, the objectives of this study were:

1. To determine the benefits to the local school system by international student teachers;
2. To determine how the presence of international student teachers impacted the community they were involved with; and
3. To explain changes in perception that occurred in the community due to the presence of the international student teachers.

General Organization

The contents of this study are divided into five basic sections. The first section, or Chapter Two, offers a review of literature related to the psychology of human behavior, community interactions, and specific influenced behaviors. Chapter Three provides a replicable description of methods and procedures used to conduct the study. Next, Chapter Four is a compilation of responses from participants in the study. Chapter Five contains conclusions to the study, and Chapter Six contains a completed article to be submitted to the *Journal of Agricultural Education*.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The contents of this chapter include an overview of human behavior. Specifically included is the psychology behind human behavior in groups. This overview of human behaviors is followed by a description of the American and Australian educational systems. The technical education within each of these countries is also described. Finally, the specific influenced behaviors identified by study participants are addressed.

Psychology – General Overview

Psychology has been described as “the science of mental life” (Butler & McManus, 1998, p. 1). In other words, psychology is concerned with thoughts and feelings. According to Sternburg (2004), psychology studies the mental processes, or the ability to learn, reason, have emotion, and obtain motivation, behaviors and the manner in which the two relate. According to Carmichael (1957),

one of the major purposes of psychology is to examine some of the mental processes that all men have in common and the laws and generalizations which have been developed in an effort to understand both the ways in which men are similar and the ways in which they are unlike. (p. 3)

However, the thoughts and feelings of each individual are different. A problem is formed when two people understand a certain situation in different ways. As a result, a need for formal psychology arises. Since any science, including psychology, is “only as good as the *data* on which it is based” (Butler & McManus, 1998, p. 8), it becomes critical that methods be used which will allow psychologists to determine which understanding is most likely to be accurate. To this effect, psychologists attempt to separate what are the subjective views of individuals from the facts (Butler & McManus).

In order to obtain the facts, psychology requires the usage of indirect sources of information. Butler and McManus (1998), referred to the use of behaviors for the study of the human mind. They noted that to study the brain directly is usually not possible and may cause difficulty in the establishment of accountability of psychological findings. However, one must remember that psychology is not like other sciences in the fact that it can be directly observed. To the contrary, many psychological activities are indirectly observed and are multiply determined; the activity is the result of several influencing variables (Butler & McManus). Nevertheless, like other sciences, psychology attempts to “describe, understand, predict, and learn how to control or modify the processes that it studies” (Butler & McManus, p. 3). In accordance with other scientific disciplines, “psychologists observe behaviour, formulate an explanation or theory to account for the behaviour, and then conduct a test to see if their theory is correct” (Eysenck & Flanagan, 2000, p. 4). While psychology must heavily rely on indirect sources of information, “the attempt to explain why people behave in the way they do, and to support these explanations with objective evidence” (Eysenck & Flanagan, p. 5) remains the goal of psychology.

Butler and McManus (1998) noted seven acceptable methods used by those studying psychology to assist in the accurate collection of data (see Figure 1). As result of the numerous influences on psychological studies, psychologists are able to select a research method, or methods, which will obtain the most adequate information for that particular study (Butler & McManus).

Box 1.1 *The main methods used*

Laboratory experiments: a hypothesis derived from a theory is tested under controlled conditions which are intended to reduce bias in both the selection of subjects used and in the measurement of the variables being studied. Findings should be replicable but may not generalize to more real-life settings.

Field experiments: hypotheses are tested outside laboratories, in more natural conditions, but these experiments may be less well controlled, harder to replicate, or may not generalize to other settings.

Correlational methods: assessing the strength of the relationship between two or more variables, such as reading level and attention span. This is a method of data analysis, rather than data collection.

Observations of behaviour: the behavior in question must be clearly defined, and methods of observing it should be reliable. Observations must be truly representative of the behavior that is of interest.

Case studies: particularly useful as a source of ideas for future research, and for measuring the same behaviour repeatedly under different conditions.

Self-report and Questionnaire studies: these provide subjective data, based on self-knowledge (or introspection), and their reliability can be ensured through good test design and by standardizing the tests on large representative samples.

Interviews and surveys: also useful for collecting new ideas, and for sampling the responses of the population in which the psychologist is interested. (p.7)

Figure 1. Methods of Studying Psychology

The effects of having various methods for obtaining information display a variety of contexts through which psychology may be studied. Accordingly, psychology has been studied in the context of two sciences: natural and social. As a natural science, psychology outlines the laws of nature; as a social science, psychology analyzes thoughts, feelings, and behaviors (Sternburg, 2004). Carmichael (1957) explained that “scientific psychology deals with the interaction between a living organism and the world in which that organism lives” (p. 6).

Psychology, although a field of study with much history, was founded in disciplines of philosophy and physiology (Coleman, 1994). From philosophy,

psychology drew the concepts of exploring and understanding the nature of the world. Physiology contributed to the idea of studying objects through observation (Sternburg, 2004). Perhaps, Carmichael's two distinct techniques of psychology stemmed from this history. First, Carmichael (1957) described one technique as behaviorism or the observation of human beings. On the other hand, he determined that psychology could also be evaluated through reports of personal experiences. These basic ideologies have developed so today there are seven divisions of psychology: cognitive development, cognitive, humanistic, behavioral, psychodynamic, social, and biological (Jarvis, 2000).

Australian Community Psychology

Prior to the 1960s, community psychology was not recognized as an independent field of study (Gridley & Breen, 2007). However, throughout the 1960s and 1970s, several changes contributed to the formation of a formal study. During the 1970s, changes in legislature brought about the creation of a universal health insurance system, free tertiary education, national community health system, and no-fault divorce (Gridley & Breen). In addition, ideas of social responsibility, indigenous issues, and treatment of people with mental illnesses were also gaining attention. With free tertiary education came the extension of education beyond the prestigious colleges and universities (Gridley & Breen). This expansion of tertiary education allowed for the evaluation of a broader sector of society. It was also during this time that Americans in disagreement with the Vietnam War, decided to leave their homeland in pursuit of a new work environment. These migrants joined other North Americans to form a small group of community psychologist that would further explore community psychology. Finally, the events

previously mentioned caused an increased desire for a workforce of suitably trained, adaptive community psychologist (Gridley & Breen).

Gridley, Fisher, Thomas, and Bishop (2007), reported that Australian community psychology was established in 1970 as discussion concerning cultural pluralism, decolonization, and political realignment with the Asia-Pacific area began to emerge. However, it did not receive a formal birth date until 1983 when the Australian Psychological Society Board of Community Psychologist was formed. Through the years, this board adopted ideas that community psychology should be focused on people's strengths and resources instead of weaknesses. In addition, the board determined that the goal of community psychologist should be to break down social barriers, emphasize empowerment and collaboration, promote sharing skills and knowledge, and use qualitative and quantitative methods of research. Furthermore, the board also acknowledged that research was value-based (Gridley, Fisher, Thomas, & Bishop).

Social Psychology

In technical terms, social psychology is “the scientific study of those aspects of human behavior and experience that pertain to other people” (Marcuse, 1954, p. 182). Of course, by this explanation, one might think of all psychology as social psychology since all human behavior is affected by others. This, however, is not the case. Social psychology emphasizes related disciplines surrounding social psychology (MacLeod, 1954). McLeod first focused on general psychology. He stated that social psychology begins with the individual and focuses on basic mental functions. These findings are related to physical and biological sciences. The other extreme, sociology, begins with the

society. Structure, organization, and development of the group to which the individual belongs are viewed as most important. Social psychology combines these two disciplines and considers the individual within the society. However, it is important to distinguish that social psychology is different for each person based on customs, morals and values which influence individual developments (Marcuse).

Within the discipline of social psychology, there are four basic theories: group mind, motivation-oriented theory, learning-oriented theory, and social dynamic theory. Group mind cannot be simplified to individual minds but more importantly the culture of a group may define the laws of the group mentality (MacLeod, 1954). Motivation-oriented theory suggested that certain behaviors are products of instinct. Furthermore, sociality is an instinct of man and thus explains the significance of social life (MacLeod). Learning-oriented theory implies that social acts are not a result of instinct, but instead the result of surrounding influences. Thus, inherent actions are learned from the environment and may vary based on the individual's society (MacLeod). Social dynamic theory focuses on direct influences that can be seen in a social setting as opposed to the origins of influences (MacLeod).

Regardless of the guiding theory or research methodology, social psychology is concerned with and focuses on those actions that directly impact the behavior of people (Marcuse, 1954). With this in mind, one may assume that the actual presence of others is necessary in order for social psychology to occur. This is simply not the case (Marcuse). As previously stated, social psychology explains thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of individuals as they are affected due to the presence of other people. Implied presence occurs when physical presence is assumed. For example, this form of presence exists and

impacts the effort people apply to a job. However, actual presence occurs when a physical presence of others occurs (Sternburg, 1997). Nevertheless, the social psychology of an individual may be explored, even when the person is physically alone. Consider a politician rehearsing a speech in private. While no other person shares a physical space of this individual, the implied presence of others is dramatically influential on his or her behavior (Marcuse).

Implied presence may cause individuals to act in a manner they probably would not otherwise (Sternburg, 1997). Additionally, actual presence may lead to group polarization: exaggeration of the values of a group through interaction of the group (Sternburg, 2000). In either case, socialization begins to occur.

Socialization is the process whereby a person comes to behave with reference to other people as people, to apprehend himself directly or symbolically as a member of a group, to live in a world that is structured in terms of persons (MacLeod, 1954, p. 204).

Therefore, an individual begins to conform to the accepted norm of the group. “Social influence refers to the ways people alter the attitudes or behaviors of others, either directly or indirectly” (Lefron, 2001, p. 322). Likewise, stereotypical characteristics of the group may be imposed upon the individual. As result, the way in which the individual views self is influenced by the beliefs and influence of the group (MacLeod).

Several psychological groups exist and individuals may belong to any number of these groups at various times. Casual and temporary groups are those which may or may not know one another but share a common interest at a given time (MacLeod, 1954). Interest and action groups are composed of individuals who share a common concern of an issue and act together to bring about change (MacLeod). Involuntary or externally

exposed groups are distinctions society forces upon people (MacLeod). Even more arbitrary is the latent group which exists only as a psychological group and is the realization that others with similar interests exist in other physical areas (MacLeod). Finally, national group membership is imposed on people and influenced by a national label, national home, historical continuity, and national idea (MacLeod). Each of these concepts relates to the ability of individuals to belong to a national group; as result, member's actions are affected (MacLeod). For example, Hitler's ability to convey a strong historical continuity caused members of the German group to begin a war against Jewish people. Thus the significance of group impact is reinforced (MacLeod).

Individualism and Collectivism

Individualism is a term which focuses on each person as a separate entity. According to Uchelen (2000), individualism can be described as independence, autonomy, emotional detachment, and competitiveness. In other words, those accepting or living by the ideology of individualism, are generally more concerned with benefits to self rather than benefits to others. Husted and Allen (2008) suggested individualism can be thought of as loose ties between people. In other words, individualism is the term used to describe people occupying spaces in close proximity but sharing little or no association within these boundaries. Instead of making decisions that benefit the community, individuals focus on personal benefits. To this effect, each person considers achievement to be a personal interest and shows no importance to assisting group achievement.

On the other hand, collectivism turns its attention to benefitting all those involved. As the name suggests, collectivism combines the needs of each individual in a society.

Uchelen (2000) described collectivism as cooperation, emotional attachment, concern, and attentiveness. Likewise, Husted and Allen (2008) described collectivism as the connection between persons in a group or society. Individuals operating in a collectivist manner look to find the common good of the group, and those individuals are not as concerned with personal achievement as reaching a common goal.

While the terms individualism and collectivism seem to be mere opposites of one another, the combination of the two can be used to evaluate various aspects of human behavior. Forbes, Zhang, Doroszewicz, and Haas (2009) stated that commonly “individualism is associated with Western cultures and collectivism is associated with Eastern cultures” (p. 24). In addition, they discussed that in Eastern cultures harmonious societies and intrapersonal relationships are emphasized. On the other hand, Western cultures focus on the principle that an individual’s rights should be protected regardless of the consequence. Sarason (2000) defined psychology as “the detection, delineation, and understanding of how changes internal to people, as individuals or collectivists, transact with changes in external social-physical contexts” (p. 920) and emphasized the significance of individualism and collectivism to community change.

American and Australian Education

Between the USA and Australia, many comparisons and contrasts have been made. Within the realm of education, these comparisons and contrasts exist. Both of these systems have federal, state, and local laws. Furthermore, each of these educational systems has a technical education pathway. However, the methods by which they pursue education display a significant level of difference. Likewise, funding for each system is significantly different.

American Education

In the USA, educational responsibilities are divided between local, state, and federal governments. In 2008, 49.8 million students poured into 97,000 schools across America. These students ranged from pre-kindergarten to the 12th grade. During the 2008-2009 school year schools were divided into 14,200 school districts in 50 states, and the operation of schools accounted for approximately 519 billion dollars. This equates to an average expenditure of \$10,418 per student (National, n.d.).

There is also a private education sector that is largely supported by religious groups and private organizations. Private schools added an extra 6.2 million students across the nation. Therefore, students enrolled in private institutions may attend any of 35,000 private schools across the nation. On average, private schools will employ 0.5 million teachers where student/teacher ratios average 13:1 (National, n.d.).

In regards to post-secondary education, approximately 18.3 million students attended the nations two-year colleges and four-year universities. More specifically, approximately 6.5 million attended public two-year colleges, 7.2 million students attended public four-year universities, 4.3 million attended private four-year colleges, and 0.3 million attended private two-year colleges. The United States Department of Education also estimated that 714,000 associate degrees, 1,585,000 bachelor degrees, 647,000 master degrees, 91,000 first-professional degrees, and 55,800 doctoral degrees would be awarded in the 2008-09 school year (National, n.d.).

To assist students in completing education beyond the compulsory level, the U.S. government offers financial aid to eligible students. This funding is provided based on family income and need. The Federal Student Aid division of the U.S. Department of

Education oversees the applications of at least 14 million students each year. From these applicants, more than 80 million dollars is disturbed to students on a yearly basis.

Additionally, the U.S. Department of Education is responsible for assisting millions of students obtain student loans to help fund their post-secondary experience (Department of Education, n.d.a.).

Currently, the education in the U.S. operates under the Secondary and Elementary Education Act which re-authorized the No Child Left Behind Act (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). The No Child Left Behind Act provided four underlying principles: stronger accountability, more local freedom, proven methods, and choices for parents. Stronger accountability calls for an increase in the amount of testing required of students, and yearly progress of students is mandated by standardized tests. When students fail to perform at an increasing rate for simultaneous years, schools fall under strict supervision. The second principle, more local freedom, allows for increased control at the local school level and provides for funding of faith based programs. Third, proven methods, requires teachers to use teaching methods that have been researched and proven to work. Finally, choices for parents allows parents the freedom to move their students if their school is not performing at an adequate level (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.b.).

The inauguration of a new president in 2009 introduced a new movement in the Department of Education in the United States. Although No Child Left Behind remains the effective legislation, the new administration is beginning to place its focus on other avenues. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act will provide 44 billion dollars for states and schools (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.a.). This Act will attempt to provide funding to support and maintain jobs at threat due to the declining economic

situation in America. A first round of funding will provide 32.6 billion dollars that are intended to pay for state stabilization of educational systems. This will provide money to save jobs, and improve education at all levels. Furthermore, a second round of funds will provide 6 billion dollars to be placed in a Government Service Fund to provide for public safety and various other services. The final and third aspect of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act will allow states to apply for additional funding for areas that need improvement. For states that most eagerly pursue educational reform, an additional 5 billion dollars are available and will be awarded based upon the states ability to use the first round money efficiently (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.a.).

Australian Education

To understand the educational system of New South Wales, Australia, one must first look at the history of Australia. Campbell (2007) explained that prior to European settlement, education occurred on a daily basis, and elders passed knowledge of how to be one with nature and live in harmony to the younger generations. He further noted that elders would pass on their heritage through dance, poetry, music, and stories. As result, they passed on knowledge of land geography, land management, hunting, and trapping. These informal methods of education provided a means for life-skills to be passed from generation to generation (Campbell).

It wasn't until the late 1780s that formal education was introduced to the colony (Campbell, 2007). The early influences on education came from British and Irish settlers of the territory. These forms of education were undoubtedly considered to be of little significance to indigenous tribes. Nonetheless, in an area most likely established as a penitentiary colony, education was viewed as the method by which to break the cycle.

Thus, in 1788, Rev. Richard Johnson presented some form of education in Australia. However, his primary concern was not on educating citizens in regards to book knowledge, but instead he focused on moral citizenship and religion (Campbell).

Most importantly, education during this time was not managed by state governments. Instead, schooling occurred in homes, schools, or religious schools. As outlined by Campbell (2007), many poor parents opted to send their students to small group schools or home schools. These schools allowed parents the power to control when their children would attend the school. The teachers of these schools were usually local women who agreed to teach letters to students for a small price. On the other hand, religious schools often faced the problem of finding qualified teachers and obtaining appropriate materials.

Finally, in the 19th century, modern educational systems were established (Campbell, 2007). Additionally, teacher training and certification, school and teacher inspection, regulations, punishments, recruitment of teachers, grading of schools, and mandating of textbooks were instituted. Home and religious schools survived the 19th century, but with the increasing regulations, these schools fell under increasing criticism. According to Campbell, 1848 saw the establishment of a National Schools and a Denominational Schools Board. The National Schools Board set forth standards for developing national schools. The Denominational Schools Board attempted to organize church schools. Together, these boards provided structure for educational operations (Campbell).

The Australian colonies came together in 1901 to form a nation (Cathcart, 1993). The founding leaders recognized education as a significant part of the country's well

being. Campbell (2007) noted that the constitution writers left the power of education at the state level; however, interpretation could result in the influence of the federal government on educational policy. In other words, states originally made no provisions for a nationally operated education system. However, it did leave room for the influence of the government on educational policy.

Education is an integral part of the Australian society. More than one-in-three Australians are a student of some form, and educational institutions account for seven percent of the workforce (Marginson, 1993). Thus, education is valued as over six percent of the Gross Domestic Product for Australia. It also proves to be a leading factor in public policy and political debate. Education is expected to decrease unemployment and advance the economy. Overall, education is seen in Australia as being educational. Nevertheless, people's view of how education should operate differs greatly (Marginson).

Today, education in Australia operates under the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (Australian, n.d.b.). This department is primarily responsible for promoting consistency among the states and unity across the nation. As stated in the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for young Australians (2008), the State Ministers of Education

seek to achieve the highest possible level of collaboration with the government, Catholic and independent school sectors and across and between all levels of government. Australian Education Ministers also seek to achieve new levels of engagement with all stakeholders in the education of young Australians (p. 4).

Furthermore, this department is responsible for the passage of federal mandates in relation to education. For example, this year a new initiative entitled Building the Education Revolution was launched in an attempt to ensure that all Australian schools are

adequately equipped (Australian, n.d.a.). This program will provide 14.7 billion dollars over the next three years to “provide infrastructure funding so each of Australia’s 9,540 schools can meet the needs of the 21st century students and teachers” (Australian, n.d.a.).

Despite efforts to unify the education Australian students receive, there remains a significant difference between states in regards to their educational systems. In 1991, 90% of funding for education came from state and territory funds (Marginson, 1993). As a result, each state is individually responsible for the educational system in that state. For instance, compulsory education in New South Wales begins at age six and continues through age 15. However, in Tasmania the age extends to age 16 (Marginson). For the purpose of this paper, we are only going to look at education in New South Wales, Australia.

Tennessee and New South Wales Education

Within the boundaries of each of the countries mentioned, educational reformation is occurring at the national level. However, both of these educational systems rely heavily on the local level for educational decisions. In the United States, public education is directly affected by the State Department of Education. Likewise, each state in Australia is also responsible for many educational decisions. Among these local educational entities, a great emphasis is placed on the existence of a career-based learning curriculum.

Tennessee Education

According to the U.S. Department of Education (n.d.c.), Tennessee is home to 136 school districts and 1,710 schools. 68.4% of these schools are listed as a Title I school. Title I is a program which attempts to improve the academic achievement of

disadvantaged students (U.S. Department of Education). In Tennessee, there are 978,368 students enrolled, and 47.7% of students participate in the free/reduced lunch program. In addition, Title I is designed to provide assistance for reduced or free lunches to students of families who are economically disadvantaged. According to the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, the median average household income for the state of Tennessee from 2006-2008 was 41,978 dollars. This total is well below the national average of 51,233 dollars for the same time period. The same report showed that the poverty rate in Tennessee was 15 percent. This rate is above the national rate of 13.2 percent. These number reinforce the situations that impact a significant portion of Tennessee students.

Despite these setbacks, the Tennessee Department of Education has developed a plan to improve the education of students. This plan is known as the Tennessee Diploma Project. The Diploma Project intends to better prepare students for the workforce and/or college, increase the number of credits required to graduate, and administer exams to test the readiness of students to enter college or the workforce. There will be three tests administered throughout the program. Those tests include Explore, administered in the 8th grade; PLAN, administered in the 10th grade; and the ACT, administered to 11th grade students (Department of Education, n.d.c.).

Within the Tennessee Department of Education, Career and Technical Education (CTE) believes in “preparing today’s students for tomorrow’s opportunities” (Department of Education, n.d.b.). CTE provides career and technical training to students at the secondary level in the areas of agriculture, business technology, contextual academics, family and consumer sciences, health science, marketing, technology engineering, and

trade and industry. Each of these programs is designed to provide secondary students with pre-service experience in the given area of concentration (Department of Education, n.d.b.). These classrooms are often equipped with simulation labs or work closely with members of the community to establish learning experiences for students.

New South Wales Education

New South Wales was the first of the Australian territories to be established as a state and is home to the commonwealth's capital, Sydney (Cathcart, 1993). With a budget of 11.8 billion dollars, the New South Wales Government Department of Education and Training, also known as NSW DET, is the largest single organization in Australia (New South Wales Government Department of Education and Training, n.d.a.). Approximately 70% of all school aged children in New South Wales attend one of 2,200 school locations managed by the NSW DET. From pre-school to college and specialist schools, around 750,000 students attend NSW government schools (New South Wales Government Department of Education and Training, n.d.a.). Thus, the department has a significant role in education for the future of Australia.

According to the department's website, the educational system of New South Wales provides education for students from pre-school to Year 12 who are internationally competitive and of high quality (Australian, n.d.a.). The total number of students in this system is around 741,000, and they are taught by "over 50,000 full time teachers in more than 2,200 NSW Government schools – including pre-schools, primary schools, central schools, high schools, colleges and specialist schools" (Australian, n.d.a.). The department also boasts that it prepares its students for the work force as it "promotes lifelong learning, and aims to provide students with a smooth transition from school to

work or further study, and from post-compulsory education and training to work or further study” (Australian, n.d.a.).

Looking away from traditional education, New South Wales is also Australia’s largest technical and future education provider and one of the largest technical education providers in the world. Also known as TAFE NSW, this organization functions under the command of a TAFE Commission Board. This board is responsible for policies, planning, operations, management, commercial activities, and cross-sector issues. Acting as a whole, the TAFE Commission Board reviews the previously stated activities and reports to the Minister of Education.

According to the New South Wales Government Department of Education and Training website, the TAFE NSW organization has more than 500,000 enrollments per year, over 10,000 permanent teachers, ten TAFE NSW institutes and over 130 campuses. Combined, these campuses offer over 1,200 areas of concentration that are recognized by employers. The website also explained that these courses allow students to continue their schooling on a full-time, part-time or short course basis. Furthermore, TAFE NSW has designed its courses to be offered in methods which best suit the needs of employers and students. Students can attend land campuses or participate in online training. Furthermore, the Australian Qualifications Framework accredits most of the concentrations provided by TAFE NSW (New South Wales Government Department of Education and Training, n.d.b.).

The importance of qualified teachers is exemplified in the NSW DET. They are on the forefront of requiring teachers to be accredited through the Institute of Teachers. Likewise, they require that all teachers be continuously involved in professional

development (New South Wales Government Department of Education and Training, n.d.a.). In June 2008, there were 96,363 full-time equivalent employees in the Department. These appointments can be roughly divided as 50,000 permanent school teachers, 10,700 TAFE teachers, 16,700 school support staff, and 3,900 TAFE support staff (New South Wales Government Department of Education and Training, 2009).

In relation to staffing, the NSW DET established a class size reduction program. Between 2003 and 2007, a total of over 710 million dollars were invested in the class size reduction program. Nevertheless, more than 1,800 teachers were provided for more than 650 classrooms throughout NSW. As result, the average classroom sizes were reduced to 20 Kindergarten students per classroom, 22 Year 1 students per classroom, and 24 Year 2 students per classroom (New South Wales Public Schools, 2009).

Aspects of Teaching in Educational System

Cultural Awareness

Cultural awareness is a term that often arises when people discuss the interactions of multiple cultures in the same setting. The significance and need of cultural awareness within the confines of education has been widely discussed. Specifically, the need for increased cultural awareness, as global markets expand, has been acknowledged. “As people become more interconnected, students need to gain familiarity with the world around them” (Carano & Berson, 2007, p. 65).

Homan (1999) outlined several needs of cultural awareness between groups, and emphasized the importance of acknowledging cultural differences among groups. In addition, Homan noted that in order to successfully work together, individuals must have a basic understanding of other’s values and opinions. Furthermore, he expressed that

failure to recognize the difference of others could yield consequences. Specifically, the possibility of offending others when not showing respect to cultural traditions could hinder people by not recognizing strengths of various cultures. Additionally, Milner (2007) acknowledged that people define normal by common characteristics of their own culture. As result, those who do not fit the norm are often looked upon in a pessimistic view. Likewise, Cashdan (2001) proclaimed people “develop strong loyalties to their own ethnic group and discriminate against outsiders” (p. 760).

Within the realm of education, cultural awareness is needed. Merryfield (2004) explained that cultural learning assists students in understanding the activities and thoughts of other people. Additionally, Merryfield stated that cultural learning of student develops lifelong skills for cooperating with individuals who hold a different set of values and beliefs. Ford and Whiting (2007) explained “the culturally competent individual or organization seeks to develop new educational models and approaches based on culture....Attitudes, policies, and practices are three major areas where development must occur if an individual or organization is to move towards cultural competence” (p. 54). They later outlined five characteristics culturally competent students possess:

1. Culturally knowledgeable students are well grounded in the cultural heritage and traditions of their community....
2. Culturally knowledgeable students are able to build on the knowledge and skills of the local community as a foundation from which to achieve personal and academic success throughout life....
3. Culturally knowledgeable students are able to actively participate in various cultural environments....
4. Culturally knowledgeable students are able to engage effectively in learning activities that are based on traditional ways of knowing and learning....

5. Culturally knowledgeable students demonstrate an awareness and appreciation of the relationships and processes of interaction of all elements in the world around them. (p.54-55)

Stereotypes

According to social psychology, “part of the process of socialization is the acquisition of membership in social groups” (MacLeod, 1954, p.210). Furthermore, “a stereotype is a summary impression of a group of people in which a person believes that all members of that group share a common trait or traits” (Tavris & Wade, 2001, p. 423). From these stereotypes, the assumed characteristics of the group are assigned to its members. Thus, the individual may assume all or most of the beliefs about that particular group or stereotype (MacLeod, 1954, p. 211).

When people assume all stereotypes to be true, they miss the importance of individuality between group members. Stereotypes may be able to reflect the truth, but they may also distort reality. Three significant distortions exist in the usage of stereotypes:

1. *Stereotypes accentuate differences between groups.* They emphasize the ways in which groups are different and overlook the common features. So the stereotyped group may seem odd, unfamiliar, or dangerous –“not like us.”
2. *Stereotypes produce selective perception.* People tend to see only the evidence that fits the stereotype and reject any perceptions that do not fit.
3. *Stereotypes underestimate differences within groups.* People realize that their own groups are made up of all kinds of individuals: Fred is stingy, Fatima is generous. But stereotypes create the impression that all members of other groups are the same: One rude French waiter means that all French people are rude; one Greek thief means that all Greeks are thieves. If someone in their own group is rude or steals, however, most people draw no such conclusions. (Tavris & Wade, 2001, p. 424)

While the previously stated distortions generally contribute to prejudice, Tavris and Wade (2001) also noted prejudice as being “a negative stereotype and strong,

unreasonable dislike or hatred or a group or its individual members” (p. 424). Moreover, Devine (1989) noted that not all stereotype recognition leads to prejudice by stating “although one may have *knowledge of a stereotype*, his or her *personal beliefs* may or may not be congruent with the stereotype” (p. 5). Tavris and Wade emphasized “stereotypes play an important role in human thinking. They help us quickly process new information and retrieve memories. They allow us to organize experience, make sense of differences among groups, and predict how people will behave” (p. 424). However, the same authors are quick to note that stereotypes do not always hold true.

Language

For years, the influence of language on human action has been debated. The degrees of influence are widely disputed among linguistic scholars. Some feel that language and culture are virtually inseparable while others feel the two have little impact on each other (Casasanto, 2008). Nevertheless, one idea seems to be common among debates: language and culture do have some form of relation. As stated by Herzog (1941), language is perhaps the most sensitive instrument for understanding culture. Herzog also noted that while phonetics, vocabulary, and grammar may all change with time, vocabulary is most easily recognized as the element of alteration.

Penn (1972) discussed the existence of broad differences among those who study language. Specifically, she identified four individuals who constructed varying proponents of the debate: Herder, Humbolt, Sapir and Whorf. Penn explained that Herder held the belief that *Besonnenheit*, man’s ability to learn words, was naturally acquired in man before formal language was created. She also noted that Herder believed that language and thought were the same, but language was not created by thought. Penn

described the belief of Humbolt that man is only able to perceive, conceive, or think through the use of language. Language and thought are one and the same, and thought is completely determined by thought. Penn described the belief of Sapir that language is an external symbolic expression of thought. Finally, Penn explained that Whorf held opinion that language determines world-view and thought.

Tohidian (2009) emphasized the significance of work by Whorf and Sapir. In this discussion, he argued that many individuals believe that language strongly influences experience and thought. He also explained that this view, labeled as linguistic relativity, makes a clear distinction between the Whorf-Sapir hypothesis and Whorf's personal views.

In the midst of the debate, Tohidian (2009), also identified two versions of the Linguistic Relativity Hypothesis: the strong and weak version. The strong version focuses on language as the determinant of thought. The second version, the weak version, offers that language instead influences thought. In either case, he argued that there is significance to language and perception.

While many like Sapir and Whorf supported the notion that language strongly influences thought and others argue that language does not influence thought, the evidence from research indicates that language does influence thought and perception of reality but language does not govern thought or reality. (p. 73)

In regards to cultural influences, Risager (2006) held the belief that the practice of language was always cultural. She believed this to be true because language is always integrated in a larger cultural context. Risager later identified three unifying thoughts of language and culture: "language as a part of culture; language as an index of culture; language as symbolic of culture" (p. 13).

Classroom Distractions

For over three decades, student behavior and classroom management have been the number one concern of the public according to annual Gallup polls (Ledoux, 2000).

According to Behnke et al. (1981)

classroom distractions may be defined as those events which take teachers and/or their students off the intended instructional tasks....Many distractions come from the students either alone or based on the interactions with other students (e.g., classroom noise). Other distractions come from outside sources such as visitors to the classroom, parents, or staff members. Still others are from nonhuman sources such as the structure of the classroom or school, or special activities and other outside forces (e.g., weather, construction) (p. 136).

Distractions in classrooms naturally occur on a daily basis. Ahrentzen and Evans (1984) reported that noise is not the only distraction in classrooms. They identified visual stimulants (wall decorations) and kinetic stimulants (bumping into other students) as common classroom distractions. Furthermore, the study by Trentham (1975) reported that “subjects in a distraction condition perform less well on a measure of verbal originality than do subjects in a non-distraction condition” (p. 15-16).

Teaching Method Awareness

A wide spectrum of teaching methods exists from pre-service teachers taking courses to develop their teaching methods of instruction to tenured faculty trying to improve or update teaching. Regardless, it has been debated if teaching methods make a difference in the learning of students.

Tobias (1982) reported that there are various aspects of instruction which play a significant role in the learning process of students. “Some instructional variables do consistently result in superior achievement compared to others” (p. 4). He further suggested that response modes, teaching methods, media tools, and technological devices

in educational instruction could result in a change of student learning. However, he also declared that the most important aspect of student learning is methods and tools which cause students to comprehend, organize, and relate information in a cognitive manner.

Because student learning is the ultimate goal of most teachers, and not all students naturally excel in cognitive processes, it is important for teachers to take steps to assist students in achieving higher levels of learning. Mayer (1999), declared that even if a learner is not actively involved, lessons can be created to encourage cognitive learning. Specifically, he suggested teachers search for methods which cause students to use cognitive learning in the educational process.

Bovy (1981) emphasized the importance of cognitive teaching methods to student learning. Additionally, she noted that not all methods work for all students.

Even if it could be assumed that all learners equally attend to specific instructional variable, the way in which it interacts with each individual's cognitive skills is likely to be idiosyncratic. Therefore, a given method may exert different effects with different learners and thus be lacking in construct validity. (p. 204)

In this respect, various teaching methods for different students becomes a critical aspect of student learning.

Cultural Changes in Community Members

Culture is the driving force of actions made by members of a society. When two cultures are in contact with one another, new ideas and systems are shared. As result, both cultures are influenced by one another. This is no different in terms of neighborhoods or communities. "Like any system, neighborhoods are always undergoing some degree of change" (Homan, 1999, p. 363). According to Benokraitis (2009), "Culture is adaptive and always changing" (p. 40), and "some of the major reasons for

cultural change include diffusion, invention and innovation, discovery, external pressures, and changes in the physical environment” (p. 55). Diffusion in the situation was intended to describe a process when characteristics of a culture spread to another culture.

It is critical to note the connection between schools and the community when evaluating cultural changes. When looking at the extended stay of pre-service teachers, Cwick and Benton (2009) made the following observation.

Long term programs spill over into the community because of clinical practice in the schools. This means that culturally, they have a full array of interactions with a variety of stakeholders, i.e., teachers, parents, children, and the larger community. This accelerates cultural understanding, acceptance, and appreciation. (p. 38)

Harrison (2000), identified two basic types of cultures in regards to change. He identified progressive cultures, or those accepting of change, and static cultures, those resistant to change. He emphasized the roles of education and community in these cultures. Of these cultures he noted that education is the most important aspect of progressive cultures but is of little importance in unchanging communities. He explained this may be true because the influence of identification and trust reaches beyond the family in progressive communities, but in static communities families restrict the community.

Benokraitis (2009), further emphasized the role of education in cultural change. “Education is a social institution that transmits attitudes, knowledges, beliefs, values, norms, and skills to its members through formal, systematic training....Education *transmits* knowledge and culture” (p. 255-256).

Conclusion

In order to fully understand the conclusions of this study, one must first have a basic understanding of human psychology. In other words, what makes people behave in a particular manner? Next, an understanding of two countries, USA and Australia, must be acquired. The differences in the structure of these countries play a role in determining the influences of American student teachers on Australian participants. Finally, general information must be provided for the influences identified by the Australian participants. The information assists in identifying why each area identified was influenced.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

This qualitative study focused on viewpoints of eleven individuals from an Australian community where international student teachers were present. Individuals were selected based on their knowledge of and interaction with American student teachers during their tenure in Australia. Individuals completed one interview with researcher one, and recordings were transcribed, analyzed and coded by a second researcher.

Research Method

“The research method you choose says something about your views on what qualifies as valuable knowledge” (Glesne, 2006, p. 4). Creswell (2009) identified three basic research methodologies used by scholars around the globe: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. In offering a definition of each, he described qualitative research as a means by which researchers may investigate the significance given to a certain situation by those involved (Creswell). He noted the significance of individual perception and multi-layered circumstances to this method of inquiry (Creswell). He further acknowledged the flexibility of the written report in qualitative research; defined quantitative data as the importance of measurable variables that can be reported as numerical data; and identified a structured system of the final report in the quantitative method. Furthermore, Creswell described mixed methods as joining the strengths of both methodologies, qualitative and quantitative, in an attempt to achieve a greater overall strength.

“Research, quantitative and qualitative, is scientific” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p.

1). As a result, choosing the appropriate methodology for each research project becomes the responsibility of the researcher. The intention of the research will strongly influence its design. Glesne (2006) further explained

quantitative research methods are designed with the intention of making generalizations about some social phenomena, creating predictions concerning those phenomena, and providing causal explanations. Qualitative research methods are used to understand some social phenomena from the perspectives of those involved, to contextualize issues in their particular socio-cultural-political milieu, and sometimes transform or change social conditions. (p. 4)

“Qualitative research is exploratory and is sometimes useful when the researcher does not know the important variables to examine” (Creswell, 2009, p. 18). Glesne (2006), added that qualitative researchers “seek to understand and interpret how the various participants in a social setting construct the world around them” (p. 4).

The resulting variable influences of this study were not known. Thus, the qualitative method would accommodate for the exploration of participant responses to determine those variables. Furthermore, Bogden and Bilken (1982) reported that “*qualitative researchers tend to analyze their data inductively....Theory derived this way emerges from the bottom up (rather than the top down)....[The researcher] does not assume that enough is known to recognize important concerns before undertaking the research*” (p. 29). Because the researcher wanted to examine how the American international student teachers influenced the community in which they were a part, the qualitative research method was selected for this study. The researcher acknowledged the need for community members to identify the influences they viewed as most significant.

Grounded Theory

Founders Glaser and Strauss (1967), defined grounded theory as “discovery of theory from data” (p.1). Grounded theory requires that the researcher enter the field with no pre-assumptions. Instead, as the data is received, the researcher must be sensitive to the emergence of concepts and ideas (Goulding, 2002). Charmaz (2001) further explained grounded theory as consisting of “flexible strategies for focusing and expediting qualitative data collection and analysis. These methods provide a set of inductive steps that successfully lead the researcher from studying concrete realities to rendering a conceptual understanding of them” (p. 675).

Ground theory allows the researcher to explore the data, reestablish questions around the findings and then return for further explanation. As a product of grounded theory, the researcher remains focused on the data instead of what is the assumed truth or preconceived ideas (Charmaz, 2001). As emphasized by Creswell (1998), grounded theory offers many challenges to research. First, it calls for researchers to set aside preconceived ideas and allow the data to reveal the outcome. Second, while inductive in nature, there is still a systematic approach which requires the researcher to continuously revisit the data. Third, the researcher must revisit the data until emerging themes are consistent or a theory has been efficiently supported. Finally, this research yields a theory with data specific components.

Research Paradigms

Within research there are several philosophical views, or paradigms, that direct the work of a researcher. Creswell (2009) identified four basic “worldviews” found in research: postpositivism, constructivism, participatory, and pragmatism. According to

Guba and Lincoln (2005), the axiology of postpositivism is that “propositional knowledge about the world is an end in itself” (p. 198); constructivism holds that “transactional knowing is instrumentally valuable as a means to social emancipation, which is an end in itself” (p. 198); and participatory research can be identified by the axiology that “practical knowing about how to flourish with a balance of autonomy, cooperation, and hierarchy in a culture is an end in itself” (p. 198). Furthermore, Patton (2002) identified the axiology of pragmatism as “judging the quality of a study by its intended purposes, available resources, procedures followed, and results obtained, all within a particular context and for a particular audience” (p. 71-72).

Participatory Action Research

Participatory action research is a subdivision of participatory research which requires members to engage in research while adding an element of social action to assist in social or systemic change (Taylor, et al., 2004). When using this method, some provision is made to allow participants to aid in the development of the research question. “This type of reflexivity is a key component of the researcher-participant relationship in any participatory approach” (Taylor, et al., p. 5). Thus, as an integrated member of the community, the research is able to take on the role of participatory action research. In turn, reflection journals and personal accounts of the researcher provide additional sources of information for evaluation.

Retrospective Research

The need to examine the effects of a situation is not always obvious at the time, but is discovered after the fact (Otnes, Ruth, Lowrey, & Commuri, 2006). Therefore, a

research method to provide for reflection must be available. This methodology in qualitative research is known as retrospective research.

Methods that enable researchers to „go back in time’ and make inferences about the past and the present can help them understand whether and how the psychological, sociological and cultural entities that shape informants’ lives have influenced, or continue to influence, interaction with (. . .) phenomena (Otnes, Ruth, Lowrey, & Commuri, p.387).

Retrospective research allows participants to reflect on one or more experiences from the past. In this manner, the retrospective method provides the tools to analyze events which have already happened. In doing so, people are able to compare the past to the present. Three time frames exist that may be reflected upon. First, people may refer to a specific time in the past. Second, people may evaluate how past events have influenced outcomes. Finally, how certain events relate to the past may be considered (Otnes, Ruth, Lowrey & Commuri, 2006). For this study, participants were asked to utilize the second time frame and reflect upon past events and the influence those events had on the present.

Evolution of Research Question

The University of Tennessee and Charles Sturt University created an international student teacher exchange for college students pursuing an agriculture education degree. Agriculture education students from the University of Tennessee and Charles Sturt University are required to complete a student teaching experience prior to graduation. The first American student teacher to participate in the program was placed during the spring of 2005. In the spring of 2006, three additional teachers participated in the program. At the time of this study, four American student teachers had completed their service in the New South Wales community, Australia.

After the return of the student teachers, Fritz and Little (2007) completed the study “Testimonies of Four Agriculture Education Student Teachers Related to Completing an International Student Teaching Experience in New South Wales, Australia.” The study analyzed impacts of the experience on the student teachers involved. From the study evolved the recommendation that further research should be conducted to determine how community members were influenced by the presence of the American student teachers. Therefore, this study was designed:

1. To determine the benefits to the local school system by international student teachers;
2. To determine how the presence of international student teachers impacted the community they were involved with; and
3. To explain changes in perception that occurred in the community due to the presence of the international student teachers.

Procedure

During the spring of 2006, the two researchers spent ten weeks as American student teachers in the New South Wales community, Australia. During this time, both researchers were involved in improvement projects at their respective schools. Furthermore, the researchers participated in community events such as town meetings, educational forums, and cultural activities. The researchers also spent time in the homes of community members. Newspaper articles and radio interviews were published focusing on the presence of the American student teachers.

After returning home, researcher one returned as a full time student in pursuit of a Master’s degree. Researcher one sought for and received IRB approval on February 19,

2007 (See Appendix A for IRB Approval Signature Sheet) to return to the community in New South Wales. Researcher one was involved with creating the interview protocol. Five open-ended questions were designed to guide interviews with school administrators. Four open-ended questions were designed to guide interview with teachers and parents. The protocol (See Appendix B for interview protocol) was established based on a review of literature and suggestions made by an expert in rural sociology, Dr. Frank Leuthhold.

The interview protocol was established to serve as a guide in the event that participants did not provide rich descriptions. However, the questions listed in the protocol were not asked verbatim during the interviews. Instead, researcher one used open-ended questions that focused on identifying impacts of the student teachers in the community in which they were involved; recognizing the influence of international student teachers on students and teachers; comparing the school environment prior to the international student teacher experience to the present school environment; and feelings towards future international student teachers presence. In this manner, interviewer one attempted to minimize the impacts of questions on participant answers.

One year was allowed to elapse between the American student teacher exchange and the interviews. This time frame accommodated for the completion of one complete school year to provide better analysis of the lasting impacts of the program. Furthermore, the timing was partially dependent upon the availability of funding.

Researcher one departed on February 22, 2007 for the New South Wales, Australia to conduct interviews with eleven community members. Prior to interviewing, each participant signed an informed consent assent form. Participants were selected based on their involvement with the student teaching program and the community.

The principals from each participating schools were selected as representatives of their respective schools. Both of these individuals, DeWayne and Terry, were critical characters in the development of the program. One deputy principal, James, was also selected based on his involvement with the program. Two mentoring teachers, Kathy and Robbie, were selected based on their involvement with the American student teachers in the classroom. The principals identified parents and teachers they felt could provide useful insight. Thus, two parents of separate students, Debbie and Sherry, were selected. One math teacher, Gary, and one related arts teacher, Aaron were also selected. Furthermore, one school support staff member, Martin, was identified as a beneficial participant. Finally, one area businessman, Preston, was selected to provide an opinion not related to the educational setting.

The interviews were conducted from February 23 – March 8, 2007. Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes. The interview questions attempted to identify changes in community observed by the participant during the stay and after the leave of the international student teachers. The interviews were recorded to allow for transcription at a later date.

After returning home, researcher one gave the interview recordings to the researcher two. Researcher two was responsible for the transcription of interviews. Researcher two also coded the data and assigned themes to the data. Furthermore, researcher two was responsible for a subsequent review of literature to follow up the findings of the study. Finally, researcher two prepared a written report of the findings and offered conclusions of the study.

In designing the research method, both researchers drew from two established methods of collecting data: participatory research and grounded theory. In regards to participatory action research, both researchers took on the role of action research participant during their stay in the New South Wales community, Australia. As action research participants, both researchers participated in a school improvement plan in their respective schools. However, because the researchers were interested in natural changes, no action research plan was established. Therefore, a second methodology was utilized to ensure an adequate representation of the data.

The second methodology used in the study was grounded theory. From this methodology, theory is allowed to emerge from data (Strauss & Glaser, 1967). Due to the fact that the researchers were primarily interested in the influences, or themes, identified by the participants, grounded theory was selected; however, financial constraints limited researchers to only one series of interviews. Nevertheless, the researcher did revisit the interviews each time a new theme emerged in search of supportive documentation.

Coding and Analysis

Upon interview completion, recordings and notes were turned over to the second researcher. This researcher was responsible for the transcription, coding and analysis of data. As outlined by Coffey and Atkinson (1996) coding is the process by which researchers “[condense] the bulk of our data sets into analyzable units by creating categories with and from our data” (p. 26).

In coding, the researcher used both constructed and in vivo codes. As the name suggests, constructed codes are those which are “based on the researcher’s own

knowledge as well as the data being studied. Constructed codes can add more sociological meaning to the analysis than in-vivo codes because they go beyond local meanings to broader concerns” (Alston & Bowles, 1998, p. 200). For instance, stereotypes and language were constructed codes of this study. In vivo codes are those that “derive from the terms and the language used by social actors in the field, or in the course of interviews” (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 32). In vivo codes identified in this study included cultural awareness and student performance.

The researcher then utilized thematic analysis. Glesne (2006) defined thematic analysis as “a process that involves coding and then segregating the data by codes into data clumps for further analysis and description” (p. 147). As a result of this process, nine themes emerged: cultural awareness, stereotypes, language, community unification, student performance, classroom distracters, teaching awareness, cultural changes in community members, and impact of student teacher presence. In accordance with thematic analysis, after coding the data, the researcher combined like data from the various interviews. The researcher also conducted word analysis within each group to identify reoccurring terms. Furthermore, the researcher looked at data from various groups to identify overlapping ideas. Finally, reoccurring codes were identified to construct research themes.

Validity/Creditability

Glense (2006) described research validity as the “trustworthiness” of the research. In other words, can the reader believe what he or she is reading? “Qualitative validity means that the researcher checks for the accuracy of the findings by employing certain procedures” (Creswell, 2009, p. 190). In order to establish validity in qualitative

research, several procedures have been developed for the use of researchers. Creswell (2007) identified eight such procedures:

1. prolonged engagement and persistent observation;
2. triangulation – use of multiple and different sources, investigators, methods and theories;
3. peer review or debriefing;
4. negative case analysis;
5. clarity of researcher bias;
6. participant checking of findings and interpretations;
7. rich, thick descriptions; and
8. external audits.

Validity in this study was established using five of the procedures listed. First, while the researcher did not spend an extended amount of time in the field while doing the study, the researcher lived in the community being studied for ten weeks. Therefore, the researcher was able to gain an understanding of the cultural characteristics of the community. During this time, the researcher was also able to gather knowledge about the activities and procedures which were common place. Therefore, the researcher developed a sense of life in the community. Secondly, the researcher used interviews, personal notes, and related literature to ensure consistency between various sources. In this manner, researcher two was able to develop triangulation of information. Thirdly, the work of the researcher was reviewed by a peer who is familiar with the project and can thus understand its complexity. The peer reviewer looked for consistency between participant responses and conclusions. The peer reviewer also looked at the conclusions

to ensure that the researcher biases did not alter the results. Fourthly, the research acknowledged the presence of biases in review of the data. Therefore, the researcher identified those biases to the reader. Finally, the researcher provided rich, thick descriptions of the procedures, interview results, and conclusions.

Dependability/Reliability

Toma (2006) identified dependability in qualitative research as a means for “accommodating changes in the environment studied and in the research design itself” (p. 416). Adams, Fujii, and Mackey (2005) further stated that dependable research has “reliably characterized the research context and the relationship among the participants” (p. 88). Still yet, Decrop (2004) declared that dependability “consists of looking at whether the results are consistent and reproducible” (p. 159). Miles and Huberman (1994) identified seven procedures which can help researchers to establish dependability: research design with clear research questions; a detailed description of the role of researcher within the research; findings that appear parallel across various data sources; identification of theoretical constructs and analytical frameworks; data collection from various aspects of the researched field; parallel data collection and analysis among members of a research team; and colleague review.

In congruence with Miles and Huberman (1994), the researcher first outlined three research questions that were imperative to the study. The researcher then outlined the various duties, along with biases, of the researcher. Also, findings among the twelve participants, of various roles, were found to be closely related and were applicable to each participant in the study. In addition, a detailed outline of the theoretical constructs

and frameworks were provided. Finally, a peer review was utilized to assist in increasing dependability.

Transferability/External Validity

“Transferability...is concerned with the extent to which the research findings are applicable to another setting or group” (Decrop, 2004, p. 159). Thus, transferability of a study would provide for that study to be replicated in a similar setting and yield the same results. Transferability is similar to generalizability in quantitative research. “For readers to judge the potential transferability of a qualitative study’s findings to their own setting, the research report must have a full description of the contextual factors that influenced the findings” (Larrabee, 2009, p. 98). It is seldom that a qualitative study be completely transferable; however, to determine similarities, the researcher must provide examples, patterns and explanations of the data (Mackey & Gass, 2009).

The purpose of this study was to examine the influences of American student teachers on the community of the New South Wales community, Australia. The researcher recognizes that the outcomes were strongly impacted by the cultures of the community. Therefore, the transferability of this study to other cultures is not expected to yield the same results. Additionally, due to the fact that the community may have a certain degree of influence from previous American student teachers, and that the community members could become accustomed to the influences of the American student teachers, the replication of the study within the same community could also yield different results. Nevertheless, if American student teachers were sent to another small mining town in New South Wales, Australia and the same research format were followed, similar results would be expected. Because culture plays a significant role in the

behaviors of individuals, when people with like cultures share similar experiences, the outcomes are likely to be comparable.

Confirmability

“Confirmability means that the data and their interpretation are not figments of the researcher’s imagination” (Mertens & McLaughlin, 2004, p. 107). Larrabee (2009), described confirmability as whether or not the findings of a study accurately represent the experience of the participants. Jensen (2008) also explained confirmability as the ability of a researcher to report findings without allowing researcher bias to interfere. However, in qualitative research, each researcher brings his or her personal bias to the research. Nevertheless, the extent to which the bias influences the research must be addressed. Jensen further explained that confirmability acknowledges unique perspectives of researchers but requires the researcher to honestly identify biases. Furthermore, he noted that researchers should use the appropriate qualitative methodological practices to minimize the impact of biases. According to Larrabee (2009), in order to achieve such a minimization of biases, the researcher must identify preconceptions related to the study and how those preconceptions influenced decisions made throughout the process. Furthermore, the researcher may have an independent viewer audit the research findings to establish confirmability (Mertens & McLaughlin; Jensen).

The researcher in this study identified biases that might be influential on the reported outcomes. However, in an attempt to strengthen confirmability, a peer reviewer was utilized to decrease the impacts the researcher bias would have on the outcomes. Furthermore, the researcher used the grounded theory method for developing themes.

Therefore, the bias of the researcher in identifying themes was minimized and the actuality of the data was able to emerge.

Researcher Biases

The researchers in this study were participants in the American student teacher/New South Wales, Australia program. As result, the researchers acknowledged that personal biases exist. However, safe-guards of peer reviewer and grounded theory were used to minimize the effect of the researcher bias. The peer reviewer had previous experience in working with interview data. Therefore, the reviewer looked at the raw data to identify codes and themes. The reviewer then discussed findings with researcher two to identify discrepancies. Researcher two and the peer reviewer agreed upon the emerging themes. Grounded theory also allowed for the emergence of themes without the influence or bias of the researchers. By establishing no preconceived themes, non-biased themes were more easily identified.

Due to the fact that both researchers were student teachers in the community, the researchers desired that the influences on the community were viewed in a positive light. On a personal note, the researchers hoped that the influence of American student teachers benefited the community in which they worked. Furthermore, the researchers also desired that the people involved believed that the program had been a success.

The researchers also knew several of the research participants personally. Therefore, in analyzing the data the researchers' personal perception of the participant could have been imposed on the meaning of the responses. It is also possible that the interviewer, allowed personal knowledge of individual's beliefs to influence the direction of the interview.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Based on interviews with participants in this study, nine themes emerged. The nine themes were: cultural awareness, stereotypes, language, classroom distractions, teaching methods awareness, cultural changes in community members, student performance, and impact of student teacher presence.

Cultural Awareness

When bringing together people of different cultures, one might expect that cultural exchange could occur. According to participants in the study, cultural awareness increased during the stay of the American student teachers in the New South Wales Community. As stated by Kathy (mentoring teacher) “I think that socially and generally in terms of cultural awareness and kids thinking about the world...this helps the kids to understand the world differently.” She later commented that “having American students in the school has definitely exposed a lot of the less well-off kids to cultures that [they] wouldn’t otherwise experience....for a lot of them it really opened up their minds about what was outside the [New South Wales] community.” She further expanded

I think it certainly really opened up their eyes in terms of their perceptions of the US in particular...it did really make them think the world is a lot bigger than they had previously thought as to educational opportunities. I don’t say that any of them would be really interested in pursuing the University let alone going to the US to look at educational opportunities, but I certainly think that they’ve thought a little bit more about the world as a whole.

Both interviewed parents expressed positive feelings in regards to the cultural awareness brought to their children through the program. Debbie stated “I feel that it was very positive. She [daughter] needs to be exposed to as many different cultures as

possible.” She also expressed an importance in students being able to “ask about how things are in the US of A, how they are different over there.” The other parent, Sherry, shared her similar viewpoint as she commented on a particular activity in which the American student teachers had introduced high school homecoming festivities to the school. “I think the homecoming thing at the carnival last year was a really good thing....The kids here are very unaware of different cultures, and its good for them to be able to experience the way people live in different countries.”

In regards to students who were involved with the program, Terry (principal) observed

They’re more interested in talking about your culture and what you do, and all that type of stuff than they may be learning the science or whatever they are supposed to be. But really, I think that subsides after a short period of time, and they really do value, what it is you have to say, and because you know, it’s a completely different perspective to what they’re used to. And, I think the benefits far outweighs any negative.

Other participants also expressed that the program increased cultural awareness in the New South Wales community. Martin (support staff) noted that “to actually speak to young kids that come from over there [USA], their different aspects of life, is really eye opening.” James (deputy principal) also noticed that due to the American student teachers “students were more informed about the U.S....I think everyone goes through cultural changes, and certainly opens their eyes up to certain cultures and different things....You tell me about things that go on in your community, and that certainly opened my eyes. I wasn’t aware.” Gary (teacher) suggested “it’s a tremendous opportunity to be able to learn something about people from somewhere else, people that don’t exactly live the same life that we do.” On a personal note, Gary commented that he

“enjoyed speaking with them [American student teachers], finding a little bit more about their home country and their hometown.”

In speaking of cultural awareness, Dewayne (principal) recalled a specific experience that he felt contributed to the cultural awareness of all.

...it was a cultural exchange. We had dinner for her one day, a typical Australian affair, and she returned the favor and we had deep-fried chicken and some other stuff...so, we got the full exchange, it was a valuable experience.

Robbie (mentor teacher) noted a possibility of increased interest in world travel due to the American student teachers in the classroom. “Intercountry students brings in a concept that there are people out there. And, it certainly would stimulate the idea that if they’re out there, we could go and see them.” Likewise, Aaron (teacher) emphasized a similar impact on the New South Wales community students. “A lot of our students are isolated, and I think that it’s magnificent that we have visiting teachers, such as our American teachers that come to school and I encourage that they should carry on and do so.”

Aaron (teacher) also stressed that the program improved cultural awareness for both Australian and American participants.

The student teachers...made a magnificent impression, not only on the students, they also made an impression on the staff, the community....I think that by American students coming out here, they will get a very good idea of what Australian education is all about. They will see the positives and they will see the negatives. They can go back to America and say „well, in Australia these are the strengths, and these are the negatives’. It is a learning tool both ways.

Speaking of cultural awareness in both respect to Americans and Australians,

Terry (principal) commented

We are [in a] very isolated part of Australia. I know we have teachers who come out here from universities in cities that might have been from the North Shore or

on past Sydney. They come out here and they learned a heap....American people come out here, and hopefully they learn a fair bit. But, with the Americans, there is no doubt that we come out on the positive side. Our kids learned a heap.

Additionally, Martin and Preston noted an increase in cultural awareness for the American student teachers in regards to the New South Wales community. Martin (support staff) commented that “You all [American student teachers] have taken something back to the states and said „Okay, [our town] is a nice place’.” Preston (businessman) added to this idea,

I think it is a good thing for the Americans to come over and really see what it is like in a place like [our town] and Australia....You got a very kind of varied look at what Australia...maybe you did what we call the touristy stuff, but it still gives you a different perspective...a lot of people in America don’t know what the bad perception of Australian life is, especially when you think about the multicultural aspect of Australia, which is different.

Stereotypes

Stereotypes of a particular group can either be uplifting or degrading to individuals of that group. In some cases they may be realistic representations, while in others they are entirely false. Nevertheless, stereotypes exist in all cultures across all groups of people. During the study, several interviewed participants mentioned stereotypes in their dialogue. Some of these referred to stereotypes of the Americans, some to the stereotypes of Australians, and others to stereotypes in general. However, the existence of stereotypes was evident.

In the interview with Terry (principal), he discussed common stereotypes of Americans by Australians. He also alluded to the importance of teachers realizing the problems with stereotypes.

People have preconceived ideas about different cultures....In Australia, you either have people that are very pro-American or very anti-American....Your

[interviewer] presence and the other's presence here has allowed teachers especially to see that you can't stereotype different cultures. Even if it's American...you just have to take people as you find them.

He also noted the impact of the media in developing stereotypes. Two separate times, Terry addressed the media as having a part in influencing stereotypes. He stated that Australians often create an opinion of Americans "depending on what the media tells them that is happening", and he acknowledged that the way many Australians view Americans is "filtered through the media mogul." Kathy (mentor teacher) also noted that the media played a significant role in developing stereotypes of Americans, but concluded that the American student teachers had helped to change these perceptions. In referring to one student teacher's explanation of his hometown, she stated "I know that when Donald [American student teacher] was just talking with some of the kids about what his life was like in U.S., it was completely different from what they [Australian students] expected from the movies."

In a separate interview, Martin (support staff) revealed his personal stereotype of Americans. In speaking of the political realm, he stated "it's amazing that you can see some things about American people....I find it amazing that you will marry someone because of their government beliefs." He further accentuates his amazement with his stereotype by stating "I reckon it's the only country in the world [United States of America] that I would really think that had a lot of in-house conflict." Martin also used a stereotypical term in referring to his first impression of the program. He noted that his "first reaction would be, here come a couple of Yanks."

Several participants provided a stereotype of citizens from the New South Wales community as being isolated. Preston (businessman), who is not a native of Australia,

commented that “[Our town] is very insular...people tend to have a very closed mentality.” He also generalized the life pattern for [our town] citizens in the following statement. “The lifespan over here is study in [our town], go to Adalaide, study, and then come back here.”

Other participants also supported a stereotype of the New South Wales community students as being isolated. Terry (principal) claimed that “We are a very isolated part of Australia.” In regards to students, Sherry (parent) commented that “a lot of them don’t even get out of [our town]. A lot of them spend their entire lives here.” James (deputy principal) added that the New South Wales community did not receive a lot of international student teachers “because of the isolation.” Furthermore, Aaron (teacher) commented on the geographical isolation of students in the city

A lot of students here are isolated. The closest city being about 500 km away or 320 miles, a lot of our students here do not see any visitors from the outside world....So, a lot of our students are isolated.

Finally, Martin (support staff) described the New South Wales community citizens as “isolated and alone.”

Nevertheless, one participant in particular expressed concern that isolation is a mere stereotype of the New South Wales community and that not all citizens are isolated. In her comments, Kathy (mentor teacher) stated

There tends to be a group of parents that can haven an awfully large disposable income, compared to other parts of Australia. So, those kids who’ve got a decent home life and whose parents are relatively well-off have a lot of exposure.

Kathy did not deny the fact that travel outside of the New South Wales community is difficult for students whose families are not economically advantaged. Nevertheless, she obviously attempts to clarify the stereotype of isolation for the citizens of the town.

Preston (businessman) summarized the significance of stereotypes. He demonstrated the benefits that can be obtained when a person is able to see past the stereotype and learn about people as individuals. In referring to his own experience as he began to break down his existing stereotype of Australians, he stated “I think I understand the country where I was born and much more because I listen to all these perspectives.”

Language

Language is an important piece of any culture. It is the method through which people communicate information to one another. However, even when people share a common language, dialect and slang can make communication difficult. Language differences made a significant impact on the members who were involved with the international student teachers. Australian citizens from various backgrounds noted the significance of language during the student teaching experience.

Martin (support staff) believed that language was the most obvious difference between cultures. He stated “the first and obvious thing is the different tone of voice and accent....the words you [American student teachers] come out and say are very Americanisms.” He continued by expressing the influence this difference could make in the ability to communicate with others. More specifically, he stated a specific example of how language impacted his conversation with one of the American student teachers. “For instance, you call it a pen, we call it a biro....When we [Australians] speak in words, or if

we can abbreviate it, we do.” Preston (businessman) noted the difficulty caused by differing accents when he stated “as much as you might have found the accent difficult, they [students] too have found it difficult.”

Like Martin and Preston, several others made reference to language barriers and differences. Aaron (teacher) believed that the language difference was beneficial to the students and student teachers. Twice he commented, “I think our students are motivated when the American student teachers are in the classroom because...they are different, they’ve got a different way of speaking” and “students do respond a lot differently....American teachers are new faces to the school...they have a different way of speaking.” Likewise, Terry (principal) felt that the interest of students was heightened by the difference in language. In regards to high school students, he commented “with the teenage kids, they are more interested with the accents.” Robbie (mentor teacher) felt the exposure to a different accent could be beneficial. When asked about the lasting impression American student teachers had, he responded “the accents was a lasting impression. Sometimes the meanings of words were different.”

Debbie (parent) noted language differences could also be used to stimulate memory. She commented that her child would mention “some things that you would say a lot, like your slang terms...that sort of impacted them because they remembered those.” Likewise, Gary (teacher) agreed that language differences can benefit a classroom. He replied “accents tend to amuse a lot of the children tremendously and perhaps just a different approach.” However, the only distraction Gary could recall “is the obvious one, the accent.” Nevertheless, he was careful to note while different accents could have been a distraction, they did not develop into significant problems.

I know that the variance in pronunciations with soil and foil and aluminum foil and so forth. That probably excited the kids, but you know, that's like anything, they get over that after a short period of time. Once they know what you're talking about, that this particular sound means that particular thing, they're fairly accepting.

Classroom Distractions

Research participants were asked if American student teachers created a distraction to the learning environment. Some participants felt minimal distractions were caused. Others felt no distractions occurred due to the American student teachers. However, no participant thought the program caused significant distractions.

When asked if there were distracters present, Gary (teacher) replied "No, not too many distractions....I don't see any distractions at all." Likewise, Sherry (parent) answered "Personally, I don't think that there are any distracters." James (deputy principal) admitted to some distractions, but did not contribute these distractions to the presence of American student teachers. He stated "I don't think they're distracters. I think what was taking place was just normal general classroom participation."

While Gary, Sherry and James found the program to cause no distractions, Robbie (mentor teacher) did acknowledge some amount of distraction. He acknowledged that students were "distracting the teachers by asking about America....You can't kind of stop on that...but you got to be able to control it." He also mentioned the first American student teacher "was regularly distracted because she was the first one." However, he did not express a deep concern. To the contrary, he stated "the kids wanted to find out things...it's natural for kids."

Teaching Methods Awareness

DeWayne (principal) was very enthusiastic about the interaction of teaching methods. His initial reaction was “I thought it was a great idea, because it made my staff exposed to different ideas and different teaching strategies from overseas.” He also commented “it’s just a good opportunity for professional dialogue and professional development for everybody.” In a later statement, DeWayne believed the program benefitted staff members because they would “pick up different teaching techniques from watching, observing other people....Let staff observe different practices, and it gives them the opportunity to reflect on their own practices.” In addition, benefits to the teacher and student teacher were “good for both the teacher and the students if they have different perspectives. And, that’s why we have student teachers in our school. It helps bring new ideas...a balance.”

Aaron (teacher) discussed the influence teachers from a different culture could have on Australian teachers. “I think it’s a good experience for other teachers to see how the American teachers can teach.”

In addition, James (deputy principal) noted the advantage for the American student teachers. “I think its good for other people to come out and have a look at how different schools run, because different schools do different things.”

When asked how he felt about the American student teachers, Gary (teacher) replied “it’s been a very positive experience for me....I’ve certainly enjoyed speaking with them, finding a little bit more about...how they approach the study of teaching.” He later offered more detail. “As a math teacher, I don’t know much about teaching agriculture, but from what I have seen, agriculture usually meant that students aren’t

terribly able. And, speaking with some of the American student teachers, I've found...agriculture is a huge part of the curriculum in the United States."

Cultural Changes in Community Members

Kathy (mentor teacher) commented on the lasting impression made by the American student teachers. "When the kids found out that an American student teacher was coming back, there was a really positive response." When asked if things in the school had changed as result of the program, Preston (businessman) responded

I think it will take some time, to know...It will take a long time before it happens, you really need someone from here to pickup the challenge and go abroad or go out and go elsewhere, come back and say hey, there is a wide world out there.

While Terry (principal) did not use specifics to identify the impact of the American student teachers, he did acknowledge the influence due to their presence. "In the ten weeks last year, there is no doubt that there was a very positive impact on school....The things that [happened] impacted the whole school."

Robbie (mentor teacher) felt lasting impacts of the program depended on the influence of each individual student teacher. "Because the program marches on, where one teacher or another teacher teaches the program.... If the impression is there, then of course it will stay." He also noted the "enthusiasm for presenting programs....The enthusiasm is there." He was skeptical about new programs, but in regards to the new American student teacher concluded "Karen [American student teacher] is going to put up a program that I'm a little apprehensive as to how that's going to go. But, we have to expand programs so we've got to give them as much backing."

James (deputy principal) stated "I couldn't say that there are any cultural changes but I think our students are more informed about the US and more informed about the

general people.” However, he quickly changed his statement to “I think everyone goes through cultural changes and certainly opens their eyes up to certain cultures and different things.”

DeWayne (principal) shared very similar views in regards to cultural change. “School culture is...I’ve been here 3 ½ years and I’m struggling to change some of the cultures in the schools....In Australian schools, the cultures move so slowly.” However, he later added “You’ve got to look deeper for cultural change. You have to learn the system of how people think. The way people interact or a change in process.”

Student Performance

The motivation of students to learn is generally considered important in any situation. However, in the case with American student teachers, the impact of those teachers on student performance and motivation became more essential. When asked about changes to student motivation or performance, participants all agreed that with the American student teachers, there was an improvement in this area.

Debbie (parent) expressed having a teacher from overseas “made them more interested in learning, and that’s always a good thing.” Likewise, Sherry (parent) discussed a change in student interest in the following statement in regards to the question “Do students perform at a higher level in the classroom as a result of having the American student teachers?”

I think that that is quite a difficult thing to assess. Obviously, there is a higher interest in the students when there is another teacher in the classroom....I think it’s really difficult to generalize, but as I said, basically they do have a higher interest. They do tend to sit back and listen.

Several teachers also noticed a change in student behavior during the stay of the American student teachers. Kathy (mentor teacher) commented “behavior wise, they definitely have done better than usual,” and they were “a lot more engaged than they were in most lessons that I’ve seen previously. So overall, yes they performed at a higher level.” She later expanded “a lot of the kids [were] excited to get new American students in the classroom.”

Aaron (teacher) was also decisive in his comments. When asked if students responded differently with American student teachers in the classroom, he responded

Yes, definitely. I believe that when American teachers are in the school and in the classrooms, students do respond a lot differently than they do with their normal teachers. I believe the students are interested to see the American teachers teach and are interested to learn about America. I believe that when American teachers are in the school...they add a little positive reinforcement to our students. Because students want to see and learn from the American teachers, to see what difference, what positive things can come out.

Preston (businessman) responded positively about student performance related to American student teachers “We do agriculture differently than what you (student teachers) do agriculture. So yeah, they’ll get a different perspective of it. And yeah, it probably can help them....It will be beneficial. It’s nice to get a different perspective.” Furthermore, Robbie (mentor teacher) noted having a teacher from overseas stimulated students “certainly at a different level” and “they [students] showed interest while the student teachers are around.” Robbie also commented that having American student teachers in the school “certainly stimulated interest both studentwise and staffwise.”

Community Unification

A significant portion of the participants saw an increase in cooperation among community members in the New South Wales community due to the presence of the

American student teachers. Kathy (mentor teacher) commented on the influence the American student teachers had politically. “The political stuff that had been going on for a very long time was dumped underneath the carpet. People...want[ed] to impress you guys and show you how wonderful we all were...everyone was on their best behavior.” In regards to the adaptations people made because of the American student teachers, James (deputy principal) stated “I think that people have adapted and certainly made changes to make everyone feel welcome.” Likewise, Sherry (parent) observed “I really do think that when the American students are here that people are motivated to try and do their best.” To the same effect, Preston (businessman) noticed that with the American student teachers there were “less caustic remarks and less kind of snide remarks...it’s not because they don’t want to make them...it’s because, oh, the Americans are here, let’s not do it. But maybe that is a positive thing.”

More specifically, Aaron (teacher) recalled extending hospitality to the American student teachers. His experience was described as “inviting them not only into my classroom, but also into my house; socializing with them.” Debbie (parent) also recounted the hospitality of locals as they attempted to “show you a good time and show you the sites. They [wanted] you to go away with a good impression of [our town].”

Within the confines of the school setting, communication and collaboration amongst teachers was also noticed. Aaron (teacher) shared his personal experience “I don’t associate with teachers in the school. If the American teachers were not here, I wouldn’t go to the science faculty.” In regards to teachers in the school, Robbie (mentor teacher) believed “some of them certainly benefit[ted] from the interaction....you will find that a lot of the faculty tend to stay to one another but there are a few that benefit

from the interaction.” Gary (teacher) shared a very positive view of increased collaboration amongst teachers.

Certainly there’s been more talk amongst teachers about the performance of the American teachers about some of their successes and some of their shortcomings, mostly successes, I’d say. It’s certainly encouraged collaboration between faculty members and staff members on a very positive level.

When asked about teacher relations as result of the American student teachers, James (deputy principal) commented

I think there was actually improvement. I think there is a general feeling of everyone trying to support each other and more than usual....I think there’s more of an effort to share resources and provide stuff, not just for the American students but also to other staff as well. I think there were more staff functions....I think it improved the relations between staff and I guess the bonding was a lot better.

Debbie (parent) observed the cooperation amongst community members in response to having American student teachers. “They get on so that they can show you a good time and show you the sites. They want you to go away with a good impression of [our town].” Martin (support staff) also noted that “if a new person comes in, they are always open and welcoming, you know, show them [visitors] around and tell them about [our town].”

Impact of Student Teacher Presence

As a final thought, participants offered their overall impression of the program. Kathy stated “everything I’ve seen has been really positive. I haven’t heard anything negative at all, so I think that everything is really positive.” Robbie commented “I think the program is quite good...its a great experience for the kids.”

In response to lasting impressions made by American student teachers, Aaron commented “they made a very positive impression. They were very confident. They

were liked. And, they were very professional.” James (deputy principal) agreed by saying “I think it has been very positive.” He also commented “I think that it was really, really good. So all I can say is that it was very positive.”

Preston (businessman) was not as quick as other responders to offer continued success of the program. He stated “I can understand the advantages of continuing the program, but I think a lot of the success of the program depends on the [American] teachers themselves. What they make of the opportunity, and what they do with it. Do they take full grasp of whatever is out there?”

When asked about his overall impression of the program, Terry (principal) showed much enthusiasm and approval for the program. “I think it’s terrific because from what I heard last year, the people were of high quality.” He later continued “all I’ve heard is positive stuff, and the quality of people that [were] here is exceptional, I mean, the American people. It’s all positive.” DeWayne (principal) offered a quick but definitive response “we’d love to have you back.”

Furthermore, Gary (teacher) commented “I don’t think there are any negative, long-lasting things that I can remember. I miss...the positive energy that the American teachers gave me as they were young people starting out their careers.” He later summed up his opinion with the following statement.

The students that come over...have a fantastic opportunity. It’s a great way to finish up their education and to see something completely different to what they are accustomed to: culture, climate, the quality of students....They’ve [American students] all been tremendous representatives of their country and their school and their hometown. [It’s been] an honor and a pleasure to know them all.

Debbie and Sherry (parents) had positive outlooks of the program. Debbie commented several times “I think that it is a very good experience, and I thought it was

good. I think it is very good, and that it should continue as long as possible.” Likewise, Sherry stated “I think it is a good experience to have students from other countries....It was a good experience for all of us.”

Conclusions

Throughout the interviews, the participants expressed many of the same feelings and beliefs. Furthermore, the participants felt that each theme was influenced by the American student teachers in some way. The participant’s comments provided insight to the perception of the American student teacher program. Furthermore, the comments of the participants provided for the development of themes.

Chapter V

Conclusions

Anytime two cultures are brought together, the exchange of beliefs, values, processes, and ideas is inevitable. Anytime student teachers are immersed in a community for an extended period of time, the community in which they work is influenced. As in the case of American student teachers from the USA in rural Australia, the community most certainly felt an impact from the presence of the student teachers. The following conclusions are based on the responses of those individuals. Participants in the study identified nine areas that the American student teachers impacted.

Objectives

The purpose of this study was to analyze three objectives based on the presence of American student teachers in a New South Wales community, Australia. The objectives were:

1. To determine the benefits to the local school system by international student teachers;
2. To determine how the presence of international student teachers impacted the community they were involved with; and
3. To explain changes in perception that occurred in the community due to the presence of the international student teachers.

Chapter four provided the responses to these questions by the interviewed participants.

This chapter provides the conclusions reached based on those responses.

Conclusions

Psychology, the study of mental processes, offers insight to the causes of human behaviors. Specifically, when evaluating relationships between members of two different societies, one must account for the psychological processes which govern those actions. This interacting branch of psychology is known as social psychology. Within this discipline, social psychologists explain three principles which provide scaffolding for the findings of this study. According to MacLeod (1954), the theory that learning is adopted from an individual's environment, and learned actions which may vary based on an individual's society suggests that community influences would also have influence upon the individual. He also noted that concepts of socialization assume individuals will adapt their behavior to conform to the behaviors of those around them. Thirdly, many various groups exist and individuals may belong to more than one group at a time, and each group impacts the behaviors of the individual (MacLeod).

The United States of America is generally viewed as an individualist society. Members are generally classified as looking out for the self instead of the community. To the contrary, Australia is often viewed more as a collectivist society. Therefore, members of this society are more likely to make decisions that will benefit all members. As result, when members of these societies come together, in this case American student teachers and the community in New South Wales, benefits and disadvantages of each can be shared. In turn, both groups can benefit from the positive aspects of the other and recognize the negative aspects of their own viewpoint.

In regards to education, the United States and Australia operate in a very similar manner. For instance, the educational systems of both countries have a federal, state, and

local level. Furthermore, each of these countries has a federally supported reform act. However, in both countries the state is individually responsible for the education within its boundaries. To this effect, both states involved, Tennessee and New South Wales, recognize the need for technical education of students. In Tennessee, Career and Technical Education was established to prepare students for careers in agriculture, business technology, contextual academics, family & consumer sciences, health science, marketing, technology engineers, and trade & industry. These courses occur at the secondary level and are designed to prepare students for the workforce. New South Wales also provides a technical education option for its students. However, these courses are offered in addition to or after secondary education. Nevertheless, the recognition of a need for technical education exists in both places and provided a place for the American student teacher program to reside. However the influences of this program were seen beyond the technical classroom. The following conclusions demonstrate the many influences of the student teachers.

Cultural Awareness

The most widely expressed influence of the American student teachers was an increase in cultural awareness in the New South Wales community. All participants somehow noted an increase of cultural awareness as result of the student teacher exchange. Each participant expressed positive views of this influence in regards to students, teachers and community members. Several participants identified the cultural advantages to the student teachers themselves.

According to Homan (1999), in order for cultural awareness between groups to occur, all groups involved must acknowledge that there is much to learn from both sides.

Specific to this study, DeWayne (principal) noted that “it was a cultural exchange.” Likewise, Aaron (teacher) expressed that the program was “a learning tool both ways.” Therefore, this study reinforced that by having American student teachers in a New South Wales community, both the American student teachers and Australian participants had much to gain. Merryfield (2004) declared that students who are exposed to other cultures can develop the ability to interact with individuals of a different culture. Likewise, Ford and Whiting (2007) supported this theory that students with cultural exposure are more likely to develop educational systems and methods based on their cultural experiences. Kathy (mentor teacher) pointed out “that socially and generally in terms of cultural awareness and kids thinking about the world...this helps the kids to understand the world differently.” In turn, students who were involved with the student teacher exchange program should be better equipped to work with individuals of different cultures.

Community members were also culturally benefited by the program. Martin, James and Gary all commented on the impact the American student teachers had on their perceptions of the United States. Martin (support staff) referred to the experience when he stated “to actually speak to young kids that come from over there [USA], their different aspects of life, is really eye opening.” James (deputy principal) specifically identified that there were American cultures that he wasn’t aware of when he stated “you tell me about things that go on in your community, and that certainly opened my eyes. I wasn’t aware”. Gary (teacher) noted that he “enjoyed speaking with them [American student teachers], finding a little bit more about their home country and their hometown.” Dewayne (principal) stated that it was a “valuable experience.” Thus, influence of this program reached beyond the classroom and into the community.

In discussing an increase of cultural awareness, five participants noted the cultural influence of the experience on the American student teachers. These individuals were willing to accept that they had been culturally influenced, but noted that the Americans had also gained from the experience. The five individuals demonstrated their personal pride of their own culture when they realized American student teachers were able to take the New South Wales community culture to their hometowns. This desire for outsiders to approve of the culture exemplifies dedication and devotion to one's own culture. They also had a tendency to assume American student teachers left with a positive impression of the New South Wales community and Australia. This clearly demonstrated the confidence of the New South Wales community members had in their culture.

As for the American student teachers, the fact that the New South Wales community desired their approval speaks highly of their efforts. The American student teachers built a creditable reputation in the community and their opinions were highly respected, as noted by Aaron and Terry. Specifically, Terry (principal) commented that the American student teachers had a great opportunity to learn, but "there is not doubt that we [Australian participants] came out on the positive side."

Stereotypes

Tavris and Wade (2001) noted the importance of stereotypes in the abilities of people to quickly assimilate information. However, the quick assimilation of information can often be misleading or blatantly wrong. The same authors identified three distortions that stereotypes lead to: stereotypes focus on the differences in groups; stereotypes cause people to only look for qualities that fit stereotypes; and, stereotypes minimize the recognition of group differences.

Martin (support staff) expressed his personal stereotype that all American homes were developed around political viewpoints and even used the stereotypical term “Yanks” when referring to the American student teachers. Nevertheless, the cultural awareness brought about from the presence of the American student teachers resulted in disproving some of the stereotypes toward Americans. Not only was the cultural awareness of American culture increased, but the overall impression of Americans as individuals was influenced. James (deputy principal) commented “that certainly opened my eyes. I wasn’t aware.”

The media played a significant role in the Australian development of stereotypes towards Americans. Kathy (mentor teacher) referenced television as a source Australians use to understand Americans. She noted that American life “was completely different from what they [students] expected from the movies.” Likewise, Terry (principal) noted that the way many Australians view Americans is “filtered through the media mogul.”

While many of the preconceived stereotypes were altered, new stereotypes were formed. Unfortunately, the new stereotypes were not always correct. Gary (mentor teacher) commented “As a math teacher, I don’t know much about teaching agriculture, but from what I have seen, agriculture usually meant that students aren’t terribly able. And, speaking with some of the American student teachers, I’ve found...agriculture is a huge part of the curriculum in the United States.” While Gary’s statement might hold true for certain areas of the United States, certainly agriculture is not a major part of the curriculum in all areas. Nevertheless, the American student teacher that Gary had spoken with described his hometown. Thus, Gary derived a new stereotype based on one town in the United States.

The participants also had a stereotype of themselves as being isolated in the New South Wales community. Preston, Terry, Sherry, James, Donald, Martin, and Kathy all alluded to the isolation of the New South Wales community. While they were geographically isolated from many areas, throughout the interviews, many situations were identified that disprove the New South Wales community citizens as isolated. References were made to student teachers from various parts of Australia, teachers from several countries, and travel by students to other towns. Therefore, the New South Wales community was not totally isolated from the outside world. Instead, because of the geographic isolation, participants had a tendency to assimilate the New South Wales community into an isolated situation.

Perhaps Preston (businessman) best identified the benefits of the American student teachers to the stereotypes of Australians and Americans alike. His comment suggested that as American student teachers and the New South Wales community citizens worked together, stereotypes would be disproved by both groups. In the process, each would learn about the other, but more importantly, learn about self. He shared “I think I understand the country where I was born much more because I listen to all these perspectives.” He further explained that as he ridded stereotypes and gained realizations his understanding of his culture increased. Therefore, for American student teachers and the New South Wales community citizens alike, the program not only allowed them to disregard preconceived stereotypes about each other, but it opened their individual understanding of their own culture.

It is also important to recognize the comment by Gary (teacher) that “I’ve found...agriculture is a huge part of the curriculum in the United States.” While the

stereotypes toward Americans was influenced, the new stereotypes that were formed were not all correct. In Tennessee, agriculture is a significant part of many high school curriculums. However, this is not true in all areas of the USA. Therefore, while many stereotypes were disproved, other false stereotypes were created. This draws attention to the fact that American student teachers need to carefully represent their country when involved with international settings. Furthermore, American student teachers should always specify that their expressions are perhaps only characteristic to the area from which they come, not the U.S. as a whole.

Language

In relation to culture, language is a highly debated topic. Does language influence culture? Does culture influence language? Linguistic scholars for years have debated the relationship between the two. Although a wide array of opinions exists, the underlying factor that remains the same is language and culture are related in some manner. Risager (2006) outlined the perceptions of language as part of culture, language as an index of culture, and language as a symbol of culture. Throughout the study, language was repetitively referenced as an influence to the community.

Martin (support staff) believed language to be the most obvious influence of the program. He referred to the American phrases as “Americanisms.” Likewise, he identified the tendency of Australians to shorten words whenever possible. Nevertheless, the introduction of different accents had a significant role in the success or failure of a cultural exchange program.

As Martin (support staff) stated, the first noticeable difference in the program was a difference in language. Furthermore, Aaron (teacher) noted the interest of Australian

students in the beginning to listen to the American student teachers merely as result of curiosity to the new manner of speech. He commented twice on the difference in language. First he stated, "I think our students are motivated when the American student teachers are in the classroom because...they are different, they've got a different way of speaking." Then he added "students do respond a lot differently....American teachers are new faces to the school...they get a different way of speaking." However, if cultural awareness is to increase, it must begin with a respect of other methods of communication. Specifically, Martin noted that Americans use the word pen when referring to a ball point pen; Australians use the word biro. Debbie (parent) noted that even after the American student teachers had left the New South Wales community, students would reference the "slang" terms they had used.

At first sight, the differences in terminology may seem insignificant. Nevertheless, the ability to respect small differences in language and build a respect for an alternative form of communication is the beginning of cultural awareness. Developing the ability to communicate, despite these variations, is one step toward successful interactions. Therefore, community members and students had the opportunity to increase their ability to successfully discuss business transactions, educational opportunities, or social dilemmas. While it may seem unimportant to share various terms and accents, acceptance of another's language is actually the acceptance of another's culture.

Classroom Distractions

Regardless of cultural differences or likenesses, distractions in the classroom always occur. Behnke (1981) noted that classroom distractions may exist in many forms.

As examples, Behnke noted that distractions come from students, visitors, staff members, and special activities. Likewise, Ahrentzen and Evans (1984) noted that both visual and kinetic stimulants prove to be classroom distractions.

Participants who were involved in school activities noticed distractions in the classroom as result of the American student teacher presence. The responses in relation to distractions were varied. However, no participant noted a significant distraction caused by the presence of international student teachers. To the contrary, the disturbances that were caused by the American student teachers were viewed as beneficial.

Particularly, Robbie (mentor teacher) noted students were distracted and asked many questions about American culture. However, in regards to cultural awareness the ability of students to ask questions proved to be beneficial. He noted that “the kids wanted to find out things...it’s natural for kids.” Other participants also noted that any distraction caused was either a normal classroom distraction or the result of students enquiring about another culture. Therefore, the payoff for the distractions would be an increase of cultural awareness among students. For example, James (deputy principal) stated “I don’t think they’re distracters. I think what was taking place was just normal general classroom participation.”

Thus, it can be concluded that American student teachers did cause some distractions within the classroom. However, those distractions were not negative distractions, and some distractions were minimal. The participants in the study felt student enthusiasm for cultural inquiry were of more benefit than harm. Beyond the cultural awareness that was brought forth in the program, participants believed the

classroom distractions were normal and would have existed with or without the American student teachers.

Teaching Method Awareness

Studies have shown that various teaching methods are important to the cognitive learning of students (Bovy, 1981; Tobias, 1982; Mayer 1999). Tobias noted that certain instructional variables lead to a greater level of achievement. Likewise, Mayer declared that the design of instruction contributes to the cognitive learning of individuals.

According to DeWayne (principal), the experience exposed the Australian teachers to new teaching methods and strategies. He also noted the significance of allowing teachers to observe other methods for analysis purposes. His statement was “I thought it was a great idea, because it makes my staff exposed to different ideas and different teaching strategies from overseas. It’s just a good opportunity for professional dialogue and professional development for everybody.” He later added that from the program he believed staff members would “pick up different teaching techniques from watching, observing other people....Let staff observe different practices, and it gives them the opportunity to reflect on their own practices.”

Three other participants, Aaron, James, and Gary also made similar comments. Therefore, the presence of the American student teachers provided the opportunity for Australian teachers to look at their own teaching methods, while acquiring new teaching methods and ideas. As a result, having the American student teachers in the classroom proved beneficial to the Australian teachers.

Cultural Changes in Community Members

In regards to cultural changes, the participants were hesitant to respond that cultural changes had occurred. Various communities may be acceptant or resistant to change (Harrison, 2000). DeWayne (principal) stated “In Australia schools, the cultures move so slowly.” Nevertheless, education is the institution through which social change occurs (Benokraitis, 2009). As expressed by Preston (businessman), “you really need someone from here to pickup the challenge and go abroad or go out and go elsewhere, come back and say hey, there is a wide world out there.”

Cwick and Benton (2009), noted that programs in the school that persist, eventually spill out into the community. Preston and DeWayne reinforced this belief. In regards to school change, Preston (businessman) noted “it will take a long time before it happens.” Equally, DeWayne (principal) noted that “in Australian schools, the cultures move so slowly.” While these participants were hesitant to directly admit to cultural changes as result of the program, their responses did imply that change in culture is possible.

The parent participants were complimentary to impact of the American student teachers. Several times, Debbie (parent) expressed “I think that it is a very good experience”, “I thought it was good”, and “I think it is very good, and that it should continue as long as possible.” Likewise, Sherry (parent) also expressed her approval of the program by stating “I think it is a good experience to have students from other countries....It was a good experience for all of us.”

The participants repetitively made reference to the program as broadening the perspectives of students and community members. Specifically, James (deputy principal)

noted “I couldn’t say that there are any cultural changes but I think our students are more informed about the US and more informed about by square general people. I think everyone goes through cultural changes and certainly opens their eyes up to certain cultures and different things.” Likewise, Aaron (teacher) shared positive feelings toward the performance of the American student teachers by stating “they made a very positive impression. They were very confident. They were liked. And, they were very professional.”

In summary, the participants did not readily admit to a cultural change, instead they acknowledged cultural influences. However, with the continuation of the program cultural changes within the community are likely.

Student Performance

Participants noted positive impacts on the performance of the New South Wales community in regards to influences of American student teachers on the performance of students. Both parents noted their children were more interested in learning due to different perspectives the American student teachers offered. Sherry (parent) noted students “tend to sit back and listen.” Therefore, the presence of individuals from a new culture causes students to focus better.

Furthermore, teachers also noticed a change in student performance. Kathy (mentor teacher) noted that in relation to behavior, students were better behaved in the presence of the American student teachers. Aaron (teacher), noted that he felt students were more interested in listening to the American student teachers because “they add a little positive reinforcement to our students.” In addition, Preston (businessman) believed having a different perspective on the subject matter encouraged students to perform at a

higher level. Finally, Robbie (mentor teacher) described the American student teacher experience as stimulating. Thus, it can be concluded that the presence of the American student teachers encouraged students to perform better academically and behaviorally. In addition, the cause for improvements were identified as an increased interest in a different culture and perspective.

Community Unification

Within the realm of psychology, much research has been conducted on communities. However, from this study emerged a new concept that the presence of people from a different culture would cause a community to merge. According to Kathy (mentor teacher), because the New South Wales community wanted to exhibit their best for the American student teachers the political issues were ignored. The focus of the community during that time was making a positive impression on American student teachers. Other participants, James, Sherry, and Preston, also acknowledged that the presence of the American student teachers forced community members to ignore differences and assist in accommodating the American student teachers.

Therefore, one can conclude that due to the collectivist nature of Australians, they were able to put aside their differences to function as a group in hosting American student teachers. Several participants noted that they desired for American student teachers to return home with a positive impression of their community and school. The unification in this situation did not occur because of some detailed program set forth. Instead, the New South Wales community joined as a collectivist society, to showcase their community in the best light.

Impact of Student Teacher Presence

Participants in the study gave final remarks concerning the presence of the American student teacher program. The program was identified as a success. The participants noted within the confines of the school community, American student teachers improved the behavior and academic success of the New South Wales community students by increasing their interest in the subject matter and providing new perspectives. It was also identified that classroom distracters were not a significant problem. Instead, they provided a pathway for students to inquire about various cultures. Furthermore, lasting impacts were made by providing the New South Wales community teachers with new teaching methods to use in their classrooms.

American student teachers did yield unification among the New South Wales community members. In an attempt to display the community in a positive light, members were able to put aside differences and collaborate. Participants also noted that the cultural awareness of community members increased due to the presence of the American student teachers. Thus, while cultural change requires more time, cultural awareness was greatly influenced and increased.

The perceptions of community members were also changed. Many stereotypes of Americans existed because of the media influence. However, with the American student teachers in the community, members were exposed to the reality of American life. They were also reminded that stereotypes are not always accurate. Community members were also reminded of the stereotypes they impose upon themselves and were able to share with the American student teachers the falsifications of those stereotypes.

Implications for Research

This study revealed several themes that are beneficial to the establishment of other international student teaching exchange programs between the USA and Australia. First, this study was useful in establishing an international student teaching experience for American student teachers to Australia. As result of this program, community members identified positive results within their community. Therefore, this study can be used to assist in establishing other beneficial international student teaching experiences.

Next, this study evaluated the role of international visitors in making community impacts. Often times, studies focus in the impacts to the visitors. However, this study focused on the influences to the community which was involved.

The study also analyzed the various influences that contributed to cultural changes. Not only did the study attempt to identify the cultural changes to the New South Wales community, but it investigated the causes for these cultural changes. More specifically, the influences of the American student teachers were evaluated.

Finally, this study would be useful to anyone considering the creation of an international student teacher exchange program. This study outlined the community member's perspectives and receptiveness to the program. It also identified areas of benefit to the host community.

Future Research Questions

Based on the findings of this study, several future research questions were established. Those research questions are:

1. What impact on the New South Wales community did American student teachers have after five and ten years had elapsed from the first student teaching experience?
2. After five and ten years, are the New South Wales community members more receptive to international visitors?
3. As the number of American student teachers to the New South Wales community increases, what cultural changes will be accepted by community members?
4. After ten years, how do student participants perform in comparison to non-student participants?

CHAPTER VI

Article

Impacts of American Student Teachers on Twelve Community Members in A New South
Wales Community Australia: A Qualitative Study

Article to be submitted to the *Journal of Agricultural Education*.

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the influences of American student teachers on a rural community in New South Wales, Australia. The study analyzed interviews with twelve participants of the American student teacher program in a rural New South Wales community, Australia. Two researchers worked together to complete this study. Both researchers were student teachers with the New South Wales community for ten weeks and taught agriculture in one the community's two high schools. After allowing one year to pass, researcher one returned to the community to interview twelve individuals involved with the program. The interviewed participants were questioned based on a predetermined protocol. The interviews were then transcribed, coded, and categorized into themes by researcher two. Using participatory action research and a modified grounded theory approach, the researchers were able to identify areas of influence suggested by the participants. The participants identified nine areas of influence within the school and community of the American student teachers: cultural awareness, stereotypes, language, classroom distractions, teaching methods

awareness, cultural changes in community members, student performance, community unification, and impact of student teacher presence.

Introduction

In this age of globalization, greater attention has been placed on increasing individuals understanding of international affairs. Within the realm of education, this trend is no different. According to Alfaro (2008), in recent years, it has become “increasingly clear that there is an awareness of the need for the globalization of teacher education programs . . . to prepare globally minded teachers for service in the United States” (p. 20). As globalization becomes an increasing focus, it is apparent that in order to remain effective, teachers and teacher training programs must embrace the opportunities to widen their perspectives of world cultures. As a result, the numbers of student teachers with international experiences is increasing.

In response to the increase in global student teaching experiences, considerable research has been conducted to evaluate the benefits to student teachers. Benefits to the student teachers have included increased awareness of teaching, culture, and self (Clement, 2002). Furthermore, Sandell (2007), reported over two-thirds of participating international student teachers had increased in the areas of professionalism, international perspectives, and personal development.

While the impacts of international experiences on student teachers have been widely evaluated, the impacts of those student teachers on the communities in which they reside have received less attention. Nevertheless, students, schools, and communities cannot be successfully separated. As stated by Wright and Smith (1998), “school, and community environments may support each other and be mutually beneficial” (p. 146).

Therefore, it must be considered that international student teachers in any community could make some impact on that particular community

Psychology – General Overview

Psychology has been described as “the science of mental life” (Butler & McManus, 1998, p. 1). In other words, psychology is concerned with thoughts and feelings. According to Sternburg (2004), psychology studies the mental processes, or the ability to learn, reason, have emotion, and obtain motivation, behaviors and the manner in which the two relate. According to Carmichael (1957),

one of the major purposes of psychology is to examine some of the mental processes that all men have in common and the laws and generalizations which have been developed in an effort to understand both the ways in which men are similar and the ways in which they are unlike. (p. 3)

However, the thoughts and feelings of each individual are different. A problem is formed when two people understand a certain situation in different ways. As a result, a need for formal psychology arises. Since any science, including psychology, is “only as good as the *data* on which it is based” (Butler & McManus, 1998, p. 8), it becomes critical that methods be used which will allow psychologists to determine which understanding is most likely to be accurate. To this effect, psychologists attempt to separate what are the subjective views of individuals from the facts (Butler & McManus).

In order to obtain the facts, psychology requires the usage of indirect sources of information. Butler and McManus (1998), referred to the use of behaviors for the study of the human mind. They noted that to study the brain directly is usually not possible and may cause difficulty in the establishment of accountability of psychological findings.

However, one must remember that psychology is not like other sciences in the fact that it can be directly observed.

Social Psychology

In technical terms, social psychology is “the scientific study of those aspects of human behavior and experience that pertain to other people” (Marcuse, 1954, p. 182). Of course, by this explanation, one might think of all psychology as social psychology since all human behavior is affected by others. This, however, is not the case. Social psychology emphasizes related disciplines surrounding social psychology (MacLeod, 1954). MacLeod first focused on general psychology. He stated that social psychology begins with the individual and focuses on basic mental functions. These findings are related to physical and biological sciences. The other extreme, sociology, begins with the society. Structure, organization, and development of the group to which the individual belongs are viewed as most important. Social psychology combines these two disciplines and considers the individual within the society. However, it is important to distinguish that social psychology is different for each person based on customs, morals and values which influence individual developments (Marcuse).

Individualism and Collectivism

While the terms individualism and collectivism seem to be mere opposites of one another, the combination of the two can be used to evaluate various aspects of human behavior. Forbes, Zhang, Doroszewicz, and Haas (2009) stated that commonly “individualism is associated with Western cultures and collectivism is associated with Eastern cultures” (p. 24). In addition, they discussed that in Eastern cultures harmonious societies and intrapersonal relationships are emphasized. On the other hand, Western

cultures focus on the principle that an individual's rights should be protected regardless of the consequence. Sarason (2000) defined psychology as "the detection, delineation, and understanding of how changes internal to people, as individuals or collectivists, transact with changes in external social-physical contexts" (p. 920) and emphasized the significance of individualism and collectivism to community change.

Tennessee Education

According to the U.S. Department of Education (n.d.c.), Tennessee is home to 136 school districts and 1,710 schools. 68.4% of these schools are listed as a Title I school. Title I is a program which attempts to improve the academic achievement of disadvantaged students (U.S. Department of Education). In Tennessee, there are 978,368 students enrolled, and 47.7% of students participate in the free/reduced lunch program. In addition, Title I is designed to provide assistance for reduced or free lunches to students of families who are economically disadvantaged. According to the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, the median average household income for the state of Tennessee from 2006-2008 was 41,978 dollars. This total is well below the national average of 51,233 dollars for the same time period. The same report showed that the poverty rate in Tennessee was 15 percent. This rate is above the national rate of 13.2 percent. These numbers reinforce the situations that impact a significant portion of Tennessee students.

Within the Tennessee Department of Education, Career and Technical Education (CTE) believes in "preparing today's students for tomorrow's opportunities" (Department of Education, n.d.b.). CTE provides career and technical training to students at the secondary level in the areas of agriculture, business technology, contextual academics,

family and consumer sciences, health science, marketing, technology engineering, and trade and industry. Each of these programs is designed to provide secondary students with pre-service experience in the given area of concentration (Department of Education, n.d.b.). These classrooms are often equipped with simulation labs or work closely with members of the community to establish learning experiences for students.

New South Wales Education

New South Wales was the first of the Australian territories to be established as a state and is home to the commonwealth's capital, Sydney (Cathcart, 1993). With a budget of 11.8 billion dollars, the New South Wales Government Department of Education and Training, also known as NSW DET, is the largest single organization in Australia (New South Wales Government Department of Education and Training, n.d.a.). Approximately 70% of all school aged children in New South Wales attend one of 2,200 school locations managed by the NSW DET. From pre-school to college and specialist schools, around 750,000 students attend NSW government schools (New South Wales Government Department of Education and Training, n.d.a.). Thus, the department has a significant role in education for the future of Australia.

Looking away from traditional education, New South Wales is also Australia's largest technical and future education provider and one of the largest technical education providers in the world. Also known as TAFE NSW, this organization functions under the command of a TAFE Commission Board. This board is responsible for policies, planning, operations, management, commercial activities, and cross-sector issues. Acting as a whole, the TAFE Commission Board reviews the previously stated activities and reports to the Minister of Education.

According to the New South Wales Government Department of Education and Training website, the TAFE NSW organization has more than 500,000 enrollments per year, over 10,000 permanent teachers, ten TAFE NSW institutes and over 130 campuses. Combined, these campuses offer over 1,200 areas of concentration that are recognized by employers. The website also explained that these courses allow students to continue their schooling on a full-time, part-time or short course basis. Furthermore, TAFE NSW has designed its courses to be offered in methods which best suit the needs of employers and students. Students can attend land campuses or participate in online training. Furthermore, the Australian Qualifications Framework accredits most of the concentrations provided by TAFE NSW (New South Wales Government Department of Education and Training, n.d.b.).

Cultural Awareness

Homan (1999) outlined several needs of cultural awareness between groups, and emphasized the importance of acknowledging cultural differences among groups. In addition, Homan noted that in order to successfully work together, individuals must have a basic understanding of other's values and opinions. Likewise, cultural awareness is needed in education. Merryfield (2004) explained that cultural learning assists students in understanding the activities and thoughts of other people. Additionally, Merryfield stated that cultural learning of student develops lifelong skills for cooperating with individuals who hold a different set of values and beliefs. Ford and Whiting (2007) explained "the culturally competent individual or organization seeks to develop new educational models and approaches based on culture....Attitudes, policies, and practices

are three major areas where development must occur if an individual or organization is to move towards cultural competence” (p. 54).

Stereotypes

According to social psychology, “part of the process of socialization is the acquisition of membership in social groups” (MacLeod, 1954, p.210). Furthermore, “a stereotype is a summary impression of a group of people in which a person believes that all members of that group share a common trait or traits” (Tavris & Wade, 2001, p. 423). From these stereotypes, the assumed characteristics of the group are assigned to its members. Thus, the individual may assume all or most of the beliefs about that particular group or stereotype (MacLeod, 1954, p. 211).

When people assume all stereotypes to be true, they miss the importance of individuality between group members. Stereotypes may be able to reflect the truth, but they may also distort reality.

Language

For years, the influence of language on human action has been debated. The degrees of influence are widely disputed among linguistic scholars. Some feel that language and culture are virtually inseparable while others feel the two have little impact on each other (Casasanto, 2008). Nevertheless, one idea seems to be common among debates: language and culture do have some form of relation.

Classroom Distractions

Distractions in classrooms naturally occur on a daily basis. Ahrentzen and Evans (1984) reported that noise is not the only distraction in classrooms. They identified visual stimulants (wall decorations) and kinetic stimulants (bumping into other students)

as common classroom distractions. Furthermore, the study by Trentham (1975) reported that “subjects in a distraction condition perform less well on a measure of verbal originality than do subjects in a non-distraction condition” (p. 15-16).

Teaching Methods Awareness

A wide spectrum of teaching methods exists from pre-service teachers taking courses to develop their teaching methods of instruction to tenured faculty trying to improve or update teaching. Regardless, it has been debated if teaching methods make a difference in the learning of students.

Tobias (1982) reported that there are various aspects of instruction which play a significant role in the learning process of students. “Some instructional variables do consistently result in superior achievement compared to others” (p. 4). He further suggested that response modes, teaching methods, media tools, and technological devices in educational instruction could result in a change of student learning.

Cultural Changes in Community Members

When two cultures are in contact with one another, new ideas and systems are shared. As result, both cultures are influenced by one another. This is no different in terms of neighborhoods or communities. “Like any system, neighborhoods are always undergoing some degree of change” (Homan, 1999, p. 363). According to Benokraitis (2009), “Culture is adaptive and always changing” (p. 40), and “some of the major reasons for cultural change include diffusion, invention and innovation, discovery, external pressures, and changes in the physical environment” (p. 55).

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the impacts of American student teachers on the rural community in New South Wales, Australia. The study examined influences made by American student teachers on the students, parents, school administrators, and community members in a rural community in New South Wales.

Methodology and Procedure

As stated by Creswell (2009) three basic research methodologies exist for use by scholars around the globe: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. For this study, the researcher was concerned with the perceptions of community members in regards to community changes as result of American student teachers in a rural community in New South Wales, Australia. Therefore, the qualitative method was selected as the method for which to acquire information.

The uniqueness of the research called for the use of two qualitative research methodologies. First, due to the fact that the researchers were American student teacher to a rural community in New South Wales, Australia and active participants in the New South Wales community, the role of action research participant was taken on. The researchers were involved in a school improvement activity at their respective schools.

A second methodology, a modified grounded theory, allowed for the emergence of themes from the research data. Grounded theory is the “discovery of theory from data” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 1). Due to financial restraints, only one round of interviews was conducted. However, after each theme emerged, the researcher revisited the data to search for supportive documentation.

During the spring of 2006, the two researchers spent ten weeks as American student teachers in the New South Wales community, Australia. During this time, both researchers were involved in improvement projects at their respective schools. Furthermore, the researchers participated in community events such as town meetings, educational forums, and cultural activities. The researchers also spent time in the homes of community members. Newspaper articles and radio interviews were published focusing on the presence of the American student teachers.

After returning home, researcher one returned as a full time student in pursuit of a Master's degree. Researcher one sought for and received IRB approval on February 19, 2007 to return to the community in New South Wales. Researcher one, along with sociology expert Dr. Frank Leuthhold, created an interview protocol to serve as a guide during the interview in the event that participants did not provide rich descriptions. However, the questions listed in the protocol were not asked verbatim during the interviews. Instead, researcher one used open-ended questions that focused on the influences of the American student teachers in the rural New South Wales community.

One year was allowed to elapse between the American student teacher exchange and the interviews. This time frame accommodated for the completion of one complete school year to provide better analysis of the lasting impacts of the program. Furthermore, the timing was partially dependent upon the availability of funding.

Researcher one departed on February 22, 2007 for the New South Wales, Australia to conduct interviews with eleven community members. Prior to interviewing, each participant signed an informed consent assent form. Participants were selected based on their involvement with the student teaching program and the community.

The principals from each participating schools were selected as representatives of their respective schools. Both of these individuals, DeWayne and Terry, were critical characters in the development of the program. One deputy principal, James, was also selected based on his involvement with the program. Two mentoring teachers, Kathy and Robbie, were selected based on their involvement with the American student teachers in the classroom. The principals identified parents and teachers they felt could provide useful insight. Thus, two parents of separate students, Debbie and Sherry, were selected. One math teacher, Gary, and one related arts teacher, Aaron were also selected. Furthermore, one school support staff member, Martin, was identified as a beneficial participant. Finally, one area businessman, Preston, was selected to provide an opinion not related to the educational setting.

The interviews were conducted from February 23 – March 8, 2007. Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes. The interview questions attempted to identify changes in community observed by the participant during the stay and after the leave of the international student teachers. The interviews were recorded to allow for transcription at a later date.

After returning home, researcher one gave the interview recordings to the researcher two. Researcher two was responsible for the transcription of interviews. Researcher two also coded the data and assigned themes to the data. Furthermore, researcher two was responsible for a subsequent review of literature to follow up the findings of the study. Finally, researcher two prepared a written report of the findings and offered conclusions of the study.

In designing the research method, both researchers drew from two established methods of collecting data: participatory research and grounded theory. In regards to participatory action research, both researchers took on the role of action research participant during their stay in the New South Wales community, Australia. As action research participants, both researchers participated in a school improvement plan in their respective schools. However, because the researchers were interested in natural changes, no action research plan was established. Therefore, a second methodology was utilized to ensure an adequate representation of the data.

The second methodology used in the study was grounded theory. From this methodology, theory is allowed to emerge from data (Strauss & Glaser, 1967). Due to the fact that the researchers were primarily interested in the influences, or themes, identified by the participants, grounded theory was selected; however, financial constraints limited researchers to only one series of interviews. Nevertheless, the researcher did revisit the interviews each time a new theme emerged in search of supportive documentation.

Coding and Analysis

Upon interview completion, recordings and notes were turned over to the second researcher. This researcher was responsible for the transcription, coding and analysis of data. In accordance with Coffey and Atkinson (1996) researcher two “[condensed] the bulk of our data sets into analyzable units by creating categories with and from our data” (p. 26). The researcher then utilized thematic analysis. Glesne (2006) defined thematic analysis as “a process that involves coding and then segregating the data by codes into data clumps for further analysis and description” (p. 147). As a result of this process, nine

themes emerged: cultural awareness, stereotypes, language, community unification, student performance, classroom distracters, teaching awareness, cultural changes in community members, and impact of student teacher presence.

Validity/Creditability

Glense (2006) described research validity as the “trustworthiness” of the research. In other words, can the reader believe what he or she is reading? In order to establish validity in qualitative research, Creswell (2007) identified eight procedures to be used by researchers.

Validity in this study was established using five of Creswell’s procedures. First, while the researcher did not spend an extended amount of time in the field while doing the study, the researcher lived in the community being studied for ten weeks. Secondly, the researcher used interviews, personal notes, and related literature to ensure consistency between various sources. Thirdly, the work of the researcher was reviewed by a peer who is familiar with the project and can thus understand its complexity. The peer reviewer looked for consistency between participant responses and conclusions. The peer reviewer also looked at the conclusions to ensure that the researcher biases did not alter the results. Fourthly, the research acknowledged the presence of biases in review of the data. Finally, the researcher provided rich, thick descriptions of the procedures, interview results, and conclusions.

Dependability/Reliability

Decrop (2004) declared that dependability “consists of looking at whether the results are consistent and reproducible” (p. 159). Miles and Huberman (1994) identified seven procedures which can help researchers to establish dependability. In congruence

with Miles and Huberman (1994), the researcher first outlined three research questions that were imperative to the study. The researcher then outlined the various duties, along with biases, of the researcher. Also, findings among the twelve participants, of various roles, were found to be closely related and were applicable to each participant in the study. In addition, a detailed outline of the theoretical constructs and frameworks were provided. Finally, a peer review was utilized to assist in increasing dependability.

Transferability/External Validity

“Transferability...is concerned with the extent to which the research findings are applicable to another setting or group” (Decrop, 2004, p. 159). The transferability of this study to other cultures is not expected to yield the same results. Additionally, due to the fact that the community may have a certain degree of influence from previous American student teachers, and that the community members could become accustomed to the influences of the American student teachers, the replication of the study within the same community could also yield different results. Nevertheless, if American student teachers were sent to another small mining town in New South Wales, Australia and the same research format were followed, similar results would be expected. Because culture plays a significant role in the behaviors of individuals, when people with like cultures share similar experiences, the outcomes are likely to be comparable.

Confirmability

“Confirmability means that the data and their interpretation are not figments of the researcher’s imagination” (Mertens & McLaughlin, 2004, p. 107). The researcher in this study identified biases that might be influential on the reported outcomes. However, in an attempt to strengthen confirmability, a peer reviewer was utilized to decrease the

impacts the researcher bias would have on the outcomes. Furthermore, the researcher used the grounded theory method for developing themes. Therefore, the bias of the researcher in identifying themes was minimized and the actuality of the data was able to emerge.

Researcher Biases

The researchers in this study were participants in the American student teacher/New South Wales, Australia program. As result, the researchers acknowledged that personal biases exist. Due to the fact that both researchers were student teachers in the community, the researchers desired that the influences on the community were viewed in a positive light. On a personal note, the researchers hoped that the influence of American student teachers benefited the community in which they worked. Furthermore, the researchers also desired that the people involved believed that the program had been a success.

The researchers also knew several of the research participants personally. Therefore, in analyzing the data the researchers' personal perception of the participant could have been imposed on the meaning of the responses. It is also possible that the interviewer, allowed personal knowledge of individual's beliefs to influence the direction of the interview.

Findings and Conclusions

Cultural Awareness

Merryfield (2004) declared that students who are exposed to other cultures, can develop the ability to interact with individuals of different culture. Thus, Kathy (mentor teacher) stated "I think that socially and generally in terms of cultural awareness and kids

thinking about the world...this helps the kids to understand the world differently.” In turn, students who were involved with the American student teacher program should be better equipped to work with individuals of different cultures.

According to Homan (1999), in order for cultural awareness between groups to occur, all groups involved must acknowledge that there is much to learn from both sides. Likewise, DeWayne (principal) noted that “it was a cultural exchange.” Furthermore, Aaron (teacher) expressed that the program was “a learning tool both ways.”

Community members were also benefitted by the program. Martin (support staff) noted that “to actually speak to young kids that came from over there [USA], their different aspects of life, is really eye opening.” James (deputy principal) also notices that due to the American student teachers “students were more informed about the U.S....I think everyone goes through cultural changes, and certainly opens their eyes up to certain cultures and different things....You tell me about things that go on in your community, and that certainly opened my eyes, I wasn’t aware.” Gary (teacher) suggested “it’s a tremendous opportunity to be able to learn something about people from somewhere else, people that don’t exactly live the same life that we do.” Therefore, influence of the American student teacher program reached beyond the classroom and into the community.

Additionally, five participants noted the cultural influence of the experience on the American student teachers. These individuals were willing to accept that they had been culturally influenced, but noted that the American student teachers had also gained from the experience. The five individuals demonstrated their personal pride of their own culture when they realized American student teachers were able to take the New South

Wales community culture to their hometowns. This desire for outside approval exemplified dedication and devotion to one's own culture. The participants also had a tendency to assume American student teachers left with a positive impression of the New South Wales community and Australia. This clearly demonstrated the confidence of the New South Wales community members had in their culture.

As for the American student teachers, the fact that the New South Wales community desired their approval speaks highly of their efforts. The American student teachers built a creditable reputation in the community and their opinions were highly respected, as noted by Aaron and Terry. Specifically, Terry (principal) commented that the American student teachers had a great opportunity to learn, but "there is not doubt that we [Australian participants] came out on the positive side."

Stereotypes

Tavris and Wade (2001) noted the importance of stereotypes in the abilities of people to quickly assimilate information. However, the quick assimilation of information can often be misleading or blatantly wrong. In the interview with Terry (principal), he discussed common stereotypes of Americans by Australians. He also alluded to the importance of teachers realizing the problems with stereotypes.

People have preconceived ideas about different cultures....In Australia, you either have people that are very pro-American or very anti-American....Your [interviewer] presence and the other's presence here has allowed teachers especially to see that you can't stereotype different cultures. Even if it's American...you just have to take people as you find them.

Furthermore, Kathy (mentor teacher) stated "I know that when Donald [American student teacher] was just talking with some of the kids about what his life was like in the U.S., it was completely different from what they [Australian students] expected from the

movies.” The cultural awareness brought about from the presence of the American student teachers resulted in disproving some of the stereotypes toward Americans. James noted “that certainly opened up my eyes. I wasn’t aware.”

While many of the preconceived stereotypes were altered, new stereotypes were formed. Unfortunately, the new stereotypes were not always correct. Gary (mentor teacher) commented “As a math teacher, I don’t know much about teaching agriculture, but from what I have seen, agriculture usually meant that students aren’t terribly able. And, speaking with some of the American student teachers, I’ve found...agriculture is a huge part of the curriculum in the United States.” While Gary’s statement might hold true for certain areas of the United States, certainly agriculture is not a major part of the curriculum in all areas. Nevertheless, the American student teacher that Gary had spoken with described his hometown. Thus, Gary derived a new stereotype based on one town in the United States.

Perhaps Preston (businessman) best identified the benefits of the American student teachers to the stereotypes of Australians and Americans alike. His comment suggested that as American student teachers and the New South Wales community citizens worked together, stereotypes would be disproved by both groups. In the process, each would learn about the other, but more importantly, learn about self. He shared “I think I understand the country where I was born much more because I listen to all these perspectives.” He further explained that as he ridged stereotypes and gained realizations his understanding of his culture increased. Therefore, for American student teachers and the New South Wales community citizens alike, the program not only allowed them to

disregard preconceived stereotypes about each other, but it opened their individual understanding of their own culture.

Language

In relation to culture, language is a highly debated topic. Does language influence culture? Does culture influence language? Linguistic scholars for years have debated the relationship between the two. Although a wide array of opinions exists, the underlying factor that remains the same is language and culture are related in some manner. In regards to culture and language, Martin (support staff) stated, “the first and obvious thing is the different tone of voice and accent....the words you [American student teachers] come out and say are very Americanisms.”

Aaron (teacher) believed that the language difference was beneficial to the students and student teachers. Twice he commented, “I think our students are motivated when the American student teachers are in the classroom because...they are different, they’ve got a different way of speaking” and “students do respond a lot differently....American teachers are new faces to the school...they have a different way of speaking.” Likewise, Terry (principal) felt that the interest of students was heightened by the difference in language. In regards to high school students, he commented “with the teenage kids, they are more interested with the accents.”

At first sight, the differences in terminology may seem insignificant. Nevertheless, the ability to respect small differences in language and build a respect for an alternative form of communication is the beginning of cultural awareness. Developing the ability to communicate, despite these variations, is one step toward successful interactions. Therefore, community members and students had the opportunity to

increase their ability to successfully discuss business transactions, educational opportunities, or social dilemmas. As stated by Robbie (mentor teacher) “the accents was a lasting impression.” While it may seem unimportant to share various terms and accents, acceptance of another’s language is actually the acceptance of another’s culture.

Classroom Distractions

Regardless of cultural differences or likenesses, distractions in the classroom always occur. Behnke (1981) noted that classroom distractions may exist in many forms. As examples, Behnke noted that distractions come from students, visitors, staff members, and special activities. Likewise, Ahrentzen and Evans (1984) noted that both visual and kinetic stimulants prove to be classroom distractions.

Robbie (mentor teacher) noted “the kids wanted to find out things...it’s natural for kids.” However, in regards to cultural awareness the ability of students to ask questions proved to be beneficial. James (deputy principal) stated “I don’t think they’re distracters. I think what was taking place was just normal general classroom participation.” Furthermore, Robbie (mentor teacher) acknowledged that students were “distracting the teachers by asking about America....You can’t kind of stop on that...but you got to be able to control it.”

Thus, it can be concluded that American student teachers did cause some distractions within the classroom. However, those distractions were not negative distractions, and some distractions were minimal. The participants in the study felt student enthusiasm for cultural inquiry were of more benefit than harm. Beyond the cultural awareness that was brought forth in the program, participants believed the

classroom distractions were normal and would have existed with or without the American student teachers.

Teaching Methods Awareness

Studies have shown that various teaching methods are important to the cognitive learning of students (Bovy, 1981; Tobias, 1982; Mayer 1999). Tobias noted that certain instructional variables lead to a greater level of achievement. Likewise, Mayer declared that the design of instruction contributes to the cognitive learning of individuals.

DeWayne (principal) stated “I thought it was a great idea, because it made my staff exposed to different ideas and different teaching strategies from overseas.” He also believed the program benefitted staff members because they would “pick up different teaching techniques from watching, observing other people....Let staff observe different practices, and it gives them the opportunity to reflect on their own practice.” When asked how he felt about the American student teachers, Gary (teacher) replied “it’s been a very positive experience for me....I’ve certainly enjoyed speaking with them, finding a little bit more about...how they approach the study of teaching.” The presence of the American student teachers provided the opportunity for Australian teachers to look at their own teaching methods, while acquiring new teaching methods and ideas. As a result, having the American student teachers in the classroom proved beneficial to the Australian teachers.

Cultural Changes in Community Members

In regards to cultural changes, the participants were hesitant to respond that cultural changes had occurred. Various communities may be acceptant or resistant to change (Harrison, 2000). DeWayne (principal) stated “In Australia schools, the cultures

move so slowly.” Nevertheless, education is the institution through which social change occurs (Benokraitis, 2009). When asked if things in the school had changed as result of the program, Preston (businessman) responded

I think it will take some time, to know...It will take a long time before it happens, you really need someone from here to pickup the challenge and go abroad or go out and go elsewhere, come back and say hey, there is a wide world out there.

DeWayne (principal) shared very similar views in regards to cultural change. “School culture is...I’ve been here 3 ½ years and I’m struggling to change some of the cultures in the schools....In Australian schools, the cultures move so slowly.” However, he later added “You’ve got to look deeper for cultural change. You have to learn the system of how people think. The way people interact or a change in process.”

Cwick and Benton (2009), noted that programs in the school that persist, eventually spill out into the community. Terry (principal) said “In the ten weeks last year, there is no doubt that there was a very positive impact on school....The things that [happened] impacted the whole school.” Likewise, James (deputy principal) stated “I think everyone goes through cultural changes and certainly opens their eyes up to certain cultures and different things.” Thus it can be concluded that even though there was some resistance to admit cultural changes, some degree of cultural change did occur.

Moreover, with the continuation of the program, further cultural changes are likely.

Student Performance

Participants noted positive impacts on the performance of the New South Wales community in regards to influences of American student teachers on the performance of students. Both parents noted their children were more interested in learning due to different perspectives the American student teachers offered. Sherry (parent) noted

students “tend to sit back and listen.” Therefore, the presence of individuals from a new culture causes students to focus better.

Furthermore, teachers noted a change in student performance. Kathy (mentor teacher) commented “behavior wise, they definitely have done better than usual,” and they were “a lot more engaged than they were in most lessons that I’ve seen previously. So overall, yes they performed at a higher level.” Aaron (teacher) was also decisive in his comments. When asked if students responded differently with American student teachers in the classroom, he responded “Yes, definitely. I believe that when American teachers are in the school and in the classrooms, students do respond a lot differently than they do with their normal teachers.” Robbie (mentor teacher) also commented that having American student teachers in the school “certainly stimulated interest both studentwise and staffwise.” Thus, it can be concluded that the presence of the American student teachers encouraged students to perform better academically and behaviorally. In addition, the cause for improvements were identified as an increased interest in a different culture and perspective.

Community Unification

Within the realm of psychology, much research has been conducted on communities. However, from this study emerged a new concept that the presence of people from a different culture would cause a community to merge. According to Kathy (mentor teacher) “the political stuff that had been going on for a very long time was dumped underneath the carpet. People...want[ed] to impress you guys and show you how wonderful we all were...everyone was on their best behavior.” The focus of the

community during that time was making a positive impression on American student teachers.

Other participants also acknowledged that the presence of the American student teachers forced community members to ignore differences and assist in accommodating the American student teachers. Sherry (parent) observed “I really do think that when the American students are here that people are motivated to try and do their best.” To the same effect, Preston (businessman) noticed that with the American student teachers there were “less caustic remarks and less kind of snide remarks...it’s not because they don’t want to make them...it’s because, oh, the Americans are here, let’s not do it. But maybe that is a positive thing.”

Therefore, one can conclude that due to the collectivist nature of Australians, they were able to put aside their differences to function as a group in hosting American student teachers. Several participants noted that they desired for American student teachers to return home with a positive impression of their community and school. The unification in this situation did not occur because of some detailed program set forth. Instead, the New South Wales community joined as a collectivist society, to showcase their community in the best light.

Impact of Student Teacher Presence

Participants in the study gave final remarks concerning the presence of the American student teacher program. The program was identified as a success. Aaron commented “they made a very positive impression. They were very confident. They were liked. And, they were very professional.” Gary (teacher) commented “I don’t think there are any negative, long-lasting things that I can remember. I miss...the positive

energy that the American teachers gave me as they were young people starting out their careers." Terry (principal) also showed much enthusiasm and approval for the program. "I think it's terrific because from what I heard last year, the people were of high quality." He later continued "all I've heard is positive stuff, and the quality of people that [were] here is exceptional, I mean, the American people. It's all positive." DeWayne (principal) offered a quick but similar response "we'd love to have you back."

A few questions were raised during this study. Future research questions should answer the following:

- What impact did American student teachers have after five and ten years had elapsed from the first student teaching experience?
- After five and ten years, are the New South Wales community members more receptive to international visitors?
- As the number of American student teachers to the New South Wales community increases, what cultural changes were accepted by community members?
- After ten years, how do student participants perform in comparison to non-student participants ?

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Appendix

Appendix A: IRB Approval Signature Page

OR

☐ Full IRB Review

Chair, DRC: Randal G. Waters

Signature: Randal G. Waters Date: 2-13-07

Department Head: Don L. McLemore

Signature: Don L. McLemore Date: 2/13/07

Protocol sent to Research Compliance Services for final approval on (Date):

Approved:
Research Compliance Services
Office of Research
1534 White Avenue

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol (School Administrators)

Question #1: What are the reactions from parents of students in the school?

Question #2: What distracters, if any, are present during the time of the student teaching experience?

Question #3: What were some of the initial reactions faculty and staff in the school had towards the program?

Question #4: Were there any changes in school climate/culture while American teachers were in the school or after leaving?

Questions #5: What are your thoughts about having the student teachers in your school?

Interview Protocol (Teachers/Parents)

Question #1: Do students perform at a higher level as a result of having an American student teacher in the classroom?

Question #2: Does the American teaching experience promote interest of students to travel or continue educational goals?

Question #3: Does motivation in school change as a result of new ideas and refreshing change?

Question #4: What role does leadership have when having student teachers in the classroom?

VITA

Tera S. Bunch was born in Morristown, TN on July 27, 1984. She was raised in Hawkins County, TN. As an elementary school student she attended St. Clair Elementary and completed her middle school years at Bulls Gap School, both located in Bulls Gap, TN. She later graduated from Cherokee Comprehensive High School, located in Rogersville, TN, in 2002. Her college instruction began at Walters State Community College, Morristown, TN. She graduated in 2004 with an A.S. in Agricultural Sciences. She then transferred to the University of Tennessee at Knoxville and graduated in 2006 with a B.S. in Agriculture and Extension Education.

Tera taught agriculture for two years in Rogersville, TN at Cherokee Comprehensive High School, Rogersville, TN. She taught one year of agriculture at Lenoir City High School, Lenoir City, TN. She is currently teaching eighth grade at Rogersville Middle School, Rogersville, TN.

Tera is currently pursuing a Masters of Science in Agriculture and Extension Education from the University of Tennessee at Knoxville.